

## Loneliness with its ramifications- Queen Kaikeyi

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One of the turning points of Srimad Valmiki Ramayana was sudden hostile attitude of Queen Kaikeyi towards Sri Rama on the eve of his coronation as a Prince Regent of the Kingdom. However, at different places, it was mentioned that the malevolent act by the Queen was predestined to usher in peacefulness on the earth, to provide protection from the clutches of Rakshasas etc. by Sri Rama through exile to forest.

At this juncture, it is important to note that Queen Kaikeyi till this fateful day was more affectionate towards Sri Rama than the mother Kausalya as vouchsafed by the Dasharatha and by Sri Rama himself.

In spite of Kaikeyi's ardent love and affection towards Sri Rama since his childhood, such an adamant and self-injurious act was apparently done by her due to an instigation and few hours of conversation by one of her housemaids by name Manthra. However, this needs closer and benefitting scrutiny broadly from the points of view expressed in Ramayana. In narrating the conversation of conversion of Kaikeyi, Valmiki had vividly portrayed kinds of temperament, ploys to play on susceptible emotions, personal predilections, phobia of insecurity, biased opinions, impact of pride etc. In other words, human psychology along with frailty of mind, susceptibility to fall into the design of some other persons either of evil or beneficial one, etc., were captured by Maharishi. These surmises are plausible probabilities.

The dramatic turn of events was triggered by Manthra, who perchance, saw from a terrace, people cheerfully participating in a flurry of activities like putting up festoons of perfumed garlands, banners, colourful flags, decorating the walls and space, streets and inter junctions with colourful drawings etc. Musicians started entertaining assembled people by singing, playing instruments creating an ambience of happiness all around. Every one wearing new garment, moving in and around the vast courtyard and taking a seat in vantage position to witness uninterruptedly the anointment ceremony of Sri Rama to take place next day morning.

From the reply of other happiest staff, she came to know about the grand function of coronation ceremony of Sri Rama to take place tomorrow as proposed by the King and accepted by people of Ayodhya. The cruel minded hunch-backed Manthara did not wait long to hear the news which was like a poison to her ear. Sage Valmiki clearly mentioned at many places that cruel Manthara's severest hatred towards Rama had no apparent reason<sup>1</sup>.

Even at the cost of her master Kaikeyi, she wanted to cause wreck to Sri Rama. She hurriedly climbed down, burst into the chamber of Queen Kaikeyi who is lying happily on her bed. She started insulting the Queen. The most despicable words spoken by her, a servant, like "hey, a stupid! Danger is lurking in the corners. You are submerged in the deluge of troubles, yet you were sleeping."

Despite insulting tone of Manthara, Kaikeyi, true to her affection, brushed aside Manthara's charges that an injustice was sought to be committed by the proposal of Sri Rama as a successor to the throne. Queen, instead, presented her a golden ornament for bringing such a happiest news. A befitting conduct of a Queen.

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<sup>1</sup> रामार्थमुपहिंसन्ती कुब्जा वचनमब्रवीत् ॥ सा दह्यमाना कोपेन मन्थरा पापदर्शिनी ॥ (Ayodhya Kanda Sarga 8 & 7)

Undeterred by the cold reception, Mantra continued her offensive posture to defy her master by cunningly positioned herself as the only true well-wisher of Kaikeyi. She exaggerated her feeling by saying that she was distressed by the turn of events, her mind is seething with anger, she was immersed in deep fear with no hope etc<sup>2</sup>.

With an intention to create division as well as dissension in the royal family, she accused that King had cheated her. Through deceit, the King proclaimed Sri Rama as the Prince Regent ignoring the rightful claim of her beloved son Bharatha. So many harsh sayings tarnishing image of the King were spoken to Kaikeyi with impudence. Still finding no favourable response, she adopted chiding the stupidity of the Queen and lectured on the practice of succession planning to the throne through dubious means in the royal family etc.<sup>3</sup>

Kaikeyi brushed aside this too and said that there was no threat to Bhartha to ascend throne later. She profusely praised the admirable qualities of Sri Rama to the chagrin of her housemaid. She remarked that either Bharatha or Sri Rama at the throne didn't bother her. She even went on repeatedly narrating the greatest adorable characteristic of loveable Sri Rama.

Having failed repeatedly, an enraged Manthra now started employing cajoling tactics of narrating her dream of seeing her son to become a prince. She also played the card of threat to her son by the impending ascension. Employing invidious tactics, such as invoking dormant tendencies of insecurity in the mind of Kaikeyi, she further added that she envisaged Queen's downfall from her present unassailable position of authority and influence. Once Sri Rama was at the helm of affairs, she stated that she could definitely expect retaliation in kind from Queen Kausalya to Kaikeyi's animosity and highhandedness in the past. To cap it all, she roused her sense of pride in her beauty and her sway over the King amongst the Queens.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, Kaikeyi became a puppet in the hands of housemaid. She did exactly as desired by Manthra. She finally ended up throwing to wind all notions of shame, dignity and poise which defined her all along her life. In other words, Kaikeyi, who was known for her upright thinking by nature, was beguiled by the intelligence of Manthara and chosen a wrong path like an innocent girl.

In short, Sage Valmiki through this conduct of Kaikeyi had brought out the limits of human mind up to which it can resist to undue pressure, glimpses of human susceptibility, impact and influence of associates in one's life etc.

To an intelligent reader, the whole ploy of putting blame on one person's maneuverability may defy logic. Rightly so. It requires two hands to clap. Similarly, every action can stem from concerted efforts to that particular task by one and all. Thus, Kaikeyi too had fair amount of share of her personal characteristics which propelled her to concede to the unfounded charges of her housemaid. Her own inherent propensities clouded her mental faculty. She went about proposing an unjust demand to the King and landed herself at an unenviable state of deep sorrow and abyss of grief.

King Dasharatha felt mortified beyond words to hear the unjust demands from Kaikeyi. As a person of virtue, he requested her to tread a correct path. First, he highlighted mutual overwhelming affection between her and Sri Rama. With no success, he acted pathetically and

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<sup>2</sup> सास्यगाधे भये मग्ना दुःखशोकसमन्विता | दह्यमानाऽ नलेनेव त्वद्धितार्थमिहागता || (Ayodhya Kanda Sarga 7)

<sup>3</sup> उग्रत्वं राजधर्माणां कथं देवि न बुध्यसे || (Ayodhya Kanda Sarga 7)

<sup>4</sup> बुद्ध्यस्व सौभाग्यबलमात्मनः || (Ayodhya Kanda Sarga 9)

surrendered at her foot pleading for recall of her demands by emphasizing his unconditional love towards her and her exalted position in the whole hierarchy. Having noticed that she had given up all notions of morality, respectability, the King made an important observation which is the most relevant in this context.

King Dasharatha blamed that her behaviour might have stemmed from her living lonely in such a big mansion. With limited access to contacts, she might have come under influence of evil spirits and under the control of others.<sup>5</sup>

Later, in the same Sarga, he wondered as to who would have taught her such a worthless demand as a worthy one which in reality going to benefit none. He, once again, cautioned that lonely living style led her to fall into the hands of others resulting into her unbecoming of a Queen as well as consort of a King.

There is another facet of the Queen which was about her proud behaviour arisen on account of her intoxicating beauty, self-proclaimed intelligence and constant intolerant and taunting behaviour. This had come from the mouth of Bharatha, son of Kaikeyi.<sup>6</sup>

Bharatha, who knew the desirable and detestable human characteristics, didn't hesitate to air his above-mentioned opinion even in front of his maternal grandfather. Later on, he described his mother as irate, arrogant, proud on her beauty and impudent though noble in appearance and the root cause for all kinds of disaster in the family, while introducing the wives of Dasharatha to the Bhardwaj rishi.

Kausalya too informed Sri Rama that Kaikeyi was always in continuous state of anger and causing hurt through her fierce talks. Rama too mentions about the strange and unbecoming behaviour of Queen Kaikeyi to Lakshmana. Sri Rama acknowledges that Queen Kaikeyi stooped to the level of commoner due to her bad influence etc.<sup>7</sup>

It is evident that Manthra was definitely a clear exponent of shrewd tactics and a determined person to achieve her goal. Neither Bharatha nor Sri Rama blamed Manthara for the bad turn of events. Unfortunately, it was the fault of Kaikeyi who could not hold on to her correct position of Sri Rama's first right to throne due to her inherent bad temperament, pride, attachment to power and ivory world living.

Thus, from this event, one can discern that our mind is a seat of favourable and unfavourable tendencies. Infatuation exerts undue influence and blinds one's thinking. It dulls the discrimination faculty and drives one to imagine an unworthy pursuit as a worthy one. Mind creates a cocoon of comfort level in every one of us.

Secondly, hearing any biased opinions may imperceptibly exert undue control on the listener and there are chances that the listener may fail to see the reality. Self-esteem, conviction to hold on a universally acceptable human qualities with a resolve to nurture it can be one of the ways to safeguard anyone from this possibility. Just like honesty pays, humility and control over anger and passion would prove beneficial in the end.

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<sup>5</sup> आविष्टासि गृहम् शून्यम् सा त्वम् परवशम् गता ॥ (Ayodhya Kanda Sarga 12)

<sup>6</sup> आत्म कामा सदा चण्डी क्रोधना प्राज्ञ मानिनी | अरोगा च अपि कैकेयी माता मे किम् उवाच ह ॥ (Ayodhya kanda Sarga 70 )

<sup>7</sup> कथम् प्रकृति सम्पन्ना राज पुत्री तथा अगुणा | ब्रूयात् सा प्राकृता इव स्त्री मत् पीडाम् भर्तृ सन्निधौ ॥ (Ayodhya Kanda Sarga 22)

Loneliness has its pounds of flesh in clouding mental faculty and prevents from taking informed decisions. Avoid self-isolation too. We should always remain alert and vigil. Examples of inevitable loneliness at highest level causing immense damage to that person's status and stature are plenty. Our scripture always hold that everyone should learn to give respect to superiors, be friendly and on equal terms with the colleagues and maintain dignity and be compassionate to the subordinates or people below. It does not preclude one from keeping abreast of what is happening and to keep an open mind by conversing with all at the appropriate manner keeping the decorum in mind.

In this world of liberty and privacy, everyone has an unequivocal right to hold his views. It also underlines the others' right to desist from any act which is contrary to their view.

One can pray for continued mercy of God for right thinking, praiseworthy thoughts, strength to desist from self-destruction, clarity and courage to resist to assist other when it is downright disrepute.

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