## Hard to Understand Character # 1: Parashurama

In all the avatar stories, a character from the preceding story appears in the next story and thus connects the stories to each other. For example, demon Hiranyaksha, who is in the third avatar story, has a brother, demon Hiranyakshipu, who appears in the fourth avatar story. This arrangement establishes continuity in these stories.

When we accept the above logic, Ramayana as the story of the seventh avatar, requires a link to the sixth avatar story of Parashurama. Please read the chapter “Levels of the Consciousness – From Normal to Beyond” from Yoga Ramayana book for details of avatar stories. In that chapter, we saw that Parashurama level of Consciousness is a rather crude level of Consciousness. We also saw the story of Lord Ganesh and Parashurama, where Lord Ganesh blocked Parashurama from visiting Lord Shiva. It demonstrated the limits of the Parashurama level of Consciousness.

Refinement from a comparatively coarse level of the Consciousness to a finer level means the coarse level has to make way for the finer level of the Consciousness. The coarse level of the Consciousness has to finish, so that the next level of the Consciousness can establish its foothold.

For this reason, we read in Ramayana that Parashurama and Shri Ram – both incarnations of Lord Vishnu - start a big conflict. In verse 1-75-27, we read that Parashurama challenges Shri Ram to pick up the bow of Lord Vishnu and engage with him in battle. Shri Ram takes up the challenge, picks up Lord Vishnu’s bow, and mounts an arrow on to it. He had picked up Lord Shiva’s bow earlier, so this event is a duplication, except that the bow does not break. Shri Ram mounts a powerful arrow, aims it at Parashurama, but does not release it. There is a duplication of this event later on, when Shri Ram points yet another powerful arrow at the ocean. Shri Ram does not kill Parashurama, because Parashurama and Shri Ram are not different from each other. They both represent the Consciousness of a person at different, but adjacent levels.

Shri Ram releases arrow in such a way that Parashurama loses all his powers. He retires, and his role as an avatar of Lord Vishnu ends. Logically, this means that from here on, Shri Ram’s role as an avatar of Lord Vishnu begins. If you see both of them as the continuation of levels of Consciousness, the coarse level retires and the refined level replaces it. Note that these events happen right after Sita and Shri Ram marry. It shows that the actual power of Shri Ram’s level of Consciousness reveals itself only after his union with Energy.

## Hard to Understand Character # 2: Ahalya

In chapters 1-48 and 1-49 of Ramayana, we read a fascinating story involving Ahalya, her husband, sage Gautama, and Indra – the king of heaven. The essence of the story is that Indra falls for Ahalya. Tempted because no less than the king of gods has fallen for her, Ahalya cheats on her husband. The story is extraordinary, but we wonder why this story is included in Ramayana?

As we can expect, this story is a puzzle for us, and sage Valmiki gives secret clues in the trivial details of the story. **When Indra approaches Ahalya, he disguises himself as her husband. Ahalya knows that he is Indra and not her husband, although they both look the same.** Thus, Ahalya cheats on her husband, with someone who looks just like him. What is it that Ahalya could benefit from this cheating – replacing her husband by his replica – given that she risked losing everything?

If you detect that something is illogical here, it is time to turn the puzzle card over and see the real meaning behind it. **Ahalya’s husband, Gautama, is a sage and represents devotion to god. Indra represents the “indriyas,” which means “sense organs.”** “Ahalya” translates into “one without ugliness.” If we use the word “hal” in her name to mean “plough,” we can interpret Ahalya as “barren land.”

**Let us inspect the choice Ahalya makes – she chooses Indra, who shows up in the disguise of her husband, over her husband.** **She chooses sensual gratifications, which appears in the form of devotion, instead of pure devotion to god.**

Ahalya, for lack of a better word, represents a weak or unsure faith, which appears to be present, but on close scrutiny, it is not there. It is a type of faith, where we engage in devotional activities, rituals, or customs, without understanding them. The weak or unsure faith claims belief and devotion to god and engages in devotional activities. Faith and devotion are present in some dormant form, but they do not have a foundation of an experience. Please read the Weak or Unsure Faith chapter from Yoga Ramayana book to read more about it.

**The weak or unsure faith leads a person to seek for some profit from devotional activities. Since solid foundation of faith is not there, the person’s mind accepts whatever pleasure or profit it can earn from these activities**. This point is difficult to understand. So, let us look at few examples as how a person with a weak faith uses spiritual activities to gain benefit from them.

If a person wishes to impress someone, then his prayers go on a little longer! Whenever a person donate money, they make certain that the coins made a sound of being dropped in the drop-box. They have the intention to donate money, but they are also interested in making sure that others notice it.

**For the people around such a person, there is no way to distinguish between the activities and the actual intentions behind them.** **A person may appear to be doing prayers, but if the hidden intention behind those prayers is to impress someone, the person is treading the wrong path. A person may engage in what seems to be devotional activities or path leading to god, yet, the reality may just be the opposite. An outsider cannot differentiate between these two choices.**

We interpreted the name Ahalya as “barren land,” which means any seeds we plant in this land will not grow. No actions done with weak or unsure faith will give good results.

**When a person chooses sensual gratifications, while faking a devotional activity, only he knows that he is faking a devotional activity, with no doubt.** Sage Valmiki gives us a criterion or a way to test ourselves regarding the faith. According to him, only the person involved in these actions knows the actual intention behind them.

**Note that person with weak or unsure faith is honest. He tries to do the right thing, but fails in it. He knows he could not do the right action.** **Thus, he gets the feeling of remorse.** He does not fail consistently in keeping his Ahamkara in control; he succeeds sometimes and fails at a few times. If this person searches for remorse after doing such actions, he or she will inevitably notice it.

Sage Valmiki portrays displays these traits in the character of Ahalya. She is a devoted wife of a sage. But she had a few weak moments. Thus, we read in verses 1-48-29 and 30 that sage Gautama curses the Ahalya/weak or unsure faith to be invisible and feel remorseful. We noticed earlier how challenging it is to recognize a weak or unsure faith, as it blends perfectly with faith.

We do not see Ahalya plead for a boon to lift her curse, as noticed in all other curse stories. Her husband reveals her a way out of the curse, without her pleading for it, which proves her inherent good character. Ahalya, the weak or unsure faith, needs to wait for an undefined amount of time, and during that time, she is to remain invisible and be remorseful. When Shri Ram begins his journey, the first thing he does is to lift Ahalya’s curse. Shri Ram, at the time of lifting her curse, was very young. In addition, he did not make any efforts to lift the curse. Just by His coming in contact with Ahalya lifted her curse automatically, with no effort or intention on His part.

**When a person has an experience of the higher Consciousness, even though it is extremely faint, the experience acts like a miracle. With it, the weak or unsure faith makes way for the true faith.** Thus, we read that Ahalya – as a weak or unsure faith, unites with her sage husband Gautama – who represents faith.

## Hard to Understand Character # 3: Sage Mandakarni

In the Chakra section, we will see that the event of marriage of Sita and Shri Ram as the opening of the Aagya Chakra and the breaking of the Shiva Knot. In terms of our body, this event occurs in the head region.

After killing Viradha, Shri Ram visits a chain of hermitages of various sages. One sage to another, they all lead him deeper into the forest in the southward direction. Now that Shri Ram moves southwards, we need to identify this movement in terms of the actual physical location in the body. **In terms of the body, the north side stands for the crown of the head. The south stands for the direction of the legs.** From the Aagya Chakra, which is right behind the forehead, if we travel downwards, we come to the vicinity of the ears. **If sage Valmiki is leading readers down from the Aagya Chakra, he cannot avoid references to the ears.**

In verse 3-11-7, we read that Shri Ram hears singing and playing musical instruments. **The melodious sounds are coming from the direction of a tranquil lake, but he cannot see anyone. It turns out that there is a sage inside the lake. The sage’s name is Mandkarni, in which “mand” means “a very soft musical tone” and “karn” means “ears.”** The sage’s name refers to a very soft, musical sound, audible to the ears in tranquility, but the source of which is not visible to the eyes. **Thus, we come to one of the fascinating discoveries of Yoga – the Anahata Nad / sound. Anahata means “the sound that comes without striking two objects.”**

Please Google “Anahata Nad Yoga” and you will get thousands of search results. This sound is not just for highly advanced yogis who have attained higher states. It is a low-hanging fruit; people can hear it with a little effort. People all over the world have reported hearing it. Anyone with a reasonable practice of Pranayama and sitting in complete silence can easily hear this sound. Initially, the Anahata Nad sounds like the chirping of crickets, and then it changes into the buzzing of bees. Next, it turns into a continuous ringing sound. There are ten different levels of the Anahata Nad/sound, and the higher ones are musical. The Anahata sound is documented in many classical Yoga texts.

In terms of Yoga, the reason behind this sound relates to Prana, which is a form of Energy. We hear this sound when the Prana is passing behind our ears to go toward the crown of our head. This sound does not come from hitting two objects against each other, or from outside of our body. We read that Shri Ram hears the sound but does not see anyone. **When we win the fight against Viradha-like tendencies, the Energy consumed previously by those desires is released, and it travels upwards and if we listen carefully, we can hear this sound.**

## Hard to Understand Character #4: Jatayu and Sampaati

To identify which Body-Mind process Jatayu and Sampaati represent, we need to go a few chapters ahead, read their story, and get to know these eagles. While searching for Sita, the monkeys meet Sampaati, an eagle with no wings. In verse 4-61-3, a crippled Sampaati tells them his story and his adventure with his brother, Jatayu. Just like Sugriva and Vali, these two brothers also represent processes in our Body-Mind.

According to Sampaati, he and Jatayu were strong, but arrogant eagles, who wanted to follow the sun, as it goes around the earth. Sampaati, the older eagle, flew above Jatayu to shield Jatayu from the sun's rays. They went all the way up in the sky, where they could see four mountains in the four directions of the world.

Sampaati got sunburnt, but Jatayu was relatively okay, as he was in Sampaati's shadow. According to verse 4-61-10, suddenly an abnormal fear gripped them, and they became rigid; only their eyes were conscious. Verse 4-61-13 tells us that Sampaati’s brain was not functioning, so he focused on using his eyes and tracked the sun. Jatayu, however, fell. Therefore, Sampaati followed him. Since his feathers were burning, he could not control himself. Both fell down on the earth at separate places; Jatayu, though, having good wings, fell near Janasthana. Sampaati, with burnt wings, fell on Mt. Vindhya. Jatayu did not know where Sampaati fell, or if he was alive. Sampaati came to know that his brother was alive somewhere in Dandaka forest. Wingless, Sampaati stayed near the hermitage of sage Nishakara and somehow survived. Sage Nishakara tasked Sampaati with helping the monkeys to find Sita, so he could get his wings back.

**It is interesting to see that before receiving his wings back, Sampaati wanted to take revenge on Ravana for killing Jatayu. However, the moment Sampaati got his wings back, he just took off and did not help Shri Ram.**

We can see that the eagles going toward the sun is a duplication of Hanumana jumping toward the sun as a child. Like Hanumana, they paid a heavy price for their misadventure of going near the sun.

In terms of the Body-Mind, what process do these eagles represent? Let us look at Jatayu's dialog with Ravana to see what kind of personality Jatayu has.

* **In verse 3-50-6, Jatayu questions Ravana - how a king could lay his hands on another person’s wife?**
* In verses 3-50-7 through 3-50-11, he gives Ravana a long sermon telling him why he should not abduct Sita.
* In verse 3-50-12, 13 he calls Ravana evil and a transgressor.
* In verse 3-50-13, 14, he justifies Shri Ram's killing of Khara.
* In verse 3-50-16, 17, he tries to scare Ravana by informing him about Shri Ram's power. In verse 3-50-18, Jatayu makes an argument to avoid conflict.
* In verse 3-50-19, he tells Ravana that his actions would not benefit him in any way; instead, they will only put him in harm’s way.
* In verse 3-50-21, he pleads that he is weak and unarmed, but Ravana is young and armed, so their fight is not a fair fight.
* Even while dying, in verses 3-51-31 and 32, he tries to teach moral values to Ravana, but Ravana does not answer him at all.

**After reading these points, we can stretch our imagination and see Jatayu represents the conscience process of the mind, which deals with the questions of right or wrong, integrity, principles, ethics, and morality.** His arguments are strictly based on the conscience, and he dies at the hands of the Ravana, who represents Ahamkara.

If we see Jatayu as the conscience, the question, which arises, is: what Body-Mind-Energy -Consciousness process does Sampaati represent? The difficulty here is whatever applies to Jatayu does not apply to Sampaati. Jatayu fought against Ravana and died, but Sampaati just flew away.

**Arrogance (Sanskrit word “Darp” as mentioned in verse 4-61-3) and an acute sense of conscience, represented by Sampaati and Jatayu, soared high.** However, Sampaati, got hurt and burned its wings, and had to live in a pitiable condition. We can compare the agony of an eagle with burnt wings only with the agony of a humiliated, arrogant person. It might seem far-fetched to consider Sampaati as arrogance. **However, it may explain why Sampaati just took off and did not play any role in the war. Arrogance has no role to play in the fight of the higher Consciousness / Shri Ram against the Ahamkara / Ravana.**