

Illustrious Incidents and Invaluable Insights.

Sri T S Krishnamachari , New Delhi.

In this article, meaningful lessons from the well-known episode of Jatayu's valiant fight with Ravana to save Seetha Devi, his ultimate sacrifice and an extraordinary penance undergone by his elder brother Sampati are discussed.

Sri Rama was inconsolable due to Seetha's missing from their midst. He was driven to the extent to imagine that she was eaten away by the demons. Recalling her amiable conduct, he was vehement. He was about to wage a war to destroy the mute spectators like sun, Indra etc. It is to the credit of Lakshmana **praised as an asset in companionship, (..Soumitiri mitra sampannam..)** who gently assuaged terrible feelings of Sri Rama .

Viniitam bhraataram bhraataa Lakshmanam Lakshmi vardhanam ||

With gentle and brotherly affection, he reminded him that grief would befall upon every soul. Nobody is immune to the travails of fate. He recalled that their own father, in spite of all his strict adherence to truthfulness, known for performance of numerous yajnas, fair governance of kingdom, had to breathe his last days grieving about his beloved son who was sent on exile for fourteen long years. Even sage Vashishta had, all of a sudden, lost his one hundred sons due to curse of sage Vishwamitra. Notwithstanding all these unimaginable and most tragic events that had unfolded, none of them had resorted to violence or intended to harm people in entirety. The salutary advice tendered by Lakshmana is worth recollecting by everyone of us in times of sorrow, grief, loss etc.

Sri Rama and Lakshmana, in their search for Seetha, had spotted a bird lying motionless. Sri Rama rushed towards it exclaiming that it had devoured his beloved Seetha. Jatayu, who was lying on the ground, immediately invoked blessings upon them in a feeble voice. Recognising it as Jatayu, Sri Rama sat near and put it on his lap. Jatayu narrated the events leading to the unfortunate abduction of Seetha Devi. He told him that 'Ravana, son of Visrava, had forcibly carried her away in a chariot. I waged a fierce battle. I had broken his arrows, crushed his chariot, kicked his jewel crest crown from his head. He had fallen on the ground. With anger, he mercilessly cut my wings and foot etc". Jatayu, clearly exasperating through this narration till his last breath, but calmed their nerves. He also told them that they need not harbour any misapprehensions as the spell of time when Seetha was abducted falls under Vinda. Any one loses anything during Vinda, would definitely reclaim the lost thing intact. Without informing the final destination of Ravana, Jatayu breathed his last on the lap of Lord Sri Rama.

Sri Rama was more grieved on the demise of Jatayu than hearing the missing news of Seetha Devi. He also remarked to Lakshmana that Jatayu, though much advanced in age, endangered its life by fighting with ten headed monster Ravana, the demon of incomparable strength. The compassionate Sri Rama, for the first time, discarded self-imposed image of son of Emperor Dhasaratha and bestowed immortal position to Jatayu acknowledging immense help done by it. The position earned by Jatayu is attainable only by fortunate few who had performed certain yagnas or maintained Five agnis throughout their life or one who had donated land or one who without retreating from the battlefield had given up his life in the battle defending his own country.

**Yaa gathi: yajna shiilaanaam aahita agne: cha yaa gathi:|
A para aavartinaam yaa cha yaa cha bhumi pradaayinaam ||**

Mayaa tvam samanujnaatho gaccha lokaan anuttamaan |
Grdhra raaja mahaa sattva sanskrita: cha mayaa vraja ||

Jatayu attained mukti from the hands of none other than Dharma personified Sri Rama for his brave fight for protecting dharma in trying to save Seetha and for obstructing an act of adharma by Ravana.

Let us now, dwell on the search undertaken by the vanaras under the leadership of young Angada. The search was one of the most treacherous one as they travelled through a vast stretch of a desert of scorching heat, without any trace of water, affording no shades, no place to take shelter. Angada kept the indomitable spirits of vanaras high through some sagacious sayings, viz, "When one is pursuing any given task, it is not advisable to give up efforts due to laziness, diffidence or sorrowfulness or any kind of lethargy. Persistency, ingenuity and determination only would help one to accomplish and achieve desired results".

tandriim shokam cha nirdaam chaiva samutthitaam ||

Extremely fatigued by the strenuous expedition, they entered into a cave by name Riksha in search of water to quench their thirst, the immediate need of the moment. The cave was managed by one austere woman called Swyamprabha. Hanuman explained to her the object of their entry into the cave uninvited. With admirable understanding and compassion, she provided them an excellent feast. It was so ordained that anyone who enters into the cave can never come out alive. On hearing the improbability of getting out from the cave alive, Hanuman, submitted to her that their search was for a noble cause and asked her to find out a solution. Extremely pleased with Hanuman's reasoned submission, she transported the blindfolded vanaras out of the cave and left them in front of ocean wishing them success in their noble venture.

Looking at the intimidating unbounded ocean in front of them and being conscious of loss of time set for search for Seetha Devi, Angada was unwilling to return to Kishkinda. He said that Sugreiva would award him death sentence as he didn't expect justice from one who had planned to kill his own brother. As so happen many times in our day to day living, some of the vanaras who were unwilling to strain themselves beyond a piont supported him. They thought, as a recourse to escape punishment, to re-enter into the cave and remain there. The famed expedition was about to end abruptly as most of them concurred with Angada. However, Hanuman, ever vigilant and dutiful towards Lord Sri Rama's cause, employed persuasive skills, threatening tactics including likely fury from Lakshmana. At the same breadth, he also praised eloquently skill and valour of Angada. He exhorted Angada saying that he possesses eight fold attributes of intelligence. (**Buddhyaa hi asta angayaa yuktam.**)

Eightfold aspects of intelligence as pointed out by Acharyas are earnest desire/inclination to hear from others, taking efforts to enquire, hearing with keen interest and receptiveness, grasping what has been heard, retentiveness, clear reasoning and enunciation in favour of a proposition, reasoning against a proposition, insightful knowledge and true wisdom.

Shushrunaa shravanam chaiva grahanam dhaaranam tatha |
Uuha apoha artha vijnaanam tattva jnaanam cha dhigunaa: ||

Ultimately, he managed to win over them to continue the search for Seetha.

However, Angada and others were convinced of failure of their mission as there was no clue about the whereabouts of Seetha Devi. With Angada at the forefront, all of them including Hanuman, decided to sit on fast unto death. When they sat, he saw a huge bird on a tree looking intently to devour them. He told Hanuman that fasting would be successful as the bird would eat every one of us one by one. They were not aware that the bird was the brother

of Jatayu who destined to do great service to them. Sampaaati, on his own thinking that "Fate always follows human beings, be it good or bad, as mass of monkeys come on their own as food for me."

Vidhi: kila naram loke vidhaanena anuvartate |

Yathaa ayam vihito bhaksya: chiraat mahyam upaagata: ||

Angada calmly recollected the events unfolded from the exile of Sri Rama till their futile search for Seetha. In his narration, he described the efforts of brave Jatayu to protect Seetha, his unfortunate death at the hands of Ravana. On hearing about the sudden demise of his younger brother, Sampaaati wanted to hear about it in detail. Angada briefly reported all the events that had taken place till that moment including their unsuccessfulness in locating whereabouts of Seetha Devi. He also narrated the peaceful end of jatayu on the lap of Sri Rama without informing Seetha's ultimate destination except briefly informing about Seetha's abductor etc.

Feeling friendly towards them, Sampaaati requested Angada to bring him down due to burnt wings. At the enquiry of Angada and Jambhavan, he briefly informed about the birth and life history of Jatayu and himself, reason for burnt wings, separation from Jatayu and a prophecy by one sage by name Nisakara. He informed the vanaras that the Sage told him that he was destined to do service to Rama and Seetha through monkeys who were in search of Seetha. He proclaimed that life was worth living as the service to Rama was beneficial to devas, and humanity. He also assured me that I would get to see Seetha from a long distance as well get the wings restored thorough this service.

Paksau cha prapaksau cha puna: anyau bhavisyata: |

Caksusii chaiva praanaa: cha vikrama: cha balam cha te ||

The sage had unwillingly refrained from restoring burnt wings by his power of penance as that would come in the way of Sampaaati's intended service to Sri Rama.

To the astonished vanaras, Sampaaati proudly informed that he had been bestowed with extra ordinary eye sight to see things vividly at faraway place. He was too happy to do his part of kankaryam to Lord Rama's associates.

Vaank maatrena tu raamasya karisye saahyam uttamam ||

He joyfully told them that he could see Seetha Devi being kept in Lanka about 100 yojanas from their place. During the course of Sampaaati's valuable advice, he got his wings afresh. He advised them that it is the mental determination which is important for anyone to pursue any given task. Intelligent and pious souls would not refrain from taking appropriate steps to complete the given task.

Tat alam kaala sangena kriyataam buddhi nishcaya: |

Na hi karmasu sajjante buddhimanta: bhavat vidhaa: ||

A comparative analysis of these two valiant birds will be worth recapitulation. Jatayu promised Sri Rama that he would protect Seetha in their absence. Even at his old age, he valiantly fought with Ravana. By prolonging and preserving his last hour of life, albeit by the grace of Seetha Devi, he could convey valuable news that Seetha was alive to Sri Rama. More importantly, while blessing them, Jatayu confided with them that Seetha will be safely restored to them. We can safely say, Jatayu managed to keep his breath till last minute to do Rama Seetha Kankaryam i.e., enabling Sri Rama to a fruitful pursuit through his information.

On other hand, Sampaaati had endured an excoriating wingless life bidding his time for arrival of monkeys in search of Seetha Devi for a long time about 6000 years. He had to

overcame so many times the feeling of worthlessness and utter dependence for food on his son. His unswerving belief in the forecast of sage Niskara, willingness to do service to Lord Rama and Seetha were the motivating factors to brave the odds. Ultimately, he realised the purpose of his life by seeing from other side of shore of ocean and by proudly informing about whereabouts and her safety to the diffident monkeys. He praised them about their extraordinary strength and been chosen to do Lord's Service. He exhorted them to undertake the impossible travel over ocean by quoting his example of perseverance and belief in Lord Sri Rama. He also cited propitious spell of time, namely- Abhijit, for eventual success in their holy venture. Sampati, through his service and timely information, completed the unfinished task of his brother. One recollect that Jatayu could not complete his sayings but breathed his last.

Putra: vishravasa: saaksaat bhraataa vaishravanasya cha |
Iti uktvaa dur labhaan praanaan mumocha patagaeshvara:||

Sampati having waited for a long time, completed the missing information of the whereabouts, beginning with the same of the words of first part of Jatayu's sayings.

Putra: vishravasa: saaksaat bhraataa vaishravanasya cha |
Adhyaaste nagariim Lankaam raavana: naama rakshasa: ||

Sampati acted as a potential light house near the Ocean to point out the direction to the vanaras to navigate. Here, we can, definitely, say, Sampati had rendered SeethaRama Kainkaryam by giving news and encouraged the most capable monkey Hanuman to reach Seetha in Lanka, the first step in the long journey of Seetha's restoration to Sri Rama.

Thus, from these episode, one can learn that "one should be steadfast in fulfilling the word given to other at any cost. Sufferings and happiness can happen to anyone at any time. However, one has to develop the requisite attitude to endure pain/ sufferings and get along in the life. Whatever be the impediments that come in the way, one ought to pursue the task with enthusiasm and optimism without falling into despair. When one is focussed on the already decided objectives, difficulties would matter insignificant."

With the benign blessings of Acharyas, may the Lord Sri Seetha Ramachandra bestows His unfailing grace on us to develop such ennobling qualities as well as the eight fold intelligent attributes.