

## Evaluation of a communication by recipient -Series on Episodes about Hanuman- E

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In the series on Hanuman, from Sundara Kanda of Srimad Valmiki Ramayana, few analysis of effective communication skills were made out through this columns earlier, namely, out of a message delivered in the most intimidating surroundings in the court of Ravana, from an address employing different points of view to contain fellow members' revolt in the Dandaka Forest of rough terrain, through a spirited speech of consolation and trust to infuse hope of certainty of freedom from the captivity to a grief-stricken Seetha Devi etc.

First impression is the best impression. In introducing about oneself, one needs to put in the best foot forward. Though it is well said, often many persons find themselves lacking in some aspect or other to present in a better manner highlighting their potential strength. Effectiveness of an introduction could be improved only if one knows about the normal parameters of evaluation.

In fact, it is interesting to note that Valmiki Ramayana too points out essentiality of setting out some kind of parameters by a leader to an envoy or messenger and an evaluation criterion of the messenger and the message. Valmiki Ramayana is much more elaborate in depicting Sri Rama's life history than many other versions. His approach in description of the happenings from human point of view make it a fertile ground for a beneficial analysis for learning life skills, even now.

The epic contains a fruitful introduction by Hanuman in his first meeting with Sri Rama in Kishkinda Kanda as well as a successful introductory words with Seetha Devi in Sundara Kanda. Both the meetings assumed critical importance and were watershed moments in the context of entire story of Srimad Valmiki Ramayana.

As regards the meeting with Sri Rama, Hanuman was entrusted with a tall task by his King Sugriva. Maharishi Valmiki mentions King Sugriva as a righteous person and an efficient leader in many places. धर्मात्मा विमृश्य गुरु लाघवम्..

However, he was in a frightened mood on seeing two able bodied men roaming in the neighbourhood with a bow and an arrow, mainly in view of his then status of fearful living in exile without a support of his kingdom. He was terror stricken and harboured a thought that they were sent on a specific errand by his inimical brother king Vali to kill him.

As he was in distress with preconceived notion out of his brother's enmity towards him, Hanuman failed to calm him down through appropriate argument. No doubt, Hanuman, by himself an able leader with high level of intellect and bold in expressing his opinion.

Thus, when his king Sugriva was perplexed, troubled and injected a mood of fearfulness among his faithful companions on seeing Sri Rama and Lakshmana at a distance, Hanuman bravely denounced the perceived conduct of his master and requested him to steer clear wavering mentality. He indicated to him that one can avoid falling into a stressful situation by ensuring not to succumb into agitated thinking. Only with a steadied composure, body language, firm wisdom and intellect and firm command, can a master lead his team. These words stand eternal as a mark of leadership traits.

बुद्धि विज्ञान संपन्न इङ्गितैः सर्वम् आचर | न हि अबुद्धिम् गतो राजा सर्व भूतानि शास्ति हि || ... [4-2-18]

However, clever Sugriva not outdone by the apt advice of Hanuman, then pointed out to him the need for maintaining mandatory caution as a king. He told him that an enemy, who also happens to be a king, could afford to have many friends from diverse background and could use them for his ulterior motive of destruction of his opponents. He can employ unsuspected strangers like these two, who were handsome and divine looking, to kill or destroy his unguarded opponents who mistakenly repose confidence on the strangers out of feeling of complacency. Thus, trusting any strangers without proper indiscrete enquiry was frowned upon. It was important to note that kings always resort to ingenuous way of thinking to trap his opponents and Vali was no exception.

---- राजानो बहु मित्राः च विश्वासो न अत्र हि क्षमः || अरयः च मनुष्येण विज्ञेयाः छद्म चारिणः | विश्वस्तानाम् अविश्वस्ताः छिद्रेषु प्रहरन्ति अपि || [4-2-22]. Anyhow, all the above are worth to note.

As Hanuman was consistent in his opinion that the two strangers did not pose any threat to the king, the reluctant Sugriva ordered him to go and meet them in disguise of a hermit so as to ascertain their antecedents, purpose etc.

Now, coming to the important meeting by Hanuman with them, Sugriva, also, instructed him mainly under three broad categories. Firstly, about Hanuman's conduct, as to how should he conduct, what to speak, watch and control on his intonation, simultaneous observation of facial expression, body language of the addressed. Secondly, to make a brief introduction about Sugriva so as to command their respects and interest in him from them. Thirdly, Hanuman to make a on the spot assessment of usefulness of befriending them or not and was convinced of their credential and usefulness, could he reveal his true identity.

लक्षयस्व तयोः भावम् प्रहृष्ट मनसौ यदि | विश्वासयन् प्रशंसाभिः इङ्गितैः च पुनः पुनः || ...[4-2-25]

मम एव अभिमुखम् स्थित्वा पृच्छ त्वम् हरि पुंगव | प्रयोजनम् प्रवेशस्य वनस्य अस्य धनुर् धरौ || ...[4-2-26]

इङ्गितानाम् प्रकारैः च रूपव्या भाषणेन च || ...[4-2-24]

One may wonder why such an elaborate instruction was needed at all. This was due to the fact that as a shrewd person, Sugriva did not want to forego an opportunity if the new comers were believable and not sent by his enemy, then he could enlist their support to defeat Vali. Further, with proper right intonation, humble conduct, proper messages, he wanted to convey to them that Hanuman and his king were indeed dependable.

In the above backdrop of high stakes resting on his meeting, Hanuman approached them in the disguise of a sage. He spoke very softly. He praised them with appropriate adoring words within the limit of diplomacy and dignified exchange of pleasantries. He glorified them that they look brave and undefeatable and with their sharp glance of lions befitting some kind of royal descent. At the same time, they both captivate the minds of beholder like divine personalities.

सिंह विप्रेक्षितौ वीरौ महाबल पराक्रमौ | शक्र चाप निभे चापे गृहीत्वा शत्रु नाशनौ || [4-3-9]

श्रीमन्तौ रूप संपन्नौ वृषभ श्रेष्ठ विक्रमौ | ...[4-3-10]

He, gently, inquired about their presence in the forest as it seemed that they were in search of someone. He, at the same time, never missed an opportunity to express a doubt about their purpose in such a lonely place duly pointing out contradiction of their outfit vis a vis physical characteristic of a royal descent. He also touched upon their inner feelings by his expression of noticing tinge of grief in their look.

As there was no response from them till then, the clever Hanuman gave up his disguised form. He informed them that he was sent by his Vanara king Sugriva to know about them. He clarified that he had to resort to disguised form as a measure of abundant caution in dealing with strangers in deference to the order of his master. He also told them truthfully about the exiled status of his king who was living in the nearby hill in mortal fear of his inimical brave brother Vali. But at the same time, he too mentioned though appropriate submissions about the genuine, dependable and pious character of Sugriva. He too conveyed the readiness of Sugriva to assist them in any manner.

सुग्रीवो नाम धर्मात्मा कश्चित् वानर पुंगवः | वीरो विनिकृतो भ्रात्रा जगत् भ्रमति दुःखितः || [4-3-20]

With his submissions, he did not leave any scope to Sri Rama to misconstrue any weakness on the part of Sugriva that he was only interested to reclaim his kingdom from Vali.

So far so good, as Hanuman had befittingly conducted himself as desired and as commanded by Sugriva.

Now, coming to the response from Sri Rama, Maharishi Valmiki, once again, indirectly emphasised the effectiveness of address of Hanuman through impressions of Sri Rama as shared by him with Lakshmana.

Sri Rama, who was visibly happy with the melodious tone of Hanuman suggesting a sort of friendliness, commended it to Lakshmana that only persons who mastered the subject of "phonetics" could accomplish such a feat.

वाक्यज्ञम् मधुरैः वाक्यैः स्नेह युक्तम् ...|

Hanuman's description about their admirable personality which suggested either a royal descent or from the world of divine and his subtle remark of tinge of sorrow obtrusively noticeable at the same time in them was well received by Sri Rama. He remarked to his brother that only those who have mastered the Vedic texts as well as endowed with a gift of gab could only articulate and speak flawlessly in the manner Hanuman had spoken to.

...न अन् ऋग्वेद विनीतस्य न अयजुर्वेद धारिणः | न अ साम वेद विदुषः शक्यम् एवम् विभाषितुम् || [4-3-28]

Just for our kind information, it is heard that for anyone to be called as an expert of Vedas and Vedic literature, he ought to read, memorise most of the texts running into many thousands of lines and assimilate the essence for a minimum period of about 14 years or so. This regime of rigorous learning moulds one undoubtedly a master of expert in articulation and speech besides on any worldly matters.

Further, Sri Rama had remarked to Lakshmana that this person by his conduct created an ambience of affable personal chemistry which was irresistible. Neither could they see any contraction in his forehead or eyes nor any harsh sound came from him while he delivered his speech.

न मुखे नेत्रयोः च अपि ललाटे च भ्रुवोः तथा | अन्येषु अपि च सर्वेषु दोषः संविदितः क्वचित् || [4-3-30]

To cap it all, Hanuman's speech was unhindered, measured and free flowing and in a medium tone, refined and pleasant to listen, so remarked Sri Rama.

अविस्तरम् असंदिग्धम् अविलम्बितम् अव्यथम् | उरःस्थम् कण्ठगम् वाक्यम् वर्तते मध्यमे स्वरम् || संस्कार क्रम संपन्नम् अद्भुताम् अविलम्बिताम् | उच्चारयति कल्याणीम् वाचम् हृदय हर्षिणीम् || ...[4-3-31 and 32]

Hanuman's excuse having appeared in disguise form as well truthful position of his master's present condition of much weakened status though he was otherwise brave and dependable ally worthy to be befriended was too well appreciated by Sri Rama. This had led them to briefly mention about them, their problem and their eagerness to seek friendship with Sugriva.

The above normal event of meeting between two groups, one who was weak but in search of strong friendship and the other though capable but in the mood of seeking a friendship, was so exhaustively exquisitely explained by Maharishi through the medium of a probing successful messenger and his salutary effect on Sri Rama which brought the two unlikely equals to a workable arrangement.

Sri Rama, in fact, confided with his brother that a person like Hanuman could bring success to his king in any assignments regardless of whatever be the level of difficulty, complexity of issues and however irreconcilable it may be due to variety of virtues possessed and exhibited by him.

एवम् गुण गणैर् युक्ता यस्य स्युः कार्य साधकाः | तस्य सिद्ध्यन्ति सर्वेऽर्था द्रुत वाक्य प्रचोदिताः || [4-3-35]

A true tribute which resonances well even today among the intellectual persons dealing with human relationships at every level.

Of course, to a general reader, an agreement between Prince Sri Rama and an exiled Sugriva with only five more Vanaras under his command, poses an incongruous relationship, rightly so. The weakness of Vanaras writ large. But, through this strange alignment, Maharishi Valmiki beautifully conveyed that the Time is the great leveller of Justice. The so-called positions are cyclical, one who is presently in the enjoyment of fortune may, in the times to come, get caught in the zone of missed fortune. Any kind of relationship to be enduring and successful should be built on the basis of equality, harmonious respect and truthful appreciation of each other's strength and weakness etc. With a view to brevity, the later events of the successful chemistry ensued between these two parties were left undiscussed though a study of them would definitely throw out many more life learning messages through ever valid sayings of Sage Valmiki.

One can also deduce that successfulness in carrying out an assignment depends upon numerous factors. One of such factors referred to in the above episode was the on-the-spot execution by an astute messenger. The other factor was the ability of a master in laying out a plan to the understanding of a subordinate in a manner which empowers him to put in use his innate qualities with a freedom fitting in line with overall planned action and outcome.

Added to the above points, the most obvious one was the way the message of Hanuman was received, acclaimed and accepted by the other side with due respect to the other though of Vanaras tribe. This was succinctly portrayed and conveyed by Maharishi Valmiki to the discerning analysts.