

Insights into actions and address to Seetha Devi -Series on Episodes about Hanuman- F

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Success of a person in any endeavour always attracts favourable attention of one and all. Many react with usual saying of “hard work paid dividends” with simultaneous expression of their appreciation to the achiever. It is essential, from the perspective of personal improvement, one should, at least, try to trace faithfully the journey which an achiever had gone through like cycle of high and low of level of intensity, up or down in the level of confidence, resilience developed within one’s self etc. Seldom does anyone comes to know about the gravity of stress undergone by those persons as it borders on individual privacy.

However, we have a chance to look into such a state of affairs from a study of Sundara Kanda of Valmiki’s Ramayana of the much-celebrated Hanuman’s successful adventure of locating, rendering solace and assuring Seetha Devi a timebound release.

It is important to add that some versions of Ramyana contain that Hanuman initially threw down Sri Rama’s ring and started conversing with her afterwards. As against such a simplistic narration, Valmiki Ramayana contains an extensive insight into various aspects such as inner struggles, thought processes. Description about Hanuman’s on-the-spot planning, distractions encountered, an intelligent handling of the stressful situations etc definitely mirror familiar pattern of stressful thinking noticeable in one and all while executing work of any kind.

In the entire episode, Hanuman’s talk with Seetha Devi and an exchange of memento was the crown and a well-known event. It may look curious as to how such an event of talking to a lady in distress could possibly ride over the other difficult task of Hanuman such as crossing over the ocean, valiant defence against the attack by Ravana’s army leaders, courageous communication of message of impending doomsday to Ravana etc. For brevity, action of Hanuman once he set his foot on the soil of Lanka and search operations till he found out Seetha are taken up for detailed discussion in this article.

Hanuman came to know that Seetha was indeed kept in Lanka. Details of exact location or conditions prevalent were not known to him. A shortest brief given to him.

A ray of hope that Seetha was alive at Lanka was itself a strongest motivator for him to undertake crossing of the ocean courageously¹.

Vanaras and the leaders who were left behind were full of hope and certain that he would succeed even in this difficult and dangerous task. A sure recipe to create silent streak of stress in him.

The foremost point mentioned by Valmiki was that even after crossing over the other side of the ocean, Hanuman felt energetic.² Neither the well protected fort preventing possible entry of an intruder nor numerical strength of menace-looking demons guarding the fort diminished his enthusiastic outlook. An important sign of an achiever.

Strategies on next movement and nature of covert action were mentally thought upon by him. He had a dilemma regarding time and form in which to enter into Lanka without attracting anyone’s attention. Though capable of assuming any form, he wisely gave up an idea of assuming form of a demon as that would prevent him from moving around all over the place. Hanuman thought that a huge body with an unimaginable speed in action would surely arouse curiosity and hinder his planned work.³

He, thus, assumed a diminished stature of a monkey and waited for sunset to enter under shade of dark sky. Two things in one shot.

He overcame challenge put up by a demoness and gained entry into the country. The defeated demoness profusely blessed him success. A strong sign of prowess and an irresistible personality.⁴

Hanuman, with his single-minded conduct, did not come under the sway of curiosity or any kind of emotion even on witnessing abundant affluent city which looked like a city of Gods as though it were floating in the sky. He did see so many splendid glittering buildings embedded with pearls, corals, silver, gold and diamond studded pillars, beautiful ladies residing in mansions as well as strolling on the streets, tempting eatables in plenty

¹ चिकीर्षन् कर्मदुष्करम् | समुद्रस्य परं पारं दुष्प्रापं प्राप्तुमिच्छति ||

² अग्निःस्वसन् कपिस्तत्र न ग्लानिमधिगच्छति ||

³ कायवृद्धिं प्रवेगं च मम दृष्टुं राक्षसाः || मयि कौतूहलं कुर्युरिति मेने महाकपिः |

⁴ प्रविश्य शापोपहताम् हरीश्वर | शुभाम् पुरीम् राक्षसराजपालिताम् | यदृच्छया त्वम् जनकात्मजाम् सतीम् | विमार्गं सर्वत्र गतो यथासुखम् ||

etc. He was firm on his mission on finding Seetha Devi amongst all these places. A necessary ingredient not to fritter away time and energy on peripheral things.⁵

It is normal, in execution of any work, initial phase of euphoria of got to do an important task gets dissipated in the wake of no sign of progress. Doubts, despondency do set in. Continuous failure not only puts a brake on achieving further progress but may also lead to depression. In rare cases, it is not unusual that one may try to disassociate himself from that very task and actively spend time and energy in preparing excuses for the purported failure.

Sage Valmiki stated that despite an elaborate search in every nook and corner of the territory by Hanuman, there was no trace of Seetha Devi. Continuous failure had its impact. He felt disheartened, feeling numb and dispirited. Here, through Hanuman, Valmiki echoes one of life learning lessons that self-pitying needs to be discouraged⁶.

Hanuman reminding himself repeatedly that only thought of successfulness in the work undertaken probably would lead one to achievement. Valmiki emphasised that one should not give room to feeling of despair. One should keep on striving to maintain comfortable frame of mind. Self-assurance and confidence are indeed needed to effect progress in any tangled matter. Depression only leads to disruption of efforts⁷.

Hanuman gently overcame dwindling confidence through reliance on the age-old wisdom that human being's action could meet success only if they prevent themselves from falling prey to depression. Gainfully, this mindset spurred him into action.

But, after sometime, all these inner wisdom or self-hypnosis failed to keep him pursue the task in the face of deemed failure. Once again, he went into a mode of self-defeating scenario to bemoan wasted efforts of crossing over the sea. This energy sapping grief got exacerbated partly due to Hanuman's way of thinking with excessive love and respect towards his friends and leaders.

Hanuman became conscious that his failure would be a common point of discussion amongst Vanaras. His name and fame would suffer a setback was another worrying factor. He also bemoaned the fact that though everyone knew about impossibility of success but no one would be ready to accept failure. They may criticise him harshly. An unavoidable one for Hanuman who was known as a go getter or a reliable trouble shooter. In other words, purported failure and people's reaction thereof aggravated his mental anguish⁸.

Another dimension on which Hanuman became very much agonised was his surmise that if Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and other Vanaras were to be told about unpleasant, unfavourable, harsh reality of his failure, such a news would then turn out to be a life-threatening situation to all. He was sure that in that scenario, there would be every possibility that calamity in the form of death would occur to Sri Rama, Lakshmana, his other brothers, their mothers. It would, then, result in the death of Sugriva and entire Vanaras race too.⁹ A dire situation to him that he would commit an error if he let know the reality about his failed attempts but by not letting them know would be an error on his part, could otherwise be construed as a dereliction of duty.¹⁰

These recursive thoughts of gloom put him into many hours of depression. Maharishi Valmiki stated that anyone who volunteered to help others to get them out of danger never want to see them dying. This kind of serious introspection somehow helped him to resume and repeat the search with a strong resolve to continue till he met with success or wither away rather returning empty handed to cause disaster to the human and monkey race. This thought process on the part of Hanuman underlines the known fact that one ought to be conscious about repercussions on reporting and be careful.

After some time, with a strong recovery of inner faith with a disciplined mind and with observant eyes, he noticed Ashoka Vanam and could finally see Seetha Devi in that place.

His finding had indeed burdened him with yet another set of points to consider. He became cautious that every movement of him had now assumed another level of criticality. Firstly, Seetha was in the most inhumane

⁵ ददर्श हनुमान् लङ्कां दिवि देवपुरीं यथा ।।...प्लवमानामिवाकाशे ददर्श हनुमान् पुरीम् ॥ सहेमजाम्बूनदचक्रवाळम् । महाहर्षं मुक्तामणिभूषितान्तम् । परार्थकालागुरुचन्दनाक्तं । स रावणान्तःपुरमाविवेश ॥

⁶ अनिर्वेदः श्रियो मूलम् अनिर्वेदः परम् सुखम् । अनिर्वेदो हि सततम् सर्वं अर्थेषु प्रवर्तकः ॥

⁷ करोति सफलम् जन्तोः कर्म यच्च करोति सः । तस्माद् अनिर्वेदं क्तम् यत्नम् चेष्टे अहम् उत्तमम् ॥

अदृष्टामः च विचेष्टामि देशान् रावणं पालितान् ॥

⁸ वृथा जातो मम श्रमः ॥ निवेद्यमाने दोषः स्याद् दोषः स्याद् अनिवेदने ॥ कथम् नु खलु कर्तव्यम् विषमम् प्रतिभाति मे ॥

⁹ परुषम् दारुणम् क्रूरम् तीक्ष्णम् इन्द्रिय तापनम् ॥ सीता निमित्तम् दुर्वाक्यम् श्रुत्वा स न भविष्यति ।

¹⁰ वेद्यमाने दोषः स्याद् दोषः स्याद् अनिवेदने ॥ कथम् नु खलु कर्तव्यम् विषमम् प्रतिभाति मे ।

pathetic unfriendly situation of relentless harassment by the ogress. Secondly, any misadventure or wrong step would result in vain. Thirdly, Ravana had set a time limit of two months to Seetha to submit to his unjust demands. Hanuman reflected intensively of way forward to be employed by him¹¹.

To his credit, as a successful one amongst thousands of monkeys searching in all directions, he had assessed enemy's strength, town layout, military capability. Seetha could not possibly think that there can be an end to her sorry state of affairs any time soon. She was seen contemplating to commit suicide in which she could not succeed.¹²

Compassionate Hanuman accused himself guilty of failing in his duty had he left without expressing the most needed consolation. Any lapse in this regard may result in a situation where she might not even survive for long.¹³

Hanuman saddled with thoughts as to how could he talk to her as well as how could he create a trust in her to hear him. As regards the timing to talk to her, he decided that there was enough time from midnight till dawn. He can wait for the watchguards to go to sleep. He had a deliberation with himself about what should be initial talking points, the language, the form in which he had to appear before her to broach the subject.

Thus, one could notice such an onerous responsibility and high stakes thrust upon him. He was perplexed about prioritizing his needed response on the spot. There is a repeated saying of Hanuman in these circumstances that messenger should never indulge into any prospective action which is not in tune with ground reality and already gained position. There will be every chance that a messenger thinking himself as clever would cause ruin to his own cause by not adhering to the above said view.¹⁴

With regard to the language of the address, he went on to think that conversation in Sanskrit would pose a challenge as she might mistakenly consider him as Ravana impersonating as a monkey. Thus, he firmly arrived at to talk in his natural language with his miniature stature as a monkey.

Why such a cautious thinking? A frightened person would get easily frightened even at a drop of needle. An unexpected sort of problem¹⁵. Hanuman felt that there could be a possibility that a frightened Seetha could shout and jeopardise the main cause. Thereafter, arms wielding dreadful demons guarding the Ashok Vanam could assemble in no time and start attacking him. They might succeed either in killing or catching him alive which was not conducive to his master's cause and not in the interest of sobbing Seetha devi. The place which was not accessible and invisible to find out by anybody hereafter adds another dimension to Hanuman to guard against any such misadventure either by him or from her too.

Further, in war or hostilities, no one is cocksure of victory till it is achieved. Surrounded by them on all sides, he, as unarmed, might not escape to other side of the ocean at least to convey the whereabouts. Any conflict in which success is uncertain should always be avoided by an intellectual who wants only an assured victory.¹⁶

The worst part of it in all these unwarranted commotions and events, she would neither come to know about an arrival of a messenger from Sri Rama. She could not be told that her rescue would happen soon within the time limit set by Ravana. The other dangerous possibility was that cruel demons may kill her as a retribution.

Thus, the entire thought process of Hanuman was to avert fruits of hard labour put in and to avoid failure through any sort of foolish action or out of syndrome of fatigue. Especially, he did not want to do anything feeling that he was the only one who met with success and immune to do any wrong move. Such a mindset of sagacious thinking needs to be imbibed by team leaders.¹⁷

Hanuman, after serious internal rumination, came to a conclusion that his address should be a short pleasant one and not frightening. He should give news about her beloved husband, the only cherished relation of her. Even in such a message too, he had to put forth an appreciatory intelligible introduction about the prince of Ayodhya in a soft captivating voice to attract her attention who was lost in a single pointed memory of Sri Rama.

Sage Valmiki himself stated that Hanuman had executed the plan in the same manner as decided upon. He remarked that efforts and words spoken by the noble-minded Hanuman was not futile since it was so sweetly

¹¹ ततो बहु विधाम् चिन्ताम् चिन्तयामास वानरः ॥

¹² अदृष्ट दुःखाम् दुःखस्य न हि अन्तम् अधिगच्छतीम् ॥

¹³ गते हि मयि तत्र इयम् राज पुत्री यशस्विनी । परित्राणम् अविन्दन्ती जानकी जीवितम् त्यजेत् ॥

¹⁴ भूताः च अर्था विनश्यन्ति देश काल विरोधिताः ॥ विकलवम् दूतम् आसाद्य तमः सूर्य उदये यथा ॥

¹⁵ अर्थ अनर्थ अन्तरे बुद्धिः निश्चिता अपि न शोभते ॥ घातयन्ति हि कार्याणि दूताः पण्डित मानिनः ॥

¹⁶ रावणम् मन्यमाना माम् सीता भीता भविष्यति ॥ वानरस्य विशेषेण कथं स्यादभिभाषणम् । त्रासिता पूर्वम् भूयः त्रासम् गमिष्यति ।

¹⁷ असत्यानि च युद्धानि संशयो मे न रोचते ॥ कः च निहसंशयम् कार्यम् कुर्यात् प्राज्ञः संशयम् ॥

¹⁷ न विनश्येत् कथम् कार्यम् वैकल्यम् न कथम् भवेत् ॥ लन्घनम् च समुद्रस्य कथम् नु न वृथा भवेत् ॥

worded and pleasant to the hearing of Seetha devi. He had succeeded in finding out a common ground to convince and commence a conversation with her.¹⁸

The proof of pudding is in the eating. Whether so much inner trials endured by Hanuman did impact Seetha Devi positively in her assessment of him? The answer is yes. Seetha Devi felt inwards a pleasurable sensation in the presence of Hanuman and could not resist hearing him again and again.¹⁹

She had confided with Hanuman certain personal happenings only known to her and Sri Rama. Importantly, she requested that Hanuman should think over what would be the best course of action to rescue her and to proceed in that direction quickly. Besides, Maharishi Valmiki in one of places nicely wrote that Seetha had a healthy conversation with Hanuman having convinced herself that Hanuman was tested and trusted by her husband to interact with her.²⁰

Regarding the mental contemplation of Hanuman, Ramayana contains beautiful profound sayings justifying his serious thinking. If a mediator subjected himself to cluttered gloomy mind set when the time and place set against him, he may in all likelihood harm the tasks which could have been completed easily like darkness gets dispelled at dawn. Even a seasoned meticulous messenger may meet with failure in the above given circumstances by laying too much emphasis on gain and loss and deciding arrogantly.²¹

Hanuman's tactics and conduct made Seetha Devi to tell him that she started in believing the age-old adage which states that happiness would do occur to any surviving person even at an end of a fairly long period of a hundred years of life. Perseverance and persistence pay in the end.²²

Through his entire act, Hanuman had stood tall for his courageous actions, right attitude to prioritize the succeeding moves, humble behaviour with Seetha Devi and at the same brave intimidating behaviour with Ravana's army leaders, putting team cause over personal sufferings, empathy to alleviate her sufferings. No wonder Hanuman is still revered as true inspiring leader to many for his leadership qualities which distinguish the great from the run of the mill.

¹⁸ शुभानि धर्म युक्तानि वचनानि समर्पयन् । श्रावयिष्यामि सर्वाणि मधुराम् प्रब्रुवन् गिरम् ॥ श्रद्धास्यति यथा हि इयम् तथा सर्वम् समादधे । इति स बहु विधम् महाअनुभावो । जगति पतेः प्रमदाम् अवेक्षमाणः । मधुरम् अवितथम् जगाद वाक्यम् ।

¹⁹ अथवा नैतदेवं हि यन्मया परिशङ्कितम् ॥ मनसो हि मम प्रीतिरुत्पन्ना तव दर्शनात् । गुणान् रामस्य कथय प्रियस्य मम वानर ॥ चित्तम् हरसि मे सौम्य नदी कूलम् यथा रयः ।

²⁰ यदि असि प्रेषितः तेन रामेण विदित आत्मना ॥ प्रेषयिष्यति दुर्धर्षो रामो न हि अपरीक्षितम् । पराक्रमम् अविज्ञाय मत् सकाशम् विशेषतः ॥

²¹ भूताश्चार्था विपद्यन्ते देशकालविरोधिताः । विक्लबं द्रुतमासाद्य तमः सूर्योदये यथा ॥ अर्थानर्थान्तरे बुद्धिर्निश्चितापि न शोभते । घातयन्ति हि कार्याणि दूताः पण्डितमानिनः ॥

²² कल्याणी बत गथा इयम् लौकिकी प्रतिभाति मे । एहि जीवन्तम् आनदो नरम् तावर्ष शत अपि ॥