# Shri Ram Defeats Ravana: Story and Its Meaning In Terms of Yoga

Until now, we saw Valmiki Ramayana from different angles. **Now, we will focus on the story and its meaning in terms of Yoga.** We will go line by line of Yuddha-Kanda, starting from chapter 6-40, where events of the war are described.

## Sugriva’s Brash Reaction

In verse 6-40-1, Shri Ram, Sugriva, and others ascend Mount Suvela to get a magnificent view of Lanka. Before war, any general of an army would like to survey the battlefield from the highest viewpoint. Verse 6-40-2 tells us that Lanka is a beautiful city, with excellent layout and beautiful groves. Shri Ram looks at the town as if he is a tourist and there is no information about Lanka that could be useful for the upcoming battle.

From the top of Mt. Suvela, Shri Ram, Sugriva, and others see Ravana standing outside of his palace, probably looking at Shri Ram’s army. Verses 6-40-3 to 6-40-6 give a description of Ravana. What we get is a description of him we are already familiar with. Ravana is wearing a red cloak, and he had smeared red sandalwood paste all over his body. He is adorned with golden ornaments. He proudly displays scars on his body, which are marks of enormous battles he has won. **We know that Ravana stands for Ahamkara, and his red color comes from the color of the Muladhara Chakra. Besides red, the Muladhara Chakra also has a golden color in it. So, we see that Ravana is wearing golden ornaments.**

According to verse 6-40-8, when Sugriva sees Ravana from the top of Mt. Suvela, he becomes angry and, in an impulsive reaction, jumps toward Ravana. Verse 6-40-9 tells us that Sugriva completely underestimates Ravana and considers him a mere straw.

**From verses 6-40-10 to 6-40-27, we get the description of a fierce battle between Sugriva and Ravana.** There is no mention of either of them winning. Thus, they were both equal in power. **In verse 6-40-28, we read that Ravana uses his magical powers to fight against Sugriva. Sugriva recognizes his limitation against Ravana’s powerful magic and backs off**. Verse 6-40-29 tells us that Sugriva jumps back from Ravana’s palace and returns to Mt. Suvela, where Shri Ram is.

As expected, Shri Ram does not approve of this misadventure. He tells Sugriva that it was a wrong and reckless action, not fit for a king. Sugriva’s impulsive attack and the act of backing-off make little sense to anyone and confuses Ravana too.

**In terms of military strategy to win the war, Shri Ram, and others who stayed with him, missed an excellent opportunity for a quick victory.** Ravana was a high-value target for Shri Ram’s army, and they spotted him with no guards accompanying him. Therefore, killing Ravana was the correct military strategy. It would have saved them from bloodsheds and would have ensured a quick victory for them.

**In fact, Sugriva’s impulsive decision to attack Ravana in this situation is very logical**. Ideally, Shri Ram and others should have followed his lead. If we think in terms of military strategy, where winning the war with minimum losses to your side is the aim, then Shri Ram is wrong.

The only justification for Shri Ram to be correct in this situation is if Shri Ram and his army were not ready to start the war for some strategic reason. In that case, Sugriva would provoke a war when his side was not ready. However, this is not the case for Shri Ram’s army because, immediately after scolding Sugriva in verse 6-41-26, Shri Ram marches His army toward the city of Lanka. Nothing happens in between these two events, so there is no reason for Sugriva or anyone to hold back from attacking Ravana. **Therefore, Sugriva was correct in attacking Ravana at this instance, while Shri Ram is wrong in not following Sugriva’s lead and incorrect in scolding him.**

**Whenever we see Shri Ram is not following our normally understood conventions or logic, we are looking at a puzzle.** Like all other puzzles we see in Ramayana, this one puzzle too resolves itself, if we consider this event to be happening within ourselves. When we consider Shri Ram as the Consciousness, then the whole thing reveals itself as an obvious fact.

What does it mean when we say that a soft heart (Sugriva) attacked the Ahamkara (Ravana), and the Consciousness (Shri Ram) stood by?

This event represents yet another warning sign by sage Valmiki. He warns us not to fight the Ahamkara with a soft heart (with the emotions) because it is not possible to defeat the Ahamkara emotionally. Although the heart, filled with lots of emotions, seems to be a worthy competitor for the Ahamkara, the Ahamkara has something more that the heart cannot beat. The Ahamkara has a vast array of tricks, and the emotions of the heart have no solutions to those tricks.

**The central message of this story is the pursuit of spirituality should not be a knee-jerk action, with no thought in it. It should not be an emotional response. In that case, the Ahamkara to win the war easily.**

If we understand this warning sign, we can understand the reasons behind Shri Ram’s inactions – he is not ready for the last war with the Ahamkara. The existence of an emotional response itself means that the stage is not yet set for the last war with the Ahamkara. Therefore, the Shri Ram waits for the right moment.

In verse 6-41-25, we read that Shri Ram knows the right time to act against Ravana is, and knows that this time is not the right one. Therefore, instead of killing Ravana swiftly in a commando style of action, Shri Ram advances the entire army toward Lanka.

To certify that Shri Ram knew the best time to act. We get many omens. Those signs have nothing to do with the actual story. Signs like a harsh wind blowing in verse 6-41-13, and many others until verse 6-41-20, are in the same category – a cover for Shri Ram’s inaction, because he has to wait for the right moment.

## Shri Ram’s Strange Message to Ravana

In chapter 6-41, we read that Shri Ram calls Angada to deliver his ultimate message to Ravana. In verses 6-41-61 to 6-41-73, Shri Ram sends a long and stern message to Ravana and gives him a last chance. Even in this ultimatum, sage Valmiki does not forget to tell us that Shri Ram stands for the higher Consciousness and is not a typical army general. In verse 6-41-66, we read a message that no general of an army gave to his adversary in the entire human history. **The message Shri Ram sends to Ravana is: When Shri Ram kills Ravana, Ravana will attain the heaven.** We would have liked to imagine that Shri Ram told Ravana that Ravana would go to hell for eternity, but we do not see any hate in Shri Ram’s words.

Why does Shri Ram say Ravana will go to the heaven? Going to the heaven is a reward, not a punishment. When we consider this verse in relation to our Body-Mind-Energy-Consciousness processes, we can interpret it. In this odd-looking verse, sage Valmiki makes three hidden points.

* When the Consciousness terminates the Ahamkara, it absorbs or dissolves the Ahamkara into itself. Thus, the Ahamkara /Ravana will dissolve into the Consciousness/Shri Ram. At this point in the story, sage Valmiki cannot say that Shri Ram will absorb Ravana. Note that in some versions of Ramayana, when Shri Ram kills Ravana, Ravana’s soul merges into Shri Ram.
* As sage Valmiki has shown earlier, Shri Ram is resembling Lord Vishnu/the Universal Consciousness. Now, we can think of Shri Ram as the Universal Consciousness. Many verses indirectly show Shri Ram looks and behaves like Lord Vishnu. Although Shri Ram realizing that he is Lord Vishnu happens in verse 6-117-13, he appears and sound like Lord Vishnu earlier than that. We also need to keep in mind the thumb rule that says that everything, which applies to the body, is also applicable universally. Thus, when we see Shri Ram as the higher Consciousness, we can also see him as a Universal Consciousness as they are the same.
* We can see that Shri Ram or the higher Consciousness is equidistant from both love and hate. Thus, those who love Shri Ram will go toward him, but even those who hate him, will also go toward him. It is a bewildering statement from sage Valmiki as it beats all our logical assertions. We understand love, but we cannot see that intense hate also brings the same results. We know love connects people, but so does the hatred. Either way, there is a string of connection binding the two ends. The nature of the higher Consciousness is such that it pulls you toward itself. It does not matter whether you love it or hate it. We see that just as Sugriva connects to Shri Ram by love, Ravana connects to Shri Ram because of his hatred for him. Hence, they are both eligible for a pull toward Shri Ram. For that reason, we do not see any hate in Shri Ram’s message to Ravana.

In verse 6-41-77, Angada delivers Shri Ram’s message to Ravana verbatim. Nevertheless, Angada omits verse 6-41-66 or anything that mentions that Ravana will go to the heaven. Thus, even those, who fight for Shri Ram, do not know him.

## Indrajit – A Mighty and an Invisible Warrior

When Ravana does not pay heed to Shri Ram’s ultimatum, Shri Ram orders Sugriva to launch an attack on Lanka. Shri Ram’s strategy is to attack all four gates of Lanka at the same time.

In verse 6-43-27, Shri Ram confronts four demons – Agniketu, Rashmiketu, Suptoghna, and Yadnyakopa, but he does not kill any of them. Verses 6-44-20 and 21 tell us that six named demons attack Shri Ram. Shri Ram merely wounds them, allowing them to live to fight another day.

In verse 6-44-30, Angada strikes Indrajit, but instead of fighting with Angada, Indrajit vanishes magically from the battlefield**.** However, Angada’s victory over Indrajit is short-lived as Indrajit uses his supernatural powers. **He becomes invisible and takes the battle directly to Shri Ram.**

Verse 6-45-8 mentions that Indrajit severely wounds both Shri Ram and Laxmana, so much so that according to verse 6-45-16, they cannot look even up. In verse 6-45-22, Shri Ram falls down to the ground. In verse 6-45-25, Laxmana loses hope for his life and falls down too. Luckily, Hanumana, with the help of the other monkeys, surrounds Shri Ram and Laxmana from the invisible Indrajit and rescues them.

**Verse 6-46-2 tells us that Indrajit finishes his work and retires the way Indra would retire after finishing his work.** There are many that verses relate Indrajit to Indra. The name Indrajit means “one who defeated Indra.”

In verse 6-46-10, only Vibhishana, who stands for the Sattva Guna, can see the invisible Indrajit, but that does not help much either. Indrajit continues to inflict significant damage on Shri Ram’s side and brings down almost half of the leadership with his sharp arrows. However, he makes the mistake of believing that Shri Ram and Laxmana are dead, and therefore, he stops his shower of arrows. From verses 6-46-29 to 6-46-44, we read about Sugriva (soft heart) crying, and Vibhishana trying to console him.

Indrajit comes back on the battlefield and corrects his earlier mistake. This time, Indrajit binds Shri Ram and Laxmana with his network of magical arrows. Both of them are conscious, but unable to move.

In his cruel way, Ravana sends Sita in his Pushpaka airplane to see the dead Shri Ram and Laxmana. She falls for this ugly trick. Coincidentally, she is accompanied by a female demon Trijata, who points out that Shri Ram and Laxmana are alive. **In verse 6-48-25, Trijata tells mother Sita that Pushpaka airplane could not come near Shri Ram, if Shri Ram was dead. It means if Shri Ram was dead, Pushpaka could not fly.**

Now, we know the logic behind these strange correlation – if there is no Consciousness, meaning, Consciousness has left the body, and the person is dead, and thus, there is no Pushpaka either.

When Sita /the Energy comes close to Shri Ram/the Consciousness, Shri Ram gets his strength back. Thus, Ravana’s trick backfires on him as it only helps Shri Ram recover his strength.

**When Ahamkara releases its control over the Energy and allows it to go near the Consciousness, Ahamkara indirectly helps the Consciousness and re-energizes it.**

When Shri Ram gets his strength back, he sees Laxmana in the network of magical arrows and assumes him to be dead. In verse 6-49-17, Shri Ram plans to give up his life and follow Laxmana to the region of death. In verse 6-49-24, He orders Sugriva to go back to Kishkindha. Luckily, in verse 6-50-37, the divine eagle Garuda comes to the rescue of Shri Ram and Laxmana. He tells Shri Ram about the actual nature of Indrajit’s arrows. In verse 6-50-49, Garuda reveals that the arrows are poisonous snakes. We can interpret poisonous snakes to mean wrong desires of our mind, which bind and sting an advanced yogi.

So far, we know that Indrajit, son of Ravana, is a mighty and fierce warrior. He can become invisible, and he has already defeated Indra, the king of gods. Therefore, Indrajit represents “the invisible power of the Ahamkara, which can bind the Consciousness and the devoted mind, with the help of untamed desires.” **This statement is a warning sign given by sage Valmiki telling us that, at this crucial juncture, a network of untamed desires can overpower the higher Consciousness.** Something similar happened when Gautama Buddha was about to achieve enlightenment. Mar, a representation of the Ahamkara, tried to entice Gautama Buddha by various desires, albeit with no luck.

In Verse 6-50-37, merely by the arrival of Garuda near Shri Ram and Laxmana, the snakes give up their magical form of arrows and go away. In verse 6-50-43, Shri Ram tells that, in the presence of Garuda, he feels like he is with his father and paternal grandfather, who are in the heaven.

In our Body-Mind-Energy-Consciousness processes, Garuda does not represent any process within us. It is some external intervention to rescue the Consciousness from the network of untamed desires. In verse 6-50-46, to respond to Shri Ram in a truthful but indirect manner, Garuda tells Shri Ram that he is a dear friend, as dear as his breath. At this point of time in the war, Shri Ram does not know that He is Lord Vishnu. Garuda cannot disclose this secret to Him, nor tell him about his relation to Shri Ram. Hence, in verse 6-50-57, he says, “You will know me after you win the battle.” It is interesting to see that sage Valmiki writes with great conviction that Shri Ram will surely win the war and come to know his actual nature. He omits legalese like: You will know me, if you win the battle, and you are in a condition to know me.”

**The critical point to note here is that it difficult for Shri Ram to cut through Indrajit’s network of poisonous snakes**. It means that even the higher Consciousness finds it difficult to rise above the untamed desires created by the invisible Ahamkara. Sage Valmiki, however, gives us the solution. In verse 6-50-53, he tells Shri Ram the pure-mindedness is Shri Ram’s strength, but the demons are deceitful by nature, so he must be vigilant. This statement works only when we consider it in a spiritual context. In a regular warfare, pure-mindedness against a deceitful enemy is a recipe for defeat and death.

In verse 6-50-60, after healing Shri Ram and Laxman, Garuda flies away to the heaven. When the monkeys see that Shri Ram and Laxmana have recovered, they start fighting the demons again.