# A New Perspective on Valmiki Ramayana

Valmiki Ramayana is a work of imaginative and highly advanced Yogi. When we see it from Yoga angles, we realize that it is a complex document. Its characters map to several Yoga processes, explain their relationships, give warning signs or guidance to a Yogi, etc. Hence, it is difficult to understand completely.

When we encounter any such a complex document, we try to reduce its complexity by dividing it into pieces or layers. Then, we look at each piece individually and try to understand the function of that part by itself. We identify common patterns. This process is like a process a Software Programmer follows when he comes across a complex software. **Valmiki Ramayana is exactly like a complex software, with layers and patterns in it.** Here are some ways to help us understand the Valmiki Ramayana.

## Layers in Valmiki Ramayana

When we build a house, first we put the foundation and then the walls, etc. Similarly, when we read Valmiki Ramayana, we need to understand the layers and their sequence. There are at four layers in Valmiki Ramayana. Each subsequent layer uses the previous layer, like the walls of the house use the foundation as to support them.

* **The first layer of is the characters like Sita, Shri Ram, Laxmana, Hanumana, and Ravana.** These characters represent our Energy, Consciousness, devoted mind, Prana, and Ahamkara, respectively. We will study these characters and their Yoga meaning in the next few chapters.
* **The way these characters relate to each other becomes the second layer.** For example, Hanumana finds Sita in Lanka. It represents Prana finds Energy in Muladhara Chakra. Each relation in Ramayana teaches us something about Yoga. We saw few examples earlier.
* **The third layer is the most important level for us. It has of various signs, symptoms, recommended actions, and warnings related to the path of Yoga.** Some warning signs also apply in other paths, not just Yoga. For lack of a better word, we will call them as safeguards for spiritual aspirants.Stories of king Vishwamitra and Trishanku, of demons Viradha and Kabandha, and of actions of Hanumana are all examples of these safeguards. There are hundreds of safeguards in Ramayana. We will study and interpret a few of them.
* **Finally, as the fourth layer, sage Valmiki indirectly refers to the various Chakras.** He shows their general locations, their effects, suggests how to avoid their imbalance and the effects of such an imbalance. When sage Valmiki deals with the Chakras, he has to go by the indirect references to Chakras like vehicle of Chakra or the color, etc. He cannot declare them explicitly because that hurts the storytelling, and the story risks becoming a discourse. In addition, sage Valmiki does not use chakras in all events. There are many instances where sage Valmiki gives us safeguards, but does not refer to Chakras. Hence, chakras become forth layer.

As you can see, just by considering these layers, we see the complexity of Valmiki Ramayana. **I organized this book based on these layers.** We will study each layer independently. We will not follow the story in a sequence. The assumption is the reader knows the basic story Ramayana. However, the widely known story of Ramayana comes from other versions of Ramayana. **The Valmiki Ramayana differs from other versions. It will be very helpful to read the Valmiki Ramayana.**

## Patterns in Valmiki Ramayana

There is one more way sage Valmiki added complexity in Valmiki Ramayana. We will call it a pattern. A pattern is something that an artist ingrains in his artwork. Let us study five patterns.

**Pattern #1 - Law of Duplication Ramayana**

We often see action-replays while watching sports on TV, where the event is shown multiple times from different angles. If we visualize Ramayana, we see that sage Valmiki replays almost all the events. We see that similar events happen, sometimes back-to-back, sometimes a few chapters later. This duplication of events is the signature style of sage Valmiki. He used it so seriously, as if he was rule-bound to do so. Whenever a particular event happens, the first thing comes to mind is a similar event occurred somewhere else within Ramayana. Let us take some examples to clarify this point.

* Shri Ram lifts and breaks Lord Shiv’s bow in verse 1-67-17. In verse 1-75-13, he picks up Lord Vishnu’s bow.
* Shurpanakha talks about Sita’s beauty to Khara in verse 3-19-17 and then again to Ravana in verse 3-34-16.
* Sugriva tests Shri Ram’s strength two times, the first time with a demon skeleton, and the second time when Shri Ram shoots an arrow through seven trees.
* Shri Ram takes Sugriva to fight with Vali two times. First time, Shri Ram cannot distinguish Sugriva from Vali because they look very similar to Him. Second time, Shri Ram makes Sugriva wear a garland so Shri Ram can identify Vali.
* Two demons kidnap Sita. First time, demon Viradha kidnaps her and second time, Ravana abducts her.

There are countless examples of such duplications in Valmiki Ramayana, practically everywhere. With this pattern in mind, we can spot the additions that may be added to the original script of Valmiki Ramayana. These additions to the original script appear just once and thus give away their secret!

**For example, the verse pertaining to the creation of the four castes, mentioned in the Purush-Sukta, appears in Valmiki Ramayana only once, in the Aranya-Kanda (verse 3-14-30). Therefore, this verse is imported from the Purush-Sukta, which is written later than Valmiki Ramayana, and inserted in Valmiki Ramayana at a later date.**

Now we know that every event in Ramayana must have a duplicate event somewhere in it, can we think of a duplicate event of Shri Ram’s exile from Ayodhya? Was there any other prince of Ayodhya sent in exile? Please see the verse 1-38-21 for an answer.

**Pattern # 2 – Sage Valmiki Always Mentioned Shri Ram in Present Tense**

Sage Valmiki wrote Ramayana and taught it to Luva and Kusha. They recited it in front of Shri Ram in his court. We read Ramayana the way the twins narrate it in front of Shri Ram. We see the entire story in flashback. Instead of telling a story in past tense, it is told in present tense. **Sage Valmiki always mentions Shri Ram in the present tense. Shri Ram is the Consciousness. The Consciousness is always in the present tense – here and now.**

**Pattern # 3 - Cyclic or Iterative Nature of Ramayana**

There are many instances in Ramayana where someone recalls events that had happened earlier on. Let us look at a few examples.

* In verse 2-118-26, Sita tells the details about their marriage to Anusuya. These details are a repetition of earlier events.
* In 4-4-6, Laxmana narrates the story to Hanumana, right from King Dasharatha’s rule onwards.
* In verse 5-31-2, when Hanumana meets Sita for the first time, he begins with "there was a king named Dasharatha."

Besides these instances, there are several instances in Ramayana, where sage Valmiki reviews earlier events. Sometimes, he discusses them briefly, at other times he describes the event. It is a pattern sage Valmiki intentionally hard-wired in the story. We will see its meaning after studying the next point.

**Pattern # 4 - Shri Ram Discovering Himself as a God**

As far as sage Valmiki is concerned, Shri Ram’s victory over Ravana is a foregone conclusion. It is surely significant, but it is not the primary theme of the story. **The central theme is Shri Ram discovering Himself as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. In terms of Yoga, it is akin to a Yogi discovering his Consciousness is same as Universal Consciousness.**

If you read carefully, sage Valmiki plants clues about "who Shri Ram is?" and progressively elaborates it. Shri Ram is not even aware that he is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Only a few sages know about it. Let us take a few examples.

* In verse 1-19-14, sage Vishwamitra asks king Dasharatha to send young Shri Ram to fight the demons and protect his ritual sacrifice. At that instance, he tells king Dasharatha "I know who Shri Ram is." At that instance, sage Vishwamitra could easily reveal to Dasharatha that Shri Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, but he does not do so.
* Similarly, when Shri Ram breaks Lord Shiva’s bow in king Janaka’s court, the story could tell us he is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
* Again, when Shri Ram defeats Parashurama, the story can say that Shri Ram defeated Parashurama because He is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, yet the story does not mention it.

Sage Valmiki waits until the very end of Ramayana, when Shri Ram kills Ravana, to reveal Shri Ram’s actual identity. **In verse 6-117-11, Shri Ram asks all the gods, "I think I am human. I do not know who I am; so, please tell me." At that instance, in verse 6-117-13, Lord Brahma tells him, "You are Lord Vishnu."**

Sage Valmiki hides the secret that Shri Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, but he plants clues, builds a case for it, and slowly gives out pieces of information. This progressive elaboration, coupled with many iterations or cycles, brings up the next and a crucial point.

**Pattern # 5 – Valmiki Ramayana Begins and Ends With Lord Brahma**

Valmiki Ramayana begins with Lord Brahma narrating it to sage Narada, who tells it to sage Valmiki. It ends with Shri Ram going to the "Brahma-Loka” – the abode of Lord Brahma (verses 1-1-95 and 1-1-97). Ramayana is a story of the higher Consciousness. So, it begins and end with Lord Brahma, the Universal Consciousness. Now, we see how sage Valmiki has closely tied Ramayana to the Universal Consciousness.

A process by which a Yogi realizes his Consciousness is same as the Universal Consciousness needs someone who knows how to start it – a Guru. In sage Valmiki’s example, sage Narada is his guru, and in sage Narada’s case, Lord Brahma Himself is his Guru.

**The process that takes us towards a higher Consciousness is cyclic or iterative. Each wave or iteration brings more and more clarity about the Consciousness.** Initially, it may be very faint, unclear, or hazy, but if you keep at it, each wave makes things clearer. Earlier, we saw that Ramayana has a cyclic pattern. It is sage Valmiki’s way of giving us the hint that the entire process of going to the higher Consciousness is cyclic.

## Boons and Curses in Ramayana

We see that Ramayana is full of boons and curses, which makes it necessary for us to understand them. There are two types of boons and curses in Ramayana:

* **Boons and Curses Related to Transmission of Energy**: Just as money is an unmistakable reality of our world, Energy is the reality of sage Valmiki’s world. **For him, like money, one person can transfer Energy to another as long as the first person has earned enough Energy to transfer.** Like money, someone can take Energy away from the other person. If we consider Energy as a wave, we can see that the intention of the person transferring the Energy decides if it is helpful or harmful. **A beneficial or positive Energy transfer is a boon, whereas a negative or harmful Energy transfer is a curse.** Energy transfer differs from money transfer in one way - here, emotions play a big role. The power of Energy transfer depends upon the intensity of the emotion with which someone transfers Energy.A sorrowful, dying person can cause significant damage with his curse because of his intentions. The curse on king Dasharatha by the dying parents of Shravana is a good example of curse having an extreme level of intensity. In verses 2-64-54, 55, we read that Shravana’s parents curse king Dasharatha: Like me, you too will die in agony caused by loss of your son. Shravana’s dying parents are ordinary people; yet, they end up causing much damage to king Dasharatha, who is a prominent person.
* **Boons and Curses to Set the Story, With No Energy Transfer**: **The second type of boons and curses hide the reality, the way a curtain hides things inside the house.** Let us take an example of Dasharatha’s boon to his wife, Kaikayi. There is a logical problem with his boon. It is not like king Dasharatha does great deeds, accumulates Energy, and then transfers it to his wife as a boon. The story, in fact, presents precisely the opposite circumstances. King Dasharatha is about to lose a war and his life too. He desperately needs his wife’s help to escape impending defeat and death. So, he promises her two boons for her help in the battlefield. **Energy transfer did not happen in this boon.** His boon is like giving a signed blank check to his wife. **Sage Valmiki intentionally creates a hole in the story in the form of Dasharatha’s inability to save his life. With it, we can identify it as a simple curtain on the reality.**

Now let us see how Kaikayi uses Dasharatha’s boon to create a powerful story. Kaikayi uses this boon to send Shri Ram and Sita in the jungle. Let us take a pause for a second here and see how this event plays in terms of Yoga processes. **Yoga teaches us that our current reality is that our Ahamkara has already abducted our Energy. Sage Valmiki needs to set our current reality into the story of Ramayana, so that Ramayana becomes relevant to us as a guide of Yoga.** Ravana represents Ahamkara. Sita represents the Energy. For Ravana to kidnap Sita, she needs to be in the jungle. For Sita to go to the jungle, Shri Ram needs to be in the jungle. The story needs a reason to achieve this outcome. King Dasharatha’s boon to Kaikayi provides the reason. As we saw above, since there was no Energy transfer, this boon is an example of curtain that hides our current reality.

## Shri Ram’s Values

To understand Shri Ram, we must understand how He sees the world. He did not know that He is Lord Vishnu, the 7th incarnation. For Him, he is a normal human being. We cannot understand Shri Ram’s actions until we understand His Values. His values differ from us because He is also an advanced Yogi. Let us see a few of them to see His values differ from us.

**Value #1 - Actions and the Results are Independent**

For us, actions and their results are directly connected. In fact, we first decide the results we want, and then perform the actions to get the desired results. If there saw no chance of getting a result, we would not think of doing even a small action. Now let us see the contrast between our view and that of Shri Ram’s view.

**Shri Ram adheres to His duty and morals strictly and rather adamantly.** **He takes an action for its sake. The results follow, but for Him, the action does not connect to the result.** To describe the randomness of the action and its result, Yoga give an example. A crow flies away from a coconut tree, making a coconut fall on the ground. These two events, the crow’s flight and the coconut falling down, are entirely independent, and their connection is imaginary. If someone points to the connection, they are told that it as ignorance.

In Ramayana, Shri Ram is the only one person who takes this view. Hence, He is not angry with His stepmother, Kaikayi, when she forces Him to leave the kingdom and go to the jungle. Except Shri Ram, everyone in the family holds Kaikayi responsible for Shri Ram’s exile and Dasharatha’s death. **However, for Shri Ram, Kaikayi is just a “casual” connection, and she is not responsible for His exile.**

Please remember this value when you read Shri Ram destroys a community of robbers of "Abhivas” in verse 6-22-30 to 6-22-40 and Garuda destroys the tribal community of “Nishad” in verse 3-35-32. Bad actors like Ravana get bad results via Shri Ram. He is only a “casual” connection, not the real cause of their demise.

**Value #2 – Shri Ram Rejects Fate**

Shri Ram rejects the fate. He knows that a person performing an action will get the results of the action in due course and that fate has nothing to do with it. A general misconception about Shri Ram is He believes in fate and propagate fatalistic views. To think, people like Shri Ram rely upon fate to decide for them, is an incorrect observation. Let us see the finer point here.

The problem with the logic of fate is that it assumes separateness of the individual from the others. The concept of fate ignores the connectedness a Yogi feels with others. **For the logic of fate to work, you need separate entities, so that one person’s loss can be another person’s gain. For example, Kaikayi’s son will gain a kingdom, only if Shri Ram leaves it.**

Shri Ram does not feel that He is separate from His brother. Hence, there is no loss for Him, if Bharata takes over the kingdom. Since there is no loss for Shri Ram, He does not feel that His stepmother is responsible for it. For Him, He is leaving the kingdom and going in exile at His father’s command. He is happily obeying His father’s wish, and there is no thought of fate or misfortune in His mind. **For Shri Ram, fate is pure ignorance.**

**Value #3 - He is a Highly Active Individual**

He is a very active individual. Even in exile, Shri Ram is always on the move, builds an army, builds a bridge across the sea, and invades Lanka. All these activities show that He is highly energetic and brave. Note that Shri Ram did never behave like a vegetable, doing nothing and giving up everything in the name of fate. He did not say that getting abducted is Sita’s fate. He did not prescribe the vegetable-like state readers like us. He prescribes action, otherwise there would be no Ramayana for us.

**Value #4 - Strong Emphasis on Performing Duty**

Shri Ram places a very strong emphasis on performing duty. His true nature is to perform his duty, and it comes to Him effortlessly, with no analysis of the pros and cons of the actions. Shri Ram obeys his father’s commands because, for Him, it is his duty to do so**. He does not obey his father’s commands to earn the title of an obedient son or out of fear of the repercussions of disobeying the king.** His strict adherence to duty is visible when He tells Sita He rescued her from Ravana to perform his duty, and not to win her back!

The beauty of this value is that it is not an externally imposed, arbitrary judgment. It was not an externally imposed idea that He arbitrarily adopted, so He could go to heaven or to impress others. It is an internal, a coherent, and a natural guide. His duty toward others motivates Him.