

Leadership skill of Angada as portaryed in Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam

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Srimad Valmiki Ramayana describes in detail the search operation, the problems faced and overcome by one of the teams of Valient Vanaras under the leadership of Angada in the southern direction of Kishkindha region. A study would reveal the leadership skill exhibited by the young Angada and the lessons thereof.

Young Angada is brave, valiant like his father Valli. His prowess was appreciated on many occasions by Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Jaambavan and Hanuman. Valli requests Sugriva to consider young Angada in prowess and valour equal to him. He assured him that Angada would proudly present himself on the forefront in eliminating Rakshasas. एष तारात्मजः श्रीमान् त्वया तुल्य पराक्रमः | रक्षसाम् च वधे तेषाम् अग्रतः ते भविष्यति ||.... 4-22-11.

The assignments to the team sent to the south direction, thus, assumes importance on account of many factors such as, this was the direction in which Seetha Devi was carried away by Ravana, much of the terrain poses a high degree of difficulty and calls for the highest degree of perseverance and indomitable spirits... तस्याम् दिशि सुदुर्गमाः | ... 4-41-7. Not only there are fertile areas with mountains, rivers and pleasing vegetation but there are regions of dense forests impossible to pass through. Some of the terrains are barren land. They were expected to cross over the ocean in search of Seetha Devi.

To compensate and fortify the search operation for eventual success, Sugriva had sent tried, tested and trusted Vanaras to south entrusting the overall command to Angada with Neela, Hanuman, Jaambavan, Gaja, Gavaaksha and many strong and stubborn warriors. Sugriva specially mentioned about their extraordinary lineage which greatly bestow them with inherent infinite strength and exhorted them to devise ways and means as situation demands and achieve the result. अमित बल पराक्रमा भवन्तो विपुल गुणेषु कुलेषु च प्रसूताः || 4-41-49. He had also set the time frame of one month for completion of the task and report. He warned that any lapse in undertaking the task or in the execution would be severely dealt with.

The team, true to the faith reposed on them were eager to render service to Sri Rama and faithfully abide by the command of their king. They commenced the difficult search with great zeal, courage, indomitable energy even after knowing tremendous difficulties lying ahead. Neither was there any let up nor shortcomings in their pursuit. They were practically toiled to the last bit of their energy. However, the unrelenting climatic conditions started taking

toll on the retinue. It became visible through diminishing energy and alarming signs of despondency among the ranks. The inner feeling of experiencing joy in doing service to Sri Rama and to their king started dissipated in the face of nature's fury and rough terrain traversed without success.

Angada though accustomed to royal comforts, privileges due to his status, सुखार्हम् सुख संवृद्धम् बालम् ...(4-22-8) however, quickly assimilated to the inclement weather. With his keen intellect and inquisitive nature, he had a fair idea of difficulties to be encountered in the search operation. He endeared himself with one and all by his dignified conduct and with his humble style of taking any decisions based on interaction and consensus amongst all. At this important moment of waning interest in the minds of Vanaras, he quickly grasped the situation and spoke highly profound words of encouragement to the team members.

Let us not succumb to sluggishness, nor give way to grieving and slumber. Let us, instead, redouble our efforts as concerted efforts, openness to adopt ingenious ways with the boldness to think differently and courageous spirit of mind can only help us to achieve the results. अनिर्वेदम् च दाक्ष्यम् च मनसः च अपराजयम् | कार्यं सिद्धिं कराणि आहुः तस्मात् एतत् ब्रवीमि अहम् || ..(4-49-6). विहाय तन्द्रीम् शोकम् च निद्राम् चैव समुत्थिताम् | विचिनुध्वम् तथा सीताम् पश्यामो जनक आत्मजाम् || (4-49-5).

Those who endeavour themselves with this spirit can definitely savour the fruit of efforts. On the other hand, those who refrains now due to despondency left later with despicable feeling of remorse. अवश्यम् कुर्वताम् दृश्यते कर्मणः फलम् | परम् निर्वेदम् आगम्य न हि नः मीलनम् क्षमम् || (4-49-8). His manner of leading afront by uplifting the morale won the support of all.

But the nature had its own plan. The renewed efforts with all good intentions had not unfortunately resulted in any headway to know about whereabouts of Seetha devi. Only due to providential efforts, the Vanaras were transported from an impassable cave in front of vast expanse of sea in the southern point. The time limit set up by their king had already elapsed.

Coming out of cosy cave, with certainty of failure looming large and the warning notes by Sugriva, Angada placed before the team his proposal of abandoning the search operation and remain in the cave without any intimation to the king. He calmly informed that he expected only death sentence for him in the light of tenuous relationship with their king. The proposals found acceptance among the weak and sluggish Vanaras.

However, Hanuman sagaciously thwarted the inevitable failure of the expedition through judicious application of persuasion, intimidation, enticement and coercion tactics. Angada who was conscious of his shaky position acceded to the advice of Hanuman and started fasting unto death instead of return to Kishkinda without any success. Here, one has to appreciate the instantaneous reaction of Angada as he was well aware that he has to act under overall control and interest subjugating his pleasure and adopting tolerance in activities in tune with the prevalent situation. In other words, Angada had avoided meticulously any scope for dissension or confrontation with others as a commander. देश कालौ भजस्व अद्य क्षममाणः प्रिय अप्रिये | सुख दुःख सहः काले सुग्रीव वशगो भव || ... (4-22-20)

Due to providential benevolence, once again, the fasting unto death Vanaras came to know the whereabouts of Seetha Devi from Sampati. The news had rekindled their energy to the level noticed at the beginning of the expedition. However, on seeing the roaring sea with deafening constant sound, the daunting task of crossing over the Ocean started troubling them. But young Angada had started exploring about ways and means to cross over the unfathomable ocean. The words spoken by Angada are worth recapitulation as these sentiments are effectively used by Lord Krishna though Bhagavad Gita to the dispirited crestfallen Arjuna on the battlefield.

Angada very wisely reminded his army that it was a not wise option to lose hope and become diffident when confronted with challenging tasks. Such an attitude is harmful and kills a person just like a viper ruins an innocent child . न विषादे मनः कार्यम् विषादो दोषवत्तरः | विषादो हन्ति पुरुषम् बालम् क्रुद्ध इव उरगः || (4-64-9). He further stated that no achievement will accrue to such a person who retreat from the scene when the situation demands concerted bold positive action. यो विषादो प्रसहते विक्रमे समुपस्थिते | तेजसा तस्य हीनस्य पुरुष अर्थो न सिद्ध्यति || (4-64-10)

He prodded gently each and every one and encouraged them to come out mentioning their ability in the ensuing expedition. The valiant Vanaras expressed their perceived maximum capacity and found themselves unfit to fly over the sea at one stretch. At this juncture, Angada himself volunteered to cross over the ocean as he was confident of crossing at a stretch though unsure about his ability to return to the base.

His commitment to the tasks in deference to command of Sugriva is fully evident. However, Jambhavan submitted to Angada that as commander in chief, it devolves on the team to protect him at any costs as his intelligent leadership is pivotal for success. मूलम् अर्थस्य

संरक्ष्यम् एष कार्यविदाम् नयः | मूले हि सति सिध्यन्ति गुणाः पुष्प फल उदयः || (4-64-25) . It is to be noted that Jambhavan's statement truly attest the quality of sagacity, audacity found in Angada. Thus, Angada was persuaded not to venture though he was perfectly capable to complete the task.

Angada never missed any opportunity to profusely praise Hanuman on his successful historic return after seeing and speaking to Seetha Devi. He acclaimed his highest devotion to the master, unimaginable strength in crossing over the ocean, bold interaction with Ravana and fierce fight and killing of Ravana's brave warriors. Angada, thus, evolved as a true mass leader through open praise of Hanuman though Hanuman had belittled his proposal in front of all Vanaras.

The Yuddha Kanda described successful fights of Angada in the battlefield conquering important warriors of Ravana. Valmiki also recorded the persuasive skill to boost the morale of co warriors especially when they were retreating in fear to face Kumbhkarna. He was specially chosen as Rama's emissary to warn Ravana to surrender just before the commencement of hostilities.

To conclude, it is worth to quote the appreciation of Hanuman about Angada as having eight-fold intelligence, employing fourfold strategies as the situation demands and well aware of usage of fourteen traits of various skills. बुद्ध्या हि अष्ट अंगया युक्तम् चतुर् बल समन्वितम् | चतुर् दश गुणम् मेने हनुमान् वालिनः सुतम् || . 4-54-2.

Though the import of this saying is profound, the points in general are mentioned here. The eightfold skills are undivided attentiveness, correct understanding, receptiveness, retention, analysis of pros and cons, meticulous planning, expert knowledge and acumen. Fourfold tactics are application of persuasion, intimidation, enticement and coercion tactics. Action in tune with place and time, sturdiness, endurance, precise prediction, skilfulness, alertness, confidentiality, avoidance of endless discussions, confidence, understanding strength and weaknesses, commitment, steadfastness, extending protection and restrained anger are broadly comes under fourteen traits normally noticeable from the deeds of successful leaders. These qualities are in essence be termed as hallmark of a leader in general and needs to be cultivated studiously over the period of time.
