

## Signs of greatness of people from the verses of Srimad Valmiki Ramayana – Second part

T S Krishnamachari

Under the above heading, an analysis of exemplary conduct of Bharatha was attempted to highlighting his compassionate self-less nature even in the face of accusation by one and all for the deeds not done by him at all. Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam has a number of good-natured people in the realm of causeless compassion as if they vie with one and another as to who should be treated as the most superior.

Kaikeyi demanded that coronation ceremony ought to be done to Bharatha in place of Sri Rama and exile of Sri Rama's to forest for a period of fourteen years. Sri Rama accepted demands of his parents. However, when he informed Seetha about this, she resolutely told Sri Rama that she was not deterred by the things normally associated with a forest like inaccessibility, bereft of people, inhabited by wild animals etc.

अहम् दुर्गम् गमिष्यामि वनम् पुरुषवर्जितम् | नानामृगगणाकीर्णम् शार्दूलवृकसेवितम् || 2-27-10

In fact, Seetha was not duty bound to go to forest. Even Sage Vasishtha clearly explained, in front of all assembled people of Ayodhya, about Seetha's entitlement namely that she can step into the shoes of her husband in his absence and can take over reins of the government till his return. He had even admonished Kaikeyi for handing over an attire to Seetha to adorn in the forest. However, Seetha had voluntarily chosen to discard comforts of royal living and embrace the travails of forest dwelling. Sage Valmiki records that gladly took up dwelling in the unpopulated dense forest with the knowledge of immanent sufferings. She wanted to honour the commitment of vows made at the time of marriage rituals. Secondly, as a true reflection of deep bond of love and affection exists between her and Sri Rama. Such a thinking on the part of Seetha devi is uncommon occurrence even in ancient times.

सर्वान् भोगान् परित्यज्य भर्तुं स्नेह बलात् कृता |

अचिन्तयित्वा दुःखानि प्रविष्टा निर्जनम् वनम् || 5-16-19

सन्तुष्टा फल मूलेन भर्तुं शुश्रूषणा परा |

या पराम् भजते प्रीतिम् वने अपि भवने यथा || 5-16-20

King Dasaratha, queen Kausalya and Sri Rama recounted perilous living in the forest in detail to dissuade her from her resolve.

The king, on his part, pleaded with an unrelenting Kaikeyi pointing out that Sri Rama was not accustomed to the hardest living. He later lamented that Sri Rama, the prince, would hear shrilling and nerve wrecking sound of beasts instead of smooth calming musical notes at the palace. He had to use rough, hard and uneven surface of the ground as a bed instead of cosy soft bed. So on and so forth.

Mother Kausalya chided her husband that how could he have agreed to the demand of Kaikeyi having fully acquainted with forest dwelling. She was too worried about various beasts roaming around posing danger to their life.

Bharatha, amongst all, simply swooned and fallen on the ground just by hearing from Guha about an account of how his brother had slept overnight under a tree on the ground. He lamented that if such a hardship could fall on Sri Rama, nobody can ignore havoc of the fate. He bemoaned the iron grip of the fate and his misfortune to be unwittingly instrumental for the ordeal of his beloved brothers.

However, Seetha never spoke a word about her living in the forest as a burden or held Kaikeyi responsible to her travails, the greatest temperament and character of steady resolve. Her admiration to the valorous Rama as well her utmost devotion lessened the impact. This was claimed by Sumantra as well as by Hanuman.

What separate her from normal beings was her state of mind and the mode of receptivity to these unexpected events. Her mental stamina of forbearance to the rigours of living in

captivity in the most hostile environment with an unwavering self-belief and unassailable trust on prowess of Lord Sri Rama to rescue her is the symbol of grit and optimism. As the things existed the chances of knowing about her whereabouts is very remote and almost an uncertain event. But Seetha not only conducted herself in a most befitting manner of a truly wedded chaste wife but a queen of unquestionable conduct often acclaimed in most reverential manner by the inhabitants, servants of Ravana.

She reflected upon and felt pain intermittently many times in a day. She always put foremost the grief of mother Kausalya subduing her personal misery. Such a pattern of her thinking was described by Valmiki when Seetha was flown on Pushpaka Vimana to witness an unconscious Sri Rama and Lakshmana lying on the battle field. Initially, she grieved for her mother-in-law for the alleged demise of her dear son.

Earlier too, when Ravana brought head of Sri Rama claiming that he was slain by his generals and a portion of the body was specially preserved to show to her. Her initial reaction was about misery which would befall on frail pious minded Kausalya, when such a devastating news heard by her. True mark of highly renounced soul giving priority to other. Just like Bhartha, she put her sorrow aside and felt keen sympathy for distressed Kausalya and Sri Rama.

This trait was displayed by her once again when Hanuman recounted pathetic living of her husband in the forest not knowing about her whereabouts and safety. Seetha remarked to Hanuman that his message was a one laced with honey and poison. She felt equal pain just like Sri Rama was then undergoing. A great show of empathy.

अमृतम् विष संसृष्टम् त्वया वानर भाषितम् | यच्च न अन्य मना रामो यच्च शोक परायणः ||

Sri Rama too felt keen anguish and pain like Seetha on hearing from Hanuman about her whereabouts and her pitiable conditions of living. He expressed that though Seetha could wait for about two months' time for her release from Lanka he cannot endure living even for a second having heard about her perilous unfortunate living. Such an exhibition of compassion was consistent with his sense of responsibility and duty.

Similarly, in another occasion, Sri Rama had to feel the pain of others. Sugriva vehemently pleaded with Sri Rama to provide solace and freedom from his fearful existence by killing his brother Vali. Sri Rama, too assured him that he would eliminate Vali as a punishment for his unpardonable act of forceful confinement of Sugriva's wife and banishment of Sugriva from his own country. He, later, having ascertained full account of estrangement between the two brothers, fulfilled his vow. However, the death of Vali unnerved Sugriva who became remorse with his conduct. He felt repentant having witnessed bereavement caused to Tara and Angada. He, then, wanted to end his life by requesting Sri Rama to concede. Tara too implored Sri Rama to put an end to her life with the same arrow with which Sri Rama took away Vali's life. Though Sri Rama comforted them with soothing word, he too felt keen anguish and pain just like them.

Thus, in Srimad Valmiki Ramayana, Bharatha, Seetha, Sri Rama had acted in adverse circumstances in a manner defining super human qualities beyond purview of human beings.

Here one may note that Bharatha keenly felt pain of the Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana as his own and silently bore hardship for a long period of fourteen years. No compulsion except abiding with his inner consciousness and to remain free from remorse and guilty.

With regards to Seetha, she was not at all expected to expose herself to living in forest. Besides, she did not prepare for abduction and forceful captivity in Lanka away from cherished company of Sri Rama. A cruel play of fate. But she too bore her pain blaming her bad luck and rigours of destiny. She never blamed Kaikeyi though she was the root cause for Sri Rama's exile. A testimony to her altruistic characteristics. She lamented that definitely, due to her own poor fortune, the time had clouded her vision in the guise of deer.

कीदृशं तु महापापं मया जन्मान्तरे कृतम् |

येनेदं प्राप्यते दुःखं मया घोरं सुदारुणं || 5-15-18

नूनं स कालो मृगरूपधारी | मामल्पभाग्यां लुलुभे तदानीम् |

Sri Rama never lagged behind in bemoaning ill luck attributing to deficiency in him like a sign of punishment to probable commission of sins and unjustifiable act done at a far-off period not known at present.

Such an elaborate illustrations of conduct of Bharatha, Seetha devi and Sri Rama have an underlying thought process that no one is immune from failure even from certainty of a sure successful venture, unexpected betrayal by kith and kin, close friends, life partner and so on.

Even in the cases discussed in this article, Bharatha's resolve to request for Sri Rama's return from exile and to assume kingship, later, turned out to be stout refusal by Rama. He has to live at the outskirts, namely, Nandigram awaiting Rama's return.

Similarly, Seetha's desire of spending time together in the company of Sri Rama even though in a dense forest had unfortunately led her captivity for a period of year or so in more hostile environment. Neither she thought of such an ill-fated event nor dreamt such an unhappy mishap to happen.

Bharatha in spite of his unflinching determination of undergo utmost sufferings has also to endure accusations from the people of common walk of life.

Though easier said than done in both the cases. Endurance has been accomplished due to their love and admiration towards Sri Rama, firm commitment toward what they consider as moral obligation on their part in such unfamiliar circumstance etc in the light of anguish and grief felt by Sri Rama.

*These events also drive home a point that putting efforts is in one's hand but outcome as resultant event depends on so many uncontrollable factors. Accepting the happenings with probable consequences as it is would ensure that the affected person would not go into mood of depression. Besides, most importantly, possibility of holding grudges against others might not arise. Here, one may hasten to add that future may or may not turn out to be more entirely depressing and difficult one contrary to one's expectation. Understanding these events may strength the belief on invincibility of invisible hand of fate. Hopefully, an appreciation of the view could come handy in reducing stress.*

ऐश्वर्ये वा सुविस्तीर्णे व्यसने वा सुदारुणे |

रज्ज्वा इव पुरुषम् बद्ध्वा कृत अन्तः परिकर्षति || 5-38-3

विधिः नूनम् असम्हार्यः प्राणिनाम् प्लवग उत्तम |

*Destiny's hold on all human beings is inescapable. In its wake, destiny bestow extensive fortune or dreadful adversity to the human beings. Destiny makes them to align with it as if they bound by its iron fetters.*

जितात्मनो महाभागा येषां न स्तः प्रियाप्रिये | प्रियान्न संभवेद्दुःखमप्रियादधिकं भयम् ||

Great persons are those who cultivate a mind to remain calm in pleasurable situations as well as avoid feeling fearful from displeasure happenings.

*In short, critical thinking about these people's reaction and conduct would serve one as a tool of psychological counselling.*