



वैदिक india

This series takes a close look at facets of Vedic India that are alive even today.



Ram Bhakt Hanuman

Hanuman is possibly the greatest character of Ramayana, next only to Rama and Sita. According to the epic Ramayana, authored by the saint poet Valmiki in Vedic Sanskrit, the birth of Hanuman was pre-ordained along with the incarnation of god Vishnu as Ram. The Gods sent him to earth to serve Rama and help him in his 'mission' to destroy all the evil elements that were trying to destroy true 'Dharma'. He is also known as Anjaneya, Maruti, Pavanputra, Kesharinandan, Anjaniputra, Bajrang Bali and Hanumant.

Hanuman is worshipped as a subsidiary figure in temples dedicated to Rama or directly in shrines dedicated to Hanuman himself. In temples throughout India, and specifically in striking South Indian bronze sculptures, he appears in the form of a monkey with a red face who stands erect like a human. For his service to Rama, Hanuman is upheld as a model for all human devotion (bhakti).

Generally, he is visualised as a 'vaanar' (वानर; vernacular dialect - baanar, बानर). Most Hindus interpret the word 'baanar' as monkey-man. But some people say that the word vaanar means a man (nar; नर) who lives in forest (van; वन).

Hanuman is the son of the wind-god (Vayu). Hence the ability to fly at great speed. His exploits of superhuman strength are many. Mentioned in both the Ramayana and Mahabharata, his traditional description of a tailed superman includes his simian origin and habits. As a child too, he was extraordinary. There is a story of his attempt to swallow the sun god

While still a baby, Hanuman, the child of a nymph by the wind god, tried to fly up and grab the Sun, which he mistook for a fruit. Indra, the king of the gods, struck Hanuman with his thunderbolt on the jaw (hanu), thus inspiring the name. When Hanuman continued to misbehave, powerful sages cursed him that he should forget his magic powers, such as his ability to fly or to become infinitely large, until he was reminded of them.



Hanuman led the monkeys to help Lord Rama recover Rama's wife, Sita, from the demon Ravana, king of Lanka (sometimes thought to be Sri Lanka). Having been reminded of his powers by Jambavan, the king of the bears, Hanuman crossed the strait between India and Lanka in one leap, despite the efforts of water demonesses to stop him by swallowing him or his shadow. He was detected in Lanka, and his tail was

set on fire, but he used that fire to burn down Lanka.

Hanuman also flew to the Himalayas and returned with a mountain full of medicinal herbs to restore the wounded Laxman in Rama's army.

Hanuman's first meeting with his lord took place when Rama was searching for his consort Sita in the forests of central India. Hanuman who was then in the service of his Vanara king Sugreev, not only traced Sita to the southern island of Lanka, where she was kept in captivity by Ravana, but fought

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the final battle for her rescue along with Rama, his younger brother Laxman and the whole army of Vanaras. Hanuman accompanied his master to Ayodhya, the kingdom on the banks of the Ganga, and served as his commander until Rama returned to his godhood.

Two incidents from his life during the expedition for Sita's rescue deserve mention. Hanuman leapt across the sea to reach the spot where Sita was confined in Ravana's palace and how, while returning, he burnt down parts of the royal residences and the city itself. The second incident is about Hanuman's amazing flight to the snowy Himalayas thousands of miles to the north to bring the life-giving herb Sanjivani which was urgently required to revive Laxman who had been struck down by Ravan's eldest son during the battle.

Relation with Shani (Saturn)

In Hinduism, Hanuman is the only God not afflicted by Shani. Hanuman is the only deity in Hindu religion, over whom Shani could not cast his spell. Shani who did not even spare Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma could not overcome Hanuman and as such people worship Hanuman to get rid of the malefic effects of Shani.

In the Ramayana, Hanuman is said to have rescued Shani, from the clutches of Ravana. In gratitude, Shani promised Hanuman that those who prayed to him (Hanuman) would be rescued from the painful effects of Saturn, which in Hindu

astrology, is said to produce malefic effects in one's life when one is afflicted "negatively" with Saturn.

After the ramayana war

After the war, and after reigning for several years, the time arrived for Rama to depart to his heavenly abode. Many of Rama's entourage, including Sugriva, decided to depart with him. Hanuman, however, requested Rama that he will remain on earth as long as Rama's name was venerated by people so he could listen to people chanting Rama's name. Thus, Hanuman is immortal and is part of the Seven Immortals of Hinduism.

"Ashwathaama Balir Vyaso Hanumanash cha Vibhishana Krupacharya cha Parashuramam Saptaita Chiranjeevanam"

This means that "Ashwathama, Maha Bali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Kripacharya and Parashurama, are the 7 immortal personalities."

In Hindu theology, it has been expounded in several puranas and epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana that there exist seven immortal personalities, in the Hindu pantheon.

- Mahabali, a righteous demon king who conquered heaven, earth, and the underworld, but was forced to give it back by Vamana.
- Parashurama, an avatar of Vishnu.
- Vibhishana, Ravana's brother who was made King of Lanka by Rama.

- Hanuman, who served Rama.
- Vyasa, a sage who narrated the Mahabharata, he was also a sage in the epic.
- Kripacharya, a teacher of the princes in the Mahabharata.
- Ashwathama, a man cursed to immortality and eternal suffering without love from anybody for his role in the murder of the five sons of the Pandavas and his attempted murder of Arjuna's grandson.

It is said, that wherever the Ramayana is being recited or the name of Ram is being chanted, Hanuman will always be there. He may come in the form of a stray dog, a crow, an old man, etc.

Jai Shree Ram! ■

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Hanuman Chalisa

जय हनुमान ज्ञान गुण सागर, Jai Hanuman Gyan Gun Sagar,
जय कपीस तर्हि लोक उजागर, Jai Kapis Tihun Lok Ujagar,
राम दूत अतुलित बल धामा, Ramdoot Atulit Bal Dhaamaa,
अंजनी – पुत्र पवन सुता नामा, Anjani Putra Pavansut naamaa,

महावीर विक्रम बजरंगी, Mahabir Bikram Bajrangi,
कुमति निवार सुमति के संगी, Kumati Nivaar Sumati Ke Sangi,
कंचन बरना बीराज सुबेसा, Kanchan Baran Biraaj Subesaa,
कानन कुण्डल कुंचित केसा, Kanan kundal kunchit kesa,

Victory of Thee, O Hanuman, Ocean of wisdom and virtue, victory to the Lord of monkeys who is well known in all the three worlds.

Messenger of Ram with enormous strength, you are also known as "Anjaniputra" and the son of the Wind God.

O Hanuman ! You are valiant and brave, with a body like lightning. You remove darkness of evil thoughts and are a companion of good sense and wisdom.

Shri Hanuma"s physique is gold colored. His dress is pretty, wears ear-rings and his hairs are long and curly.

(The first two stanzas of Hanuman Chalisa end here)

Hanuman Chalisa, a boon from Tulsidas to Hindus across the world, finds place in every home where it can act as a panacea for all problems, be they physical, mental or spiritual.

Hanuman Chalisa is a devotional song based on Lord Hanuman as the model devotee. It is a poem written by Mahakavi Goswami Tulsidas in the Awadhi language during the sixteenth century. It is his best known Hindu text apart from the Ramcharitmanas. The word "chālīsā" is derived from "chālīs" in Hindi, which means 40, as the Hanuman Chalisa has 40 verses. Verses in Hanuman Chalisa are called chaupai (chaupaaEE; चौपाई) which means four line stanzas.

The Hanuman Chalisa is very popular among a lot of Hindus of north India. Millions of Hindus recite the Hanuman Chalisa every Tuesday and Saturday. The structure of the poem is extremely simple and rhythmic, making it all the more popular. The poem praises Lord Hanuman's strength and kindness and recounts the Lord's great deeds. It is claimed that Hanuman Chalisa invokes Hanuman's divine intervention in grave problems, including those involving evil spirits. This belief is based on the claim made in the Chalisa itself. Hanuman Chalisa is not just a simple prayer or a spiritual text, it has a mystical quality too. Those who do "paath" or repeated reading know its impact.

The story about the circumstances surrounding the origins of Hanuman Chalisa is as follows:

Mahakavi Goswami Tulsidas went to meet the then Emperor Akbar in the capital city of Delhi after having had a darshan or vision of Lord Sri Rama in Gokul, the birth place of Lord Sri Krishna. The Emperor challenged Tulsidas to show Sri Rama to him. When Tulsidas replied that it was not possible to have darshan of Rama without true devotion to him, emperor Akbar imprisoned Tulsidas. In prison, Tulsidas wrote the beautiful verses of the Hanuman Chalisa on Sri Hanuman.

When he completed the Hanuman Chalisa in prison, an army of monkeys fell upon the city of Delhi. The Emperor unsuccessfully tried to control the monkey menace with his forces, but failed. Finally, the Emperor realised that the monkey menace was a manifestation of the wrath of Hanuman, the Monkey God. Akbar released Tulsidas and the monkeys stopped their mischief immediately.

Tulsidas says in the Chalisa that whoever chants the Hanuman Chalisa with full devotion to Hanuman, will have Hanuman's grace.



Ram Setu

Rama Setu (Rama's Bridge), also known as Adam's Bridge, is a chain of limestone shoals, between Rameswaram Island, off the south-eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, India, and Mannar Island, off the north-western coast of Sri Lanka. The bridge is 30 km long and separates the Gulf of Mannar (south-west) from the Palk Strait (north-east). Some of the sandbanks are dry and the sea in the area is very shallow, being only 3 ft to 30 ft deep in places, which hinders navigation. It was reportedly passable on foot up to the 15th century until storms deepened the channel: temple records seem to say that Rama's Bridge was completely above sea level until it broke in a cyclone in 1480 CE.

The Archaeological Survey of India filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court during September 2007, stating that there is no historical and scientific evidence to establish the existence of Lord Rama or the other characters of the Ramayana. Denying that the Ram Setu or Adams Bridge is a man-made structure, it said that the bridge is a natural formation made of shoals and sand bars. "They have formed due to several millennia of wave action and sedimentation," reads the affidavit.

Here's the account from the "Ramayana" of Sage Valmiki:

"At Rama's command, those lions among the monkeys entered the mighty forest with alacrity in hundreds and thousands on every side and those leaders on the simian tribes, tearing up the trees and the rocks, which in size they resembled, and dragged them to the sea and thus they covered the ocean with Sala, Ashvarama trees. Those foremost monkeys transported the trees, with or without roots, bearing them like so many standards of Indra (the king of heaven) and they heaped them here and there. With the aid of mechanical devices, these powerful beings dug up stones as big as elephants and rocks, and the water suddenly spouted into the air only to fall instantly. Thereafter, those monkeys churned the sea by rushing into it on all sides pulling on the chains.

That immense causeway constructed by Nala in the bosom of the sea was built by the arms of those monkeys of formidable exploits and it extended over a hundred leagues.

Some brought trunks of trees and others set them up; it was by hundreds and thousands that those monkeys, like unto giants, made use of reeds, logs and blossoming trees to construct that bridge, rushing hither and thither with blocks of stone resembling mountains or the peaks of crags, which, flung into the sea, fell with a resounding crash.

The first day those monkeys, resembling elephants, of immense energy, full of high spirits and exceedingly merry, erected fourteen leagues of masonry. The second day, those highly active monkeys of formidable stature set up twenty leagues. Bestirring themselves, those giants threw twenty-one leagues of structure over the ocean on the third day and on the fourth, working feverishly, they built up twenty-two leagues in extent. The fifth day, those monkeys, industrious workers, reached to twenty-three leagues distance from the further shore.

That fortunate and valiant son of Vishvakarma (architect of the demigods), leader of the monkeys, constructed a causeway worthy of his sire over the ocean and that bridge erected by Nala over the sea, the haunt of whales, dazzling in its perfection and splendor,



was like the constellation of Svati in space.

Then the gods, Gandharvas, Siddhas (living beings superior to humans) and supreme Rishis (great sages) assembled in the sky, eager to see that masterpiece, and gazed on that causeway, so difficult of construction, that was ten leagues in width and a hundred in length built by Nala.

Those monkeys thereafter dived, swam and shouted at the sight of that unimaginable marvel that was almost inconceivable and caused one to tremble! And all beings beheld that causeway thrown over the ocean and by hundreds and thousands of kotis (millions), those monkeys, full of valor, having built that bridge over the immense repository of waters, reached the opposite shore.

Vast, well-constructed, magnificent with its wonderful paved floor, solidly cemented, that great causeway like unto a line traced on the waves, resembled the parting of a woman's hair.

Meanwhile Vibhishana (brother of Ravana who joined Rama), mace (club) in hand, held himself ready at his post with his companions in case of an enemy attack. Thereafter Sugriva addressed Rama, who was valiant by nature, saying "Mount on the shoulders of Hanuman and Laxmana on those of Angada. O Hero, vast is this ocean, the abode of whales; those two monkeys who freely range the sky will transport you both."

Then the fortunate Rama and Laxmana advanced thus and that magnanimous archer was accompanied by Surgriva. Some monkeys strode forward in the center, some threw themselves into the waves, some sprang into the sky, others marched on the bridge, some ranged through space like birds, and the terrific tumult of the trampling of that formidable army of monkeys drowned the roar of the ocean.

When those simian troops had passed over the sea by the grace of Nala's causeway, the king ordered them to camp on the shore which abounded in roots, fruits and water.

At the sight of that masterpiece that had materialized under the command of Raghava (another name of Lord Rama), despite the difficulties, the gods, who had drawn near with the Siddhas and Charanas as also the great Rishis, anointed Rama in secret there, with water from the sea, and said: "Mayest thou be victorious over thy foes, O Thou, who are a God among men! Do Thou rule over the earth and the sea eternally!"

Thus, in various auspicious words, did they acclaim Rama in the midst of the homage offered to him by the Brahmins."

The Ram Sethu Bridge is 30 km long ■