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CHAPTER – III

SUMMARY OF VALMIKI RAMAYANA – 7 KANDAS

रामेति रामभद्रेति रामचंद्रेति वा स्मरन् ।
नरो न लिप्यते पापै भुक्तिं मुक्तिं च विन्दति ॥१२॥

(The one who) remembers Rama, Rambhadra and Ramachandra (The poet has used these names for the same Lord Rama)| Sins never get attached, he gets good life and salvation ॥12

Summary of Valmiki Ramayana- 7 Kandas

Traditionally, the Ramayana is attributed to Valmiki, regarded as India's first poet. The names of the characters (Rama, Sita, Dasharatha, Janaka, Vasishta, Vishwaamitra) are all known in late Vedic literature, older than the Valmiki Ramayana.

The 7 Kandas or Books

The Epic is traditionally divided into several major kandas or books, that deal chronologically with the major events in the life of Rama—Bala Kaanda, Ayodhya Kaanda, Aranya Kaanda, Kishkindhaa Kaanda, Sundara Kaanda, Yuddha Kaanda, and Uttara Kaanda.

The division into 7 kandas is as follows:

3.1 .BALA KAANDA :

Bala Kaanda (book of childhood) -- It relates the divine birth of Shri Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Satrughana, born to King Dasharatha of Ayodhya , destined to fight demons. Sita's swayamvara and subsequent wedding to Rama. and in the end his encounter with Parashuraama.

The birth of the four sons of Dasharatha

Dasharatha was the king of Ayodhya. He had three queens and they are Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. He was childless for a long time and, anxious to produce an heir, he performs a fire sacrifice known as Putra-Kameshti Yagya. As a consequence, Rama is first born to Kausalya, Bharata is born to Kaikeyi, and Lakshmana and Shatrughna are born to Sumitra. These sons are endowed, to various degrees, with the essence of the God Vishnu; Vishnu had opted to be born into mortality in order to combat the demon Ravana, who was oppressing the Gods, and who could only be destroyed by a mortal. The boys are reared as the princes of the realm, receiving instructions from the scriptures and in warfare. When Rama is 16 years old, the sage Vishwamitra comes to the court of Dasharatha in search of help against demons, who were disturbing sacrificial rites. He chooses Rama, who is followed by Lakshmana, his constant companion throughout the story. Rama and Lakshmana receive instructions and supernatural weapons from Vishwamitra, and proceed to destroy the demons. Janaka was the king of Mithila. One day, a female child was found in the field by the king in the deep furrow dug by his plough. Overwhelmed with joy, the king regarded the child as a "miraculous gift of God". The child was named Sita, the Sanskrit word for furrow. Sita grew up to be a girl of unparalleled beauty and charm. When Sita was of marriageable age, the king decided to have a swayamvara which included a contest. The king was in possession of an immensely heavy bow, presented to him by the God Shiva saying-- whoever could wield the bow could marry Sita. The sage Vishwamitra attends the swayamvara with Rama and Lakshmana. Only Rama wields the bow and breaks it. Marriages are arranged between the sons of Dasharatha and daughters of Janaka. Rama gets married to Sita, Lakshmana to Urmila, Bharata to Mandavi and Shatrughan to Shrutakirti. The weddings are celebrated with great festivity at Mithila and the marriage party returns to Ayodhya.

3.2 .AYODHYA KANDA

Ayodhya Kaanda (book of Ayodhya) narrates the preparation for the coronation of Shri Rama, the intrigue that leads to his forest exile, -- the regency of Bharata, Bharata's search for Shri Rama, the meeting of the brothers and Bharata's return to Ayodhya with Shri Rama's sandals.

After Rama and Sita have been married for twelve years, an elderly Dasharatha expresses his desire to crown Rama, to which the Kosala assembly and his subjects express their support. On the eve of the great event, Kaikeyi—her jealousy aroused by Manthara, a wicked maid-servant—claims two boons that Dasharatha had long ago granted her. Kaikeyi demands Rama to be exiled into wilderness for fourteen years, while the succession passes to her son Bharata. The heartbroken king, constrained by his rigid devotion to his given word, accedes to Kaikeyi's demands. Rama accepts his father's reluctant decree with **absolute submission and calm self-control which characterizes him throughout the story**. He is joined by Sita and Lakshmana. When he asks Sita not to follow him, she says, "the forest where you dwell is Ayodhya for me and Ayodhya without you is a veritable hell for me." After Rama's departure, king Dasharatha, unable to bear the grief, passes away. Meanwhile, Bharata who was on a visit to his maternal uncle, learns about the events in Ayodhya. Bharata refuses to profit from his mother's wicked scheming and visits Rama in the forest. He requests Rama to return and rule. But **Rama, determined to carry out his father's orders to the letter, refuses to return before the period of exile**. However, Bharata carries Rama's sandals, and keeps them on the throne, while he rules as Rama's regent.

3.3 ARANYA KANDA

Aranya Kaanda (book of the forest) -- The forest life of Rama with Sita and Lakshmana, his constant companion. Shri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, met Shurpanakhaa, killings of Khara and Dushana by Shri Rama, kidnapping of Sita by Ravana, Jatayu (slain by Ravana) dying on the lap of Shri Rama and meeting with Kabandhu and Shabari.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana journeyed southward along the banks of river Godavari, where they built cottages and lived off the land. At the Panchavati forest they are visited by a rakshasa woman, Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana. She attempts to seduce the brothers and, failing in this, attempts to kill Sita. Lakshmana stops her by cutting off her nose and ears. Hearing of this, her demon brother, Khara, organizes an attack against the princes. Rama annihilates Khara and his demons.

When news of these events reaches Ravana, he resolves to destroy Rama by capturing Sita with the aid of the rakshasa Maricha. Maricha, assuming the form of a golden deer, captivates

Sita's attention. Entranced by the beauty of the deer, Sita pleads with Rama to capture it. Lord Rama, aware that this is the play of the demons, is unable to dissuade Sita from her desire and chases the deer into the forest, leaving Sita under Lakshmana's guard. After some time Sita hears Rama calling out to her; afraid for his life she insists that Lakshmana rush to his aid. Lakshmana tries to assure her that Rama is invincible, and that it is best if he continues to follow Rama's orders to protect her. On the verge of hysterics Sita insists that it is not she but Rama who needs Lakshmana's help. He obeys her wish but stipulates that she is not to leave the cottage or entertain any strangers. He draws a chalk outline, the Lakshmana rekha around the cottage and casts a spell on it that prevents anyone from entering the boundary but allows people to exit. Finally with the coast clear, **Ravana appears in the guise of an ascetic requesting Sita's hospitality. Unaware of the devious plan of her guest, Sita is tricked into leaving the rekha and then forcibly carried away by the evil Ravana.**

Jatayu, a vulture, tries to rescue Sita, but is mortally wounded. At Lanka, Sita is kept under the heavy guard of rakshasis. Ravana demands Sita marry him, but Sita, eternally devoted to Rama, refuses. Rama and Lakshmana learn about Sita's abduction from Jatayu, and immediately set out to save her. During their search, they meet the demon Kabandha and the ascetic Shabari, who direct them towards Sugreeva and Hanuman.

3. 4. KISHKINDHAA KANDA

Kishkindhaa Kaanda (book of the monkey kingdom) -- Rama meets Hanuman and helps destroy the monkey people's king, Bali, making Bali's younger brother, Sugreeva, king of Kishkindhaa instead. **Shri Rama meets Hanuman and Sugreeva and forms strategic alliance with them and crowned Sugreeva as the King of Kishkinda after killing Vali.** This book describes the start of the search for Sita and the vanaras (monkeys) going to the southern direction met Sampati (brother of Jatayu).

The Kishkindhaa Kanda is set in the monkey citadel Kishkindhaa. Rama and Lakshmana meet Hanuman, the greatest of monkey heroes and an adherent of Sugreeva, the banished pretender to the throne of Kishkindhaa. Rama befriends Sugreeva and helps him by killing his elder brother Vali thus regaining the kingdom of Kishkindha, in exchange for helping Rama to recover Sita. **However Sugreeva soon forgets his promise and spends his time in**

debauchery. The clever monkey Queen, Tara, aunt of Sugreeva, calmly intervenes to prevent an enraged Lakshmana from destroying the monkey citadel. She then eloquently convinces Sugreeva to honor his pledge. Sugreeva then sends search parties to the four corners of the earth, only to return without success from north, east and west. The southern search party under the leadership of Angad and Hanuman learns from a vulture named Sampati that Sita was taken to Lanka.

3. 5 .SUNDARA KANDA

Sundara Kaanda (book of beauty) --- Detailed accounts of Hanuman's adventures, including his meeting with Sita. This book's name derives from the fond name given to Hanuman by his mother. This book describes beautifully the adventures and lilaa (pastimes) of Hanuman who managed to cross the ocean to find Sita and give her the message from Shri Rama along with Shri Rama's ring. This book also describes Hanuman's meeting with Ravana face to face and the burning of Lanka.

The Sundara Kanda forms the heart of Valmiki's Ramayana and consists of a detailed, vivid account of Hanuman's adventures. After learning about Sita, Hanuman assumes a gargantuan form and makes a colossal leap across the ocean to Lanka. Here, Hanuman explores the demon's city and spies on Ravana. He locates Sita in Ashoka grove, who is wooed and threatened by Ravana and his rakshasis to marry Ravana. He reassures her, giving Rama's signet ring as a sign of good faith. He offers to carry Sita back to Rama; however she refuses, reluctant to allow herself to be touched by a male other than her husband. She says that Rama himself must come and avenge the insult of her abduction.

Hanuman then wreaks havoc in Lanka by destroying trees and buildings, and killing Ravana's warriors. He allows himself to be captured and produced before Ravana. He gives a bold lecture to Ravana to release Sita. He is condemned and his tail is set on fire, but he escapes his bonds and, leaping from roof to roof, sets fire to Ravana's citadel and makes the giant leap back from the island. The joyous search party returns to Kishkindhaa with the news.

3.6 .YUDDHA KANDA

Yuddha Kaanda (book of war) also has known as Lanka Kanda-- The battle in Lanka between the monkey and the demon armies of Rama and Ravana, respectively. After Ravana is defeated, Sita undergoes the test of fire, completes exile with Rama, and they return to Ayodhya to reign over the Ideal State. Yuddha Kanda, describes the surrender of Vibheeshana, the bridge construction and the long awaited battle between Shri Rama's army and that of Ravana plus the victorious return of Shri Rama to Ayodhya.

This book describes the battle between the army of Rama constructed with the help of Sugreeva and Ravana. Having received Hanuman's report on Sita, Rama and Lakshmana proceed with their allies towards the shore of the southern sea. There they are joined by Ravana's renegade brother Vibhishana. The monkeys named "Nal" and "Neel" construct a floating bridge (known as **Rama Setu**) across the ocean, and the princes and their army cross over to Lanka. **A lengthy battle ensues and Rama kills Ravana. Rama then installs Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka.**

On meeting Sita, Rama asks her to undergo agni parikshaa (test of fire) to prove her purity, since she had stayed at the demon's palace. When Sita plunges into the sacrificial fire, Agni the lord of fire raises Sita, unharmed, to the throne, attesting to her purity. The episode of agni pariksha varies in the versions of Ramayana by Valmiki and Tulsidas. The above version is from Valmiki Ramayana. In Tulsidas's Ramacharitamanas Sita was under the protection of Agni so it was necessary to bring her out before reuniting with Rama. At the expiration of his term of exile, Rama returns to Ayodhya with Sita and Lakshmana, where the coronation is performed. **This is the beginning of Ram Rajya, which implies an ideal state with good morals.**

3.7. UTTARA KANDA

Uttara Kaanda (last book) -- Rumors of impurity lead to Sita's banishment, during which she gives birth to and raises Lava and Kusha in Valmiki's ashram (hermitage). Rama and Sita reconcile. The twin boys later ascend the throne of Ayodhya, but Sita, broken at her banishment merges into the earth, and remorseful Rama departs to his celestial abode, departs

from the world. The seventh book, (Uttara Kanda), which stands apart from the main epic, is a controversial one. (Rosen, 2002 cited in Muniapan, 2007).

The Uttara Kanda is regarded to be a later addition to the original story by Valmiki and concerns the final years of Rama, Sita, and Rama's brothers. After being crowned king, many years passed pleasantly with Sita. However, despite the Agni Pariksha (fire ordeal) of Sita, rumours about her purity are spreading among the populace of Ayodhya. Rama yields to public opinion and banishes Sita to the forest, where sage Valmiki provides shelter in his ashrama (hermitage). Here she gives birth to twin boys, Lava and Kusha, who became pupils of Valmiki and are brought up in ignorance of their identity.

Valmiki composes the Ramayana and teaches Lava and Kusha to sing it. Later, Rama holds a ceremony during Ashwamedha yagna, which the sage Valmiki, with Lava and Kusha, attends. Lava and Kusha sing the Ramayana in the presence of Rama and his vast audience. When Lava and Kusha recite about Sita's exile, Rama becomes grievous, and Valmiki produces Sita. Sita calls upon the Earth, her mother, to receive her and as the ground opens, she vanishes into it. Rama then learns that Lava and Kusha are his children. Later a messenger from the Gods appears and informs Rama that the mission of his incarnation was over. Rama returns to his celestial abode.

CHARACTERS

Rama is one of the protagonists of the tale. Portrayed as the seventh avatar of the God Vishnu, he is the eldest and favorite son of the King of Ayodhya, Dasharatha, and his Queen Kausalya. **He is portrayed as the epitome of virtue.** Dasharatha is forced by Kaikeyi, one of his wives, to command Rama to relinquish his right to the throne for fourteen years and go into exile.

Sita is one of the protagonists and the beloved wife of Rama and the daughter of king Janaka. Rama went to Janakpurdham, current city of Janakpur, Nepal, and got a chance to marry her by lifting a heavy Bow in a competition organized by King Janaka. The competition was to find the most suitable husband for Sita and many princes from different states competed to win her. Sita is the avatar of Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. Sita is portrayed as the

epitome of female purity and virtue. She follows her husband into exile and is abducted by Ravana. She is imprisoned on the island of Lanka until Rama rescues her by defeating the demon king Ravana. Later, she gives birth to Lava and Kusha, the heirs of Rama.

Hanuman is the tritagonist and a vanara belonging to the kingdom of Kishkindhaa. He is portrayed as the eleventh avatar of God Shiva (He is also called Rudra) and an ideal bhakta of Rama. He is born as the son of Kesari, a vanara king, and the Goddess Anjana. He plays an important part in locating Sita and in the ensuing battle. He is believed to live until our modern world.

Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama, who chose to go into exile with him. He is the son of King Dasharatha and Queen Sumitra, and twin of Shatrughna. Lakshmana is portrayed as an avatar of the Shesha, the naga associated with the God Vishnu. He spends his time protecting Sita and Rama during which he fought the demoness Surpanakha. He is forced to leave Sita, who was deceived by the demon Maricha into believing that Rama was in trouble. Sita is abducted by Ravana upon him leaving her. He was married to Sita's younger sister Urmila.

Ravana, a rakshasa, is the king of Lanka. After performing severe penance for ten thousand years he received a boon from the creator-God Brahma: he could henceforth not be killed by Gods, demons, or spirits. He is portrayed as a powerful demon king who disturbs the penances of Rishis. Vishnu incarnates as the human Rama to defeat him, thus circumventing the boon given by Brahma.

Jatayu, the son of Aruṣa and nephew of Garuda. A demi-god who has the form of an eagle that tries to rescue Sita from Ravana. Jatayu fought valiantly with Ravana, but as Jatayu was very old, Ravana soon got the better of him. As Rama and Lakshmana chanced upon the stricken and dying Jatayu in their search for Sita, he informs them the direction in which Ravana had gone.

Dasharatha is the king of Ayodhya and the father of Rama. He has three queens, Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra, and three other sons: Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Kaikeyi, Dasharatha's favourite queen, forces him to make his son Bharata crown prince and send Rama into exile. Dasharatha dies heartbroken after Rama goes into exile.

Bharata is the son of Dasharatha and Queen Kaikeyi. When he learns that his mother Kaikeyi had forced Rama into exile and caused Dasharatha to die brokenhearted, he storms out of the palace and goes in search of Rama in the forest. When Rama refuses to return from his exile to assume the throne, Bharata obtains Rama's sandals, and places them on the throne as a gesture that Rama is the true king. Bharata then rules Ayodhya as the regent of Rama for the next fourteen years. He was married to Mandavi.

Shatrughna is the son of Dasharatha and his third wife Queen Sumitra. He is the youngest brother of Rama and also the twin brother of Lakshmana. He was married to Shrutakirti.

Sugreeva, a vanara king who helped Rama regain Sita from Ravana. He had an agreement with Rama through which Vaali - Sugreeva's brother and king of Kishkindhaa-would be killed by Rama in exchange for Sugreeva's help in finding Sita. Sugreeva ultimately ascends the throne of Kishkindhaa after the slaying of Vaali, and fulfils his promise by putting the Vanara forces at Rama's disposal.

Indrajit, a son of Ravana who twice defeated Lakshmana in battle, before succumbing to him the third time. An adept of the magical arts, he coupled his supreme fighting skills with various stratagems to inflict heavy losses on the Vanara army before his death.

Kumbhakarna, a brother of Ravana, famous for his eating and sleeping. He would sleep for months at a time and would be extremely ravenous upon waking up, consuming anything set before him. His monstrous size and loyalty made him an important part of Ravana's army.

Vibhishana, a younger brother of Ravana. He was against the kidnapping of Sita, and joined the forces of Rama when Ravana refused to return her. His intricate knowledge of Lanka was vital in the war, and he was crowned king after the fall of Ravana.

श्रीराम राम रघुनन्दन राम राम ।
श्रीराम राम भरताग्रज राम राम ।
श्रीराम राम रणकर्कश राम राम ।
श्रीराम राम शरणं भव राम राम ॥२८॥
श्रीरामचन्द्रचरणौ मनसा स्मरामि ।
श्रीरामचन्द्रचरणौ वचसा गृणामि ।
श्रीरामचन्द्रचरणौ शिरसा नमामि ।
श्रीरामचन्द्रचरणौ शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥२९॥

Rama who is the delight of the Raghus | Rama who is elder brother of Bharata | Rama who is tormentor of his enemies | I come under refuge of God Rama. ॥28॥

I remember the feet of Shri Ramachandra in my mind | I praise the feet of Shri Ramachandra by my speech | I salute the feet of Shri Ramachandra by bowing down my head | I take refuge on the feet of Shri Ramachandra by bowing myself down ॥29॥