## War Continues, but Shri Ram Does Not Kill

In verse 6-52-37, Hanumana kills demon Dhrumraksha, whose name means “Smokey-eyed,” and opens his account of killing named demons. In verse 6-54-35, Angada kills Vajradamshtra, whose name means “Iron rust or bite,” and with this, Angada, the youngest monkey on the battlefield, also opens his account.

In chapter 6-57, Ravana sends Akampana, who is like a dark cloud, to fight Shri Ram’s army. Earlier, Akampana had escaped the battle of Janasthana and had given Ravana the idea of abducting Sita. With this history, Shri Ram needs to fight and kill Akampana, but he does not do so. Instead, in verse 6-56-30, Hanumana kills Akampana, taking his count of killing named demons to two.

In verse 6-58-2, Shri Ram enquires about Prahasta, but does not pick up any weapon against him. After a long and fierce battle, in verse 6-58-54, Nila kills Prahasta and opens his account of killing named demons.

In chapter 6-59, Ravana ups the ante and enters the war himself, along with almost every other major demon warrior. Sugriva attacks Ravana right away, but falls down quickly. In verse 6-59-32, Shri Ram enters battle, but he does not fight against Ravana. On the contrary, in verse 6-59-47, Laxmana asks Shri Ram’s permission to fight Ravana, which Shri Ram is quick to give. Hanumana, too fights Ravana, and he loses the fight. However, according to verse 6-59-70, Ravana does not kill Hanumana and allows him to take a rest.

In verse 6-59-90, Ravana defeats Neel. Neel falls on the ground, but gets back up to fight again. After defeating Sugriva, Hanumana, and Nila, Ravana battles Laxmana, and, in verse 6-59-109, he brings down Laxmana too.

**Until this point in the war, the reader feels like he is reading the description of a fierce but typical battle. After this point, there is a sudden turn of events that depict spiritual processes, which is why we see many actions are hard to explain.**

Ravana has in his arsenal a powerful spear gifted to him by Lord Brahma. H shoots that spear into Laxmana’s heart. He does not stop there; he rushes to the severely wounded Laxmana. Ravana takes him by the hand and tries to pick him up. In verse 6-59-111, sage Valmiki mentions that even though Ravana had lifted gigantic mountains earlier, he could not lift Laxmana. In verse 6-59-112, almost on the verge of death, Laxmana remembers that he is a fraction of Lord Vishnu.

Meanwhile, Hanumana gets his strength back and in verse 6-59-114, he strikes Ravana and stops him from killing Laxmana. In verse 6-59-119, Laxmana becomes light in weight, to allow Hanumana to pick him up and take him to Shri Ram. The moment Hanumana brings Laxmana near Shri Ram, the spear comes out of Laxmana’s heart and returns to Ravana. In verse 6-59-122, Laxman is cured of the wound and becomes fit to fight again.

Sage Valmiki does not give any details about the spear, except that Lord Brahma had given it to Ravana. Hence, we have to assume that the Ahamkara has some inbuilt capacity to make the devoted mind dysfunctional for a short period. According to sage Valmiki, we can use two remedies in this type of situation.

* First, take the help of the Prana by doing Pranayama. Doing Pranayama will bring the dysfunctional devoted mind in contact with the higher Consciousness, revitalizing the devoted mind. Note that Ravana tried to lift the injured Laxmana, so he could kill him, but he could not do so. Sage Valmiki sets up this event to emphasize that even though the Ahamkara can make the devoted mind dysfunctional, it cannot possibly kill it.
* Second, the suggestion to a distressed devoted mind is to remember that it is a part of a higher Consciousness, and it will survive. Laxmana knew that Ravana was trying to kill him and thought he could die soon. Just then, Laxmana recollected that he was a fraction of Lord Vishnu. Following the law of duplication, Laxmana once again remembers that he is a fraction of Lord Vishnu in verse 6-59-122.

Both the devoted mind and Ahamkara are part of Consciousness. The difference is that Ahamkara does not feel that way. Ravana is the direct grandson of Lord Brahma. So, he is also a part of the same family. But he separates himself and wants to rule over others.

In verse 6-59-123, upon seeing that his army has been devastated by Ravana, Shri Ram enters the war to confront Ravana. Hanumana sees that Ravana is in a chariot, whereas Shri Ram is on foot. Thus, Ravana has a clear strategic military advantage over Shri Ram. To compensate for Ravana’s strategic advantage, Hanumana requests Shri Ram, in verse 6-59-125, to mount on his back.

Mounting on Lord Hanumana’s back, Shri Ram enters the battle against Ravana. Interestingly, the first arrows Ravana shoots are not aimed at Shri Ram, but at Hanumana. Shri Ram destroys Ravana’s chariot, and finally, in verse 6-59-138, he shoots an arrow into Ravana’s chest that brings him down. However, in verse 6-59-143, Shri Ram allows Ravana to walk away, because Ravana was tired, and as per the rules of war, Shri Ram could not kill him in that condition.

This kind of moralistic warfare, even from Ravana’s side, is unique to Ramayana, and it is not reported anywhere in the world. We can easily contrast it with Mahabharata, where six to seven warriors killed a young boy and the war did not spare even fetuses.

These characters represent a Body-Mind-Energy-Consciousness processes within us. If one of them dies, it affects the person unfavorably. Killing Hanumana, who stands for the Prana in the body, means that the Prana leaves the body, and thus, the person dies. Killing Sugriva, who stands for a soft heart, means that the heart stops beating, the outcome of which is the same as that of killing of Hanumana.

Of all these warriors, Ravana, the Ahamkara within us die, but the stage is not set for Ravana to die yet. The higher Consciousness has killed the Ahamkara in all previous incarnation stories or levels of the Consciousness, and yet, it has managed to survive. To defeat the Ahamkara for the good requires eradicating all associated desires and tendencies. Thus, we see that sage Valmiki writes several chapters on the war before Ravana’s death.

So far, Laxmana has killed two named demons, and he almost died two times. It shows that he took more risk as compared to any another warrior on the battlefield. Hanumana also has killed two demons, and he got defeated once. **However, Shri Ram has killed none of the named demon yet, but it is about to change.**

## Kumbhakarna – the Tamas Guna of Nature

Sage Valmiki dedicates a staggering eight chapters to Kumbhakarna, a brother of Ravana, to underscore his importance. He depicts Kumbhakarna as the most feared warrior on the demons’ side. In these chapters, we not only learn about Kumbhakarna but also get to understand the nature of the Tamas Guna through his character.

After suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of Shri Ram, in verse 6-60-13, Ravana plans to wake up Kumbhakarna. **Sage Valmiki exaggerates the depiction of the Tamas Guna for storytelling. Kumbhakarna perfectly represents all the flaws of the Tamas Guna in him. Thus, he is the best character in Ramayana.**

In verse 6-60-16, sage Valmiki mentions that Kumbhakarna is sleeping happily, with no cares. His intelligence becomes dull because of lust and sleep; he sleeps for seven, eight, or even nine months at a stretch. Verse 6-60-19 tells us that Kumbhakarna is foremost amongst the demons and that he is a great warrior. However, he is fond of simple pleasures in life and loves to sleep!

After receiving Ravana’s order to wake Kumbhakarna up, a large group of demons go to Kumbhakarna’s cave. From the verse 6-60-22 to verse 6-60-65, they try to wake him up. It highlights Kumbhakarna’s deep sleep and adds a touch of comedy. Kumbhakarna also eats food and drinks wine in enormously large quantities. Verse 6-60-92 specifies that he drank 2000 pitchers of wine after waking up, but he felt a little high.

When Shri Ram questions Vibhishana about Kumbhakarna, Vibhishana tells him that Kumbhakarna had won Indra in battle. It is easy to understand as laziness can overpower all the sense organs or Indra.

Just as sage Valmiki compares Indrajit with Indra, he compares Kumbhakarna with Yama, the god of death, and mentions that Kumbhakarna had defeated Yama. More than anything else, this comparison underscores the threat the Tamas Guna poses to the progress of a spiritual aspirant.

Verses 6-61-10 through 6-61-29 tell us how Lord Brahma cursed Kumbhakarna that he would sleep for six months and wake up for only for a day. Wherever we get boons and curses with no energy transfer, we know that we are looking at some aspect of reality hidden nicely behind the story.

Kumbhakarna is a grandson of Lord Brahma. Right since his birth, he was starving; so, he started eating every living being. In contrast to the other demons, whose strength comes from various boons from gods, Kumbhakarna’s power comes from his very nature. Indra tried to stop Kumbhakarna, but he was badly hurt and had to run to Lord Brahma for protection. Lord Brahma cursed Kumbhakarna to fall asleep, as if he was dead, but Ravana questioned Lord Brahma’s judgment. At Ravana’s request, Lord Brahma altered his curse a little, allowing Kumbhakarna to sleep for six months and wake up for one day, just to eat. Thus, inside the curse story, we get to understand the nature of the Tamas Guna, which is very much a part of us too.

As mentioned in verse 6-60-16, overindulgence dims the intelligence of a person, making the person lazy. If you search the internet, you will come across several sites that describe a Tamasic person as evil or like the villain of a movie, with the characteristics of being ignorant, insensitive, immoral, dishonest, exploitative, deceptive, unkind, and a host of other such traits. This kind of characterization is not accurate.

**The Tamas Guna is just a resistive force of nature. Anything else is a play of Ahamkara. That is the reason we do not see sage Valmiki portraying Kumbhakarna as a villain, even though he fights on the side of the demons.**

Maybe sage Valmiki was aware of our tendency to characterize the Tamas Guna as an evil force of nature. Hence, he wrote a few chapters that give us a very different picture of Kumbhakarna. For example, in verses 6-63-2 to 6-63-18, Kumbhakarna scolds Ravana for not following the duties of a king and tells Ravana that he is listening to bad advisors. Here, we get a picture of a person who has very high regard for books and scriptures, and who dislikes brutality and greed for wealth. Even at the cost of getting Ravana mad at him, Kumbhakarna does not hesitate to give excellent advice to Ravana. From verse 6-63-33 to verse 6-63-58, he gently and firmly tells Ravana that he will do Ravana’s bidding.

In chapter 6-64, demon Mahodara – meaning “big-belly” – who is a close advisor to Ravana, rebukes Kumbhakarna and shows off his talent. According to Mahodara, Ravana has deliberated all aspects and consequences before choosing his course of actions. From verses 6-64-4 to 6-64-10, Mahodara evokes the concepts of karma, virtue, etc. but ends up justifying Ravana’s actions. These four verses are valuable to us, because they show how words from scriptures end up being an instrument of justification of wrong actions.

In verse 6-64-6, Mahodara says that righteousness (Dharma), wealth (Artha) and fulfillment of legitimate desires (Kama) always go together. He takes out the fourth word from this list, which is salvation or liberation (Moksha). Thus, he uses these words completely out of context. Instead of saying “righteousness brings wealth, fulfillment of legitimate desires, and liberation,” Mahodara interprets it in the wrong way. He broadens the scope of legitimate desires to include illegitimate desires and equates their fulfillment with righteousness. In three verses, 6-64-7, 8, and 9 – Mahodara justifies Ravana’s abduction of Sita. These verses are difficult to translate and very difficult to interpret because of their twisted logic. **In these verses, sage Valmiki shows and gives us yet another warning that the people may quote scriptures out of context to justify wrong actions.**

Mahodara’s use of scriptures as a means to justify his ends reminds us of the warning given in the Isavasya Upanishad. It says that a person who merely collects knowledge from the scriptures but does not use it correctly, goes to even more darkness than an individual who does not read scriptures at all. Based on the logic Mahodara makes use of, we conclude that he has a twisted mind. Almost to prove that this is true, in the next few verses Mahodara hatches a wicked plan to trick Sita into Ravana’s submission by creating a fake drama of victory over Shri Ram and Laxmana.

Coming back to the story of Kumbhakarna, in verse 6-65-23, Ravana orders Kumbhakarna to go to war along with the army of Lanka against Shri Ram. The discussion of Kumbhakarna going to the battle alone, with none of Ravana’s army, keeps on popping up in these chapters. Its reason will be clear later.

Verses 6-65-40 and 41 tell us the exact size of Kumbhakarna. He is 600 bows tall and 100 bows wide. The bows used in ancient times were very tall. If we consider a bow’s height to be five feet, we get Kumbhakarna’s height to be 3000 feet, which is three times that of Eifel tower. As for his width, he is 500 feet wide.

In chapters 6-66 and 6-67, Kumbhakarna decimates and devours the monkey army, even as Angada tries to raise the monkeys’ spirits. In verse 6-67-18, Hanumana tries to stop Kumbhakarna and gets badly hurt in a single hit from him. In verses 6-67-24 through 6-67-30, sage Valmiki tells us that five monkey leaders attack Kumbhakarna at the same time. However, Kumbhakarna defeats all of them easily.

Because of his agility, little Angada gives a good fight to Kumbhakarna. However, in verse 6-67-50, Kumbhakarna catches Angada in his fist and throws him down; Angada falls unconscious. Sugriva tries to stop Kumbhakarna, but fails. Instead, in verse 6-67-62, Kumbhakarna tries to kill Sugriva by his spike. Fortunately, in verse 6-67-63, Hanumana steps in and stops the spike from killing Sugriva.

At this point, all the monkey leaders are collectively trying to stop Kumbhakarna. They are not following the one-to-one-fight rule, and yet they cannot contain Kumbhakarna. In verse 6-67-67, Kumbhakarna strikes Sugriva with a mountain, making Sugriva unconscious. So far, Sugriva has fallen unconscious three times with no confirmed killing of any named demon to his credit. Instead of killing Sugriva on the spot, Kumbhakarna plans to takes him to Lanka first and then kill him there.

In verse 6-67-72, Kumbhakarna thinks if he kills Sugriva, it will defeat Shri Ram. This logic works only if we consider Sugriva to be the heart. When the heart stops, the Consciousness has to leave the body.

Fortunately, in verses 6-67-84 to 6-67-89, Sugriva regains his consciousness. He escapes from Lanka and unites with Shri Ram. Sugriva cuts off Kumbhakarna’s nose, ears, and thus, Kumbhakarna looks even more frightening than before.

Let us step back a little and see Hanumana’s reaction at the time, when Kumbhakarna was carrying Sugriva away to Lanka to kill him. Hanumana could have tried to stop Kumbhakarna from carrying unconscious Sugriva away, but he chooses not to do so. From the verse 6-67-74 to verse 6-67-80, Hanumana decides the right course of action for him, while the enemy carries his king away. First, he thinks of killing Kumbhakarna to help Sugriva. However, he thinks it would be shameful for Sugriva to need help. Therefore, in verse 6-67-81, he waits and cheers up the monkey army in the meantime. It does not appear to be logical. Just a few verses ago, Hanumana had stopped the spike hurled by Kumbhakarna toward Sugriva. At that time, Sugriva definitely needed help, which Hanumana offered as a duty. Just a few verses before, all the monkey leaders fought together against Kumbhakarna. None of them felt any shame in it. So, why would Sugriva feel ashamed if he got help when he was unconscious and was being carried away to be killed by an enemy? **Surely, sage Valmiki has a secret message in the actions of Hanumana. Interestingly, as per the law of duplication, same illogical actions happen again. This time, Laxmana makes a blunder.**

In verse 6-67-94, the mighty Kumbhakarna is back in the battlefield. He is angry, drenched in blood and without his nose and ears. Laxmana tries to stop him and gives him a good fight. In verses 6-67-106 through 6-67-111, Kumbhakarna praises Laxmana’s bravery, but mildly and respectfully refuses to fight. He tells Laxman that he is interested in killing only Shri Ram, because when he kills Shri Ram, the rest of the army dies with him. **Strangely, in verse 6-67-114, Laxmana happily directs Kumbhakarna to Shri Ram.** Kumbhakarna brushes Laxmana away and rushes toward Shri Ram, intending to kill him. Ideally, Laxmana should have told Kumbhakarna that he could fight Shri Ram only when Laxmana was dead. It makes little sense to direct an enemy to your king, as it increases the chances of the enemy killing the king.

**Hanumana and Laxmana not engaging Kumbhakarna and putting Sugriva and Shri Ram in harm’s way is a puzzle of Ramayana.** **What Sage Valmiki is suggesting here is that Prana and a devoted mind, though strong, are no match for the Tamas Guna. Only the power of the higher Consciousness can nullify the Tamas Guna.** That is the reason we see Shri Ram killing a named demon for the first time in battle and opening his account.

This solution prescribed by sage Valmiki is rather difficult to understand. Let us try to read it from our daily experience, because that is the only useful reference for us. When we are in a phase of eating and spending too much time sleeping, we are full of Tamas Guna. These types of phases happen to all spiritual aspirants where, suddenly, a strange lethargy and laziness take them over. We cannot devote our mind, because our mind refuses to focus. We cannot spare the efforts to do Pranayama. Even if we try, it does not work. The central premise of Ramayana is the use of the devoted mind or Prana to find the Energy and the Consciousness. But now, these practices do not work against the power of the Tamas Guna. How do we proceed, if the tools we have used so far become blunt against a powerful force?

The suggestion sage Valmiki seems to give is that we did our job. It is now for the higher Consciousness to fight its battle. **Sage Valmiki’s prescription at this point in the battle is: step aside. Do not even engage in either of these practices. Be aware and leave it up to the higher Consciousness to fight the Tamas Guna.** For this reason, we see that Hanumana does not engage in battle with Kumbhakarna. By the same token, we see that Laxmana happily points Kumbhakarna to Shri Ram in war.

From verse 6-67-115 onwards, Kumbhakarna battles Shri Ram. Kumbhakarna rushes towards Shri Ram to kill him. Shri Ram shoots arrows into Kumbhakarna’s chest and makes him weaponless. Wounded Kumbhakarna then runs around the battlefield, eating soldiers from the enemy, and his army. Now, we understand the reason Kumbhakarna wanted to go to the battle alone. Kumbhakarna knew that he may be wounded in the battlefield and he may lose his sense to distinguish between friend and foe. He did not want any demon soldiers on the battlefield, so he could kill the enemy without having to worry about friendly fire for the demon army.

We see that not only does Kumbhakarna give a lecture to Ravana on morality, he also kills demons on the battlefield. Even though the Tamas Guna fights for the Ahamkara, Tamas Guna can be a problem for the Ahamkara’s side too. Sage Valmiki is reinforcing the idea that the Tamas Guna is a pure force of nature. When nature unleashes the Tamas Guna, it does not discriminate between a friend and a foe. Just as a sword cuts anyone it falls upon, with no regard for a friend or a foe, the Tamas Guna too takes no sides. Hence, Ravana does not wake up Kumbhakarna on the first shot of the battle. Rather, he waits until Shri Ram defeats him.

In verse 6-67-131, Laxmana suggests using Kumbhakarna’s weight against Kumbhakarna and making him crawl on the battleground. Laxmana suggests that the monkeys jump on Kumbhakarna, make him fall on the ground and kill him when he cannot move. In verse 6-67-132, the monkeys jump on Kumbhakarna, but they cannot bring him down. Hence, Shri Ram steps into the battle against Kumbhakarna.

In verse 6-67-158, Shri Ram chops off one of Kumbhakarna’s arm, and then, in verse 6-67-162, he cuts the other arm of Kumbhakarna. The verse 6-67-162 has a very unusual description regarding the broken arm of Kumbhakarna. It says the arm, even though it is cut off from the body, keeps moving hither, thither and yon. It hits the monkeys, the demons, and the trees.

In verse 6-67-163, Shri Ram cuts both legs of Kumbhakarna and brings him down on the ground as suggested by Laxman in verse 6-67-131. Sage Valmiki reemphasizes that Kumbhakarna falls flat on the ground, with no legs or arms. Mighty Kumbhakarna, with no legs or hands or nose or ears, crawls toward Shri Ram with his mouth as his weapon. In verse 6-67-166, Shri Ram shoots several arrows into the crawling Kumbhakarna’s mouth and closes it for good.

In verse 6-67-170, Shri Ram cuts off Kumbhakarna’s head, finally killing the mighty Kumbhakarna. Even as he dies, Kumbhakarna creates a puzzle for us. Verses 6-67-172 and 173 mentions that Kumbhakarna’s head fell in one of Lanka’s street and that his body fell into the sea, killing many alligators and fishes.

Kumbhakarna’s head falling in the street of Lanka gives us an estimate of the respective locations of Kumbhakarna and Shri Ram in the battlefield, regarding Lanka and the sea. Shri Ram is facing Lanka and has the sea behind him. Legless Kumbhakarna is crawling toward Shri Ram, with his face toward the sea. When Shri Ram cuts off Kumbhakarna’s head with a powerful arrow, we can imagine the force of the arrow that carries his head towards Lanka. **However, how could a heavy, dead, handless, legless body of Kumbhakarna cross Shri Ram and fall in the sea?**

Just a few verses ago, Laxmana tried to kill Kumbhakarna using Kumbhakarna’s weight against him. In addition, sage Valmiki has repeatedly compared Kumbhakarna with a mountain. It means that his body would stay at the same place where it was. Now, we see that there is a clear, logical discrepancy in Kumbhakarna’s legless, dead body reaching the sea and fall in it. We can answer this puzzle in the spiritual realm by considering Kumbhakarna as the Tamas Guna.

There is a story in Valmiki Ramayana, which tells us that Shri Ram’s ancestors had built that sea. Thus, there is a direct connection between the sea and Shri Ram. **Submerging Kumbhakarna’s body in the sea is an indirect way of telling that Kumbhakarna disappears into Shri Ram. Shri Ram / the higher Consciousness, upon defeating the Tamas Guna for good, absorbs it into himself/itself.**

Now we understand the compulsion of sage Valmiki to find some or the other way to drop Kumbhakarna’s dead body into the sea. He shows that Kumbhakarna’s body kept crawling, even after his head was cut off, and thus, his headless body landed in the sea. Remember the verse 6-67-162 where Kumbhakarna’s hand kept on moving even after being removed from the body and kept killing others? Sage Valmiki added this creepy effect to make it easy for us to imagine Kumbhakarna’s headless, legless dead body crawling toward the sea and provide a duplication.