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**A structural analysis of Hanuman as a mythological figure**

**Sattar, Arshia, M.A.**

**The American University, 1987**

**U·M·I**  
300 N. Zeeb Rd.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106



A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF HANUMAN

AS A MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURE

by

Arshia Sattar

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Ray Hildebrand

John J. Bodine  
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AS A MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURE

by

Arshia Sattar

ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the career of Hanumān in Valmiki's Rāmāyana, Tulsidās' Rāmcaritmānas, and the Hanumān Cālīsa. In each of these texts, Hanumān is presented in a different light and thus performs a different function. Hanumān is analyzed in terms of the various aspects of his personality, and his antecedents and heritage.

The thesis finds that in making his leap to Lanka in the Rāmāyana, Hanumān changes from a superior monkey into a bhakta. He also sets up the bhakti universe. Hanumān enters the Ramcaritmanas a bhakta, and is here presented as the model for Tulsi's creed of Rāma-bhakti. In the Hanumān Cālīsa, he reaches the pinnacle of his career. He has the status of a demi-god, a result of his devotion to Rama. The thesis includes a translation of the Hanumān Cālīsa and a brief commentary on the text.

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The function of that particular class of legends known as myths is to express dramatically the ideology under which a society lives; not only to hold out to its conscience the values it recognizes and the ideals it pursues from generation to generation, but above all, to express its very being and structure, the elements and connections, the balances, the tensions that constitute it, to justify the rules and traditional practices without which everything within a society would disintegrate.

George Dumézil  
Destiny of a Warrior (p. 3)  
Transl.: Alf Hiltebeitel

## INTRODUCTION

Animals in Indian mythology are usually found in conjunction with a deity. The usual perception of them is that they embody both sacrifice and service to the deity. Generally, animals are capable of attaining salvation and seem to have inherent qualities necessary for spiritual liberation. This could be explained by the notion that animals, too, arise out of the same underlying unity that is responsible for the phenomenal world. This leads to a certain non-differentiation between human and sub-human species.<sup>1</sup>

Animals are depicted as rational, intelligent, and even spiritual, beings. The Jataka tells of Buddhism and the Pancatantra stories tell of innumerable instances in which animals have displayed nobility and spirit and high-mindedness.<sup>2</sup> The Jataka, as well as a number of Hindu myths portray animals as having great wisdom--often they

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<sup>1</sup>S. S. Ramarao Pappu, "Animals and Humans: Hindu Metaphysical Perspectives," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Assn. for Asian Studies, Wash., D.C., 23 March 1984.

<sup>2</sup>Padmanabha Jaini, "A Jaina Perspective on the Spirituality of Animals," paper presented at same conference.

are exponents of dharma and equally often they teach this to humans.

Hiltebeitel<sup>3</sup> holds that, within bhakti, certain animals are sacrificial motifs. They can think cogently, have religious resolve, and often exhibit the exemplary virtues of religion. They teach and can be taught. There is almost an interchangeability between humans and animals, and animals can reflect human behavior and attitudes. An animal may even represent a human quality or a human aspect.

This thesis will look at one such magnificent animal--the monkey, Hanumān. Hanumān appears as the loyal ally and devoted servant of Rāma, exiled prince of Ayodhya, in the Sanskrit epic, the Rāmāyana. Known for his great strength and his selfless service, he is a popular character in the folk tradition--in fact, he is the patron deity of a local police force in Kerala.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from his popularity in the little tradition of Hinduism, he plays a stellar role in the content of the bhakti religion. He enters Hindu mythology in the Rāmāyana of Vālmīki, where he is depicted as Rāma's chief agent and servant. He is the son of the Wind-god, Vāyu, and is known for his tremendous strength and

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<sup>3</sup> Alf Hiltebeitel, "Animals in Mythology and Ritual," paper at the same conference.

<sup>4</sup> P. Thomas, personal communication.

vitality. His renown spreads outside of the epic largely because of the amazing feats he accomplishes in the story. Among these, two of the most famous are his leap to Lanka and the transporting of a mountain from the Himālayas to Lanka.

On one level, the Rāmāyana is the epic saga of the trials and tribulations of the scion of the Ikshvāhu dynasty, Rāma. On the another level, it functions within Hinduism as a paradigm, all the characters in it being models of virtue and righteousness. As a model, Hanumān represents the ideal servant--loyal, devoted, and selfless. On the third level, the Rāmāyana is a work of bhakti, with its hero, Rāma, becoming the incarnation of the Supreme lord, Viṣṇu. With Rāma as the divinity, Hanumān changes from the ideal servant into the ideal devotee. The bhakti in the bulk of Rāmāyana remains largely implicit, except in the first and the last books, which are thought to be later additions.<sup>5</sup>

Hanumān as the ideal devotee is most clearly depicted in the Rāmcaritmānas of Tulsidāsa, written in the sixteenth century, A.D. Tulsi, himself, was a Rāma-bhakta, and his retelling of Rāma's story has only one purpose--the expression and propagation of bhakti for Rāma. Because Tulsi's

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<sup>5</sup> P. Lal, The Rāmāyana of Valmiki (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1981).

own bhakti took the form of service to the lord, Hanumān is presented explicitly as the model bhakta.

In the Hanumān Cālīsā, also attributed to Tulsi, Hanumān himself is worshipped and appealed to for protection. Thus, this monkey, who started off as a mere forest dweller, has risen in status and power to a being worthy of worship and supplication. His rise to this exalted position is due to a number of factors that will be examined in the course of this thesis, but it was possible in the first instance because of the attributes of animals discussed earlier, i.e., the capacity for salvation and spiritual liberation.

There is no doubt that he embodies the highest of religious virtues as a result of which he attains the status of a paradigmatic figure for the individual who has similar religious aspirations.

There is a theory that the monkeys in the Rāmāyana are, in fact, now Aryanized tribes of Central India, and the entire epic is the story of Aryan expansion southward and the spread of Vedic culture.<sup>6</sup> There is also the idea that the monkeys represent the masses of individual human souls into whose world the deity descends.<sup>7</sup> The monkeys

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<sup>6</sup> S. N. Vyas, India in the Rāmāyana Age (Delhi: Ram & Sons, 1967).

<sup>7</sup> Alf Hiltebeitel, Lectures in Hindu Mythology, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., Spring 1983.

monkeys as a host, definitely embody and display a number of human characteristics and are, in many, ways all too human.

Within the frame of reference of the humanness of the monkeys, Hanumān can be seen as the ideal ordinary individual.<sup>8</sup> He exhibits a nobility of spirit, courage, loyalty, intelligence, and often, utter confusion and bewilderment. He is capable of despondency, dismay, jubilation, anger, and self-esteem. He thus reflects the gamut of human emotion. Most important, he is among the first of the monkeys to recognize the divinity of Rama, and through his service to him, he achieves salvation, just as any human would who did the same thing. It is difficult to remember that Hanumān is a monkey when one encounters him in the texts, but monkey he undoubtedly is, and is portrayed so iconographically.

Thus, this thesis will trace his career, from his first appearance in the Rāmāyana, through the Rāmcaritmānas and into the Hanumān Cālīsā. He appears in a great many other texts, but the three above-mentioned texts are those which provide a clear picture of his rise to spiritual ascendancy and power.

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<sup>8</sup>S. N. Vyas, India in the Ramayana Age.

PART ONE  
HANUMĀN IN THE RĀMĀYANA

## CHAPTER I

### HANUMĀN'S ROLE IN THE RĀMĀYANA

Hanumān is first mentioned in the Bāla Kānda, but only in passing, as the offspring of Vāyu. The great Brahmā asks the minor deities to beget sons on monkeys and bears to help Rāma in his mission to destroy Rāvaṇa:

. . . while the cherished offspring of Pavana was Hanumān; whose body was as hard as diamond and whose speed equalled Garuda's; and amongst the innumerable dwellers in the woods, he excelled in wisdom and courage.<sup>1</sup>

His next appearance is in the Kishkinda Kānda and from here on he is a constant actor in the main narrative. The exiled monkey king, Sugrīva, has made his home on the Rishyamukha Mountain with a band of faithful followers. Hanumān is his closest friend, chief advisor, and most trusted lieutenant.

It is always Hanumān who introduces a note of rationality and even caution to counteract Sugriva's sometimes hysterical fears and ill-considered reactions. This is seen in the monkey's first encounter with Rāma and

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<sup>1</sup>Hariprasad Shastri, The Ramayana of Valmiki, trans. 3 vols. (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1961), 1:45.

Lakshmana. Sugrīva's immediate reaction is one of fear, but Hanumān cautions him, saying:

". . . it is evident, O Plavangama, that thy simian nature is asserting itself, since by giving way to distraction of the mind, thou art not able to see clearly. Thou art intelligent, experienced, able to read the expressions of others and fully prepared for any eventuality, but a prince who gives way to agitation is not able to forestall any."<sup>2</sup>

Hanumān is sent to Rāma and Lakshmana to inquire of their purpose. He approaches them in the form of a brahmin monk.

"The illustrious Sugrīva desires your friendship. Know me to be his minister, a monkey, the son of Pavana, ranging where I please and coming here under the guise of a wandering monk from the Rishyamukha Mountain, to please him."<sup>3</sup>

Rāma is immediately impressed with the monkey's introduction and remarks on his eloquence to Lakshmana:

"O Saumitri, answer Sugrīva's counsellor, who is eloquent and warm-hearted and the subduer of his foes in courteous terms. Only one versed in the Rg\_Veda, and who is conversant with the Yajur and the Sāma Vedas, would speak thus. He has studied grammar thoroughly, and though he has spoken at length, it has been void of error. I see nought to offend either in his mouth, his eyes, his brow, limb, or attitude. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

Fulfilling his task as a minister, Hanumān decides to negotiate a friendship between Sugrīva and the exiled

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:171. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:174. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:174.

princes: ". . . that monkey, born of Pavana, who wished nothing more than Sugriva should triumph, resolved to bring about a friendly alliance between Rama and his master."<sup>5</sup>

Hanumān deems Rāma and Lakshmana fit to meet

Sugriva:

"Such supplicants, endowed with wisdom, who have mastered their anger and other passions and whose fortune has led them to his presence, are worthy to be brought before that Indra of monkeys . . . . That offspring of Surya, Sugrīva, will form a pact of friendship with you and I shall accompany him in his search for Sīta."<sup>6</sup>

The next fifteen chapters of the Kishkinda Kānda are devoted to the battle with Bāli, whom Rāma eventually slays to keep his part of the pact with Sugrīva. Bāli's widow, Tara, mourns over the body of her dead husband, and once again, it is Hanumān who provides words of succour and advice.

After the rains, while Sugrīva has spent the season in frivolity and merry-making (having been installed as the king of Kishkinda after the death of Bāli), Hanumān reminds him of his pact with Rāma and his promise to help find Sītā:

". . . it now remains for thee to concern thyself with thy friends; it is thy duty. . . . We are losing this opportunity of serving the interests of our friend, Raghava, O Vanquisher of thy Foes. . . . It is to Raghava that thou owest the prosperity of thine House, he wields immense influence, his power

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2:175. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 2:177

immeasurable, his personal attributes incomparable. Render back the service he has done to thee, O Chief of the Monkeys, call together the leaders of thy people."<sup>7</sup>

So far, we have seen Hanumān perform in his capacity as the temporal advisor to Sugrīva. It is fitting that he first appears to Rāma and Lakshmana as a Brahmin, for in the first part of his role in the Rāmāyana he enacts the role of a brahmin advisor to a Ksatriya king (Sugrīva). He is intensely loyal to Sugrīva and has only his best interests at heart. Along with his role as a Brahmin, go the attributes of learning and erudition. He is well-versed in the rules of dharma and reminds others of their duties.

Hanumān dispatches envoys to the other monkey leaders on behalf of Sugrīva so that the search for Sīta can begin in earnest. The monkeys are divided into bands and sent in different directions. Hanumān, under the command of Angada, the son of the slain Bāli, is sent to scour the southern direction for the missing princess:

Sugrīva disclosed his plan to Hanumān in particular, being supremely confident that this leader, the foremost of monkeys, would accomplish his purpose. Then, the monkey king, the Lord of all the dwellers in the woods, well pleased, addressed the Son of the Wind-god, the peerless Hanumān, saying: "Nowhere on earth, in the air or sky, in the celestial regions or in the depths of the sea, do I know of any obstacle that can impede they course, O best of all monkeys. All the worlds with the Asuras, Gandharvas Nāgas, Men and Gods as well as the mountains and seas are well known to thee. In motion, speed, skill, and energy, thou

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2:243.

art the equal of thy sire, O Valiant One, and there exists no creature on this earth that is like thee in vigour, O hero of infinite resource! Reflect, therefore, on how Sīta might be found! In thee, O Hanumān, repose strength, wit, courage, and policy in conjunction with knowledge of time and place."<sup>8</sup>

Rama reflects Sugrīva's confidence in Hanumān:

Realizing that success in the venture depended on Hanumān and that Hanumān himself was chosen on account of his exploits, Rāma reflected: "This lord of the Monkeys has supreme confidence in Hanumān and Hanumān too is sure of his success; he who has been tested by his deeds and who is considered worthiest by his master is certain to accomplish his purpose.

"O Warrior, thy resolution, thy courage and thine experience, as also Sugrīva's words seem to me to predict success. . . . O Thou endowed with the strength of a lion, I depend on thy valour; by summoning up thy great resources, do all in thy power, O Son of the Wind, O Hanumān, to bring back the daughter of Janaka."<sup>9</sup>

After much futile searching in the south, the monkeys, led by Angada, give up all hope. They finally enter a cave, led by Hanumān, where they meet the ascetic Swayamprabha. She releases them from this cave of māyā by the power of her austerities.

Out of sheer frustration, Angada decides to mutiny as he cannot face Sugrīva unsuccessful: "Thereupon, Hanumān, well-versed in all branches of learning, resolved to win over Angada who had become lax in the service of his sovereign and bring him back to the right path."<sup>10</sup> He

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2:286. <sup>9</sup>Ibid. <sup>10</sup>Ibid., 2:301.

persuades Angada that the monkeys are fickle and will not lend him their support indefinitely as they will soon want to return home to their families.

The monkeys then meet Sampati, Jatāyu's brother, who tells them that Sītā is imprisoned on the island of Lanka. They arrive at the sea-shore and the discussion begins as to who will attempt to leap across the four hundred miles of ocean. At this point, Jambavan, the king of the bears, tells Hanumān the story of his childhood and reveals to him all his fabulous powers, indicating that he is the only one capable of making that leap:

"Employ thy valour, O Hero, for thou art the most fitted to do so. Bestir thyself and cross that vast ocean, O Redoubtable Monkey; the entire monkey host is eager to behold thy prowess. Arise and leap over the mighty sea for thou surpasses all beings in motion."<sup>11</sup>

Hanumān now proceeds to expand in size to accomplish the task ahead of him. Now, recalling the immense powers he has, he declares:

"I am the son of him who shatters the mountain peaks and is the friend of the fire, the mighty and incommensurable Vāyu, who circulates in space, Marutā, of impetuous bounds, rapid pace and great soul. A thousand times am I able without pausing to encircle Meru, that great colossus that appears to lick the heavens. With my strong arms, churning up the sea, I can inundate the world with its mountains and rivers and lakes; with my thighs and legs I can cause the ocean, the abode of Varuṇa, with its great denizens to overflow. I can encircle Vainateya,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

revered by all, who feeds on serpents, a thousand times while he courses once through space. What is more, I am able to reach the sun which rises in glory crowned with rays, before it sinks in the west and return without touching the earth. I can leap beyond the stars and the planets, suck up the ocean and rive the earth; I can shatter the mountains with my bounds and, in the immeasurable energy of my leaping, I can cause the sea to overflow. When I mount into the sky flowers from countless trees and shrubs will be borne away by me on my aerial course this day and, studded with flowers, my path will resemble the Milky Way."<sup>12</sup>

We are now exposed to Hanumān's physical powers, and from this point on in the narrative, it is mainly these that come into play. While he does not renounce or reject the other aspects of his personality, it is definitely the physical that now begins to dominate Hanumān's role. Most of what he accomplishes henceforth is based on his might and bodily strength. The greatest exhibition of this is, of course, in the leap that he makes over the ocean to Lanka. Vālmīki provides a graphic description of this incident that has all the grandeur of a cosmic voyage. While this leap will be analyzed at length later, a few of the major incidents in it should be mentioned at this juncture.

Hanumān takes off from Mount Mahendra and the pressure he exerts on the mountain results in a chaotic outburst. Treasures issue from the mountain, animals are upset and disturbed, trees are uprooted as Hanumān soars through the air like some great bird. The mighty Ocean,

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 2:322-23.

Sagara, thinks that Hanumān might be in need of rest, asks the mountain, Mainaka, to raise itself, that Hanumān might stop on its peak. Mainaka tells Hanumān how Vāyu had saved him from the wrath of Indra.

Then, to test Hanumān's courage and strength, the Celestials call upon Surasa, the mother of the serpents, to transform herself into a demon and delay Hanumān awhile. She tells him he is bound by the gods to enter her mouth, which he does. By reducing himself in size, he flies in and out of her mouth and on his way again. The last obstacle is the demoness Singhhika, who secures her prey by appropriating its shadow. Hanumān once again reduces his size, enters her body, and tears up her entrails. He finally reaches Lanka, where he is accosted by Lankini, the goddess of the island, whom he pushes away in exasperation. She tells him of Brahma's prophecy that, the day she is overcome by a monkey's force, the doom of Lanka is at hand.

Hanumān begins to search the city for Sītā, but with no luck. After nearly giving up, he finds fresh determination to continue the search. He decides to look in the sacred Ashoka grove, convinced that he will find Sītā there:

"Truly this beautiful grove is worthy to be the abode of that chaste consort of the king of men, Rāma. If that goddess, whose countenance resembles the moon,

still lives, she will inevitably visit this river of cool waters."<sup>13</sup>

Hanumān finally sees Sītā leaning against a tree. She is guarded by a horde of ghoulish female demons. He watches Rāvana come to her and threaten her unless she marries him, but Sītā remains firm in her faith that Rāma will rescue her. Hanumān decides to reveal himself to Sītā:

" . . . in this insignificant form, a monkey shape, if I assume a human voice and speak in sanskrita, like a sage, Sītā will deem me to be Rāvana and she will be terrified! How can I persuade Sītā to listen to me without inspiring fear in her? . . . I shall speak to her of Rāma of immortal exploits, for then his dear consort will not be afraid of me since she is wholly absorbed in the thought of her Lord."<sup>14</sup>

Ever since Hanumān's arrival in Lanka, we see him as an extremely thoughtful and cautious being. Filled with the impact of the mission entrusted to him, he thinks before acting and weighs the pros and cons of every situation as demonstrated in the quoted passages above. He is aware of the responsibility he has to bear and displays an independent thought process in searching for the best solution to the problems that keep arising. He controls his natural impetuosity and acts after great deliberation.

When Sītā sees him, she is uncertain of whether to trust him, but he convinces her of his authenticity as

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 2:371. <sup>14</sup>Ibid., 2:406.

Rāma's messenger and gives her Rāma's ring: "I am the messenger of the son of Dasratra and have come here to thee, to carry out Rāma's purpose. Know me to be Sugrīva's minister and the Wind-god's son!"<sup>15</sup>

Hanumān offers to rescue Sītā and carry her away on his back, but Sītā refuses the offer and gives him her jewel to take back to Rāma.

Hanumān decides to provoke the demons in some manner so that he can make an estimate of their strength and carry the news back to Rāma. He destroys the Ashoka grove, slays the Kinkara's and burns the temple. He also kills hordes of the demons sent to capture him, including Jambulin, the sons of Rāvaṇa's ministers, five generals and their forces, and even Rāvaṇa's son, Aksha. He finally allows himself to be overcome by the Brahmā weapon loosed by Indraajita, out of respect for Brahmā. He is taken before Rāvaṇa, where he reveals himself as "the servant of Rāma," and warns Rāvaṇa that the end is near as he had provoked a confrontation with Rāma. Rāvaṇa orders him to be put to death, but Vibhishāṇa intercedes on his behalf. Hanumān's tail is set on fire--he escapes his bonds and sets fire to the city of Lanka. He returns to check on Sītā's safety and then, once again, leaps through the air to rejoin his comrades.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 2:417.

He announces to them, "I have seen the goddess!"<sup>16</sup> and recounts his adventures to them:

"Single-handed, I have laid Lanka low and, setting it on fire, have reduced it to ashes. On every highway I proclaimed aloud; 'May victory crown the invincible Rāma and Lakshmana! May the king, Sugrīva, whose support is Rāghava, prosper. I am the servant of the king of Kosāla, the offspring of Pavana! I am Hanuman!' I have announced this everywhere."<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that after making the leap and seeing Sītā, Hanumān's perception of himself has changed. While he had earlier spoken of himself as Sugrīva's minister and ally, he now describes himself as Rāma's messenger or servant.

On their way back to Kishkinda, the monkeys stop at Madhuvan and, in excitement and exultation, destroy it. Hanumān then recounts his exploits to Rāma and gives him news of the pining Sītā. Rāma clasps Hanumān in his arms and praises and thanks him.

Hanumān tells Rāma about the military strength of the demons and of the layout of the city. The preparations for battle begin. Rāma chooses Hanumān to be his mount: "I, myself, mounted on the shoulders of Hanumān, like Indra on Airāvata, will march in the centre of my troops in order to encourage them."<sup>18</sup>

Before the battle, Vibhiṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa's brother, defects to Rāma's side. The other monkeys are suspicious of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 2:474. <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2:485. <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 3:9.

his intentions, but Hanumān cautions them and advises Rāma to allow Vibhiṣaṇa to explain himself. Vibhiṣaṇa then becomes a trusted ally.

After much plotting, planning, and spying by both sides, the battle proper begins. The monkeys reach Lanka by building a bridge across the ocean. There are a number of battles, between troops and between individual heroes, which are described in detail. Hanumān is everywhere on this battle-field, causing great losses to the demons and rallying his own troops.

At one point in the battle, both Rāma and Lakshmana are struck down by the arrows of Indraajita. Both are healed by Garuda.

Hanumān slays Dhumaraksha and Akampana. After this, there is the first armed encounter between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. In this battle, Hanumān is always at Rāma's side and adds his own mighty blows to those dealt by Rāma. When Rāvaṇa injures Lakshmana, Hanumān causes the demon to swoon with the power of his fist, and then picks up Lakshmana and carries him to safety. He is soon back in the thick of things as Rama's mount: ". . . Rāghava climbed on the shoulders of that great monkey, as Viṣṇu on Garuda, in order to fight the Enemy of the gods."<sup>19</sup> Hanumān helps Rāma in his battle with Kumbhakarna, the mountainous brother of Rāvaṇa. This is the encounter in which Rama uses Vāyu's weapon.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3:154.

Indrajita, Rāvaṇa's son, causes havoc in the monkey army. Rāma and Lakshmana decide to fall prey to his arrows so that he returns to the demons' camp to rejoice, thereby giving the monkeys a chance to regroup. Seeing the heroes unconscious, the monkey army falls into disarray and is prepared to give up. The dying Jambavan asks about Hanumān:

" . . . should the valiant Hanumān still live, even if the army has been destroyed, it is not destroyed! If Maruti yet lives, O Dear friend, he, the rival of Marutā, the equal of Vaishvarāra in power, then there is still the possibility of survival!"<sup>20</sup>

He then says to Hanumān:

"Come hither, O Mighty One, it is for thee to deliver the monkeys, none other has the power and thou art their best friend. This is the moment to demonstrate thy prowess, I see no other; do thou bring joy to those brave troops of bears and monkeys! Heal those two unfortunate beings, Rāma and Lakshmana, of their wounds. Prepare to cross far above the great path of the ocean in order to reach Himāvat, the highest of mountains, O Hanumān."<sup>21</sup>

Jambavan directs him to Himāvat and asks him to bring back special medicinal herbs to heal the two warriors. Once again, Hanumān takes off through the air to reach the mountain. Unable to identify the herbs, he uproots the entire peak and carries it back to the battle-field. The injured are revived and Hanumān carries the peak back to Himāvat.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3:215.      <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3:216.

The battle continues. Hanumān slays Nikumbha, and then helps Lakshmana fight Indraajita and his troops. In the final battle with Rāvaṇa, Lakshmana is struck down once more. The monkey, Sushena, sends Hanuman to Mount Mahodaya to fetch medicinal herbs. Once again, Hanumān brings back the entire summit of the mountain, and Lakshmana revives.

Rāvaṇa is finally slain and Rāma sends Hanumān to Sītā to give her the good news. Overjoyed, Sītā praises Hanumān:

"Thy speech which is characteristic, urbane, and dictated by the eight-fold intelligence, is worthy of thee. Thou, the exceedingly virtuous son of Anila art deserving of praise! Assuredly, strength, prowess, knowledge of the scriptures, courage, boldness, superior skill, energy, endurance, steadiness, constancy, and humility, these brilliant qualities and many others are to be found in thee!"<sup>22</sup>

After she is restored to Rāma, through the trial by fire, Rāma sends Hanumān ahead to Ayodhya to tell Bharata all that has occurred. Bharata is elated and bestows a number of gifts on Hanumān.

Rāma is crowned king of Ayodhya. As part of the ceremonies, monkeys are sent to fetch water from the four seas. Hanumān is sent north: ". . . and Hanumān, the marvelous son of Anila, who was as swift as the wind, with his

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 3:331

huge urn, encrusted with diamonds, drew water from the icy northern sea."<sup>23</sup>

It is finally time for the monkeys to leave Ayodhya and return to Kishkinda. They all receive gifts from Rāma and Sītā.

Then Vaidehi, the delight of Janaka, prepared to bestow her own necklace on the son of the Wind as a token. . . .

Thereupon, the dark-eyed Sita gave the necklace to the son of Vāyu, and Hanumān, in whom courage, strength, glory, skill, capability and reserve, prudence, audacity, and prowess were ever to be found, that lion among monkeys, adorned with that necklace, looked as radiant as a mountain covered by a white cloud silvered by an aureole of moonbeams.<sup>24</sup>

In the Uttara Kānda, which was added later, there is a slightly different account of Hanumān's departure. In farewell to Rāma, he says:

"I shall ever hold thee in the greatest affection, O Prince, my devotion is thine forever, O Hero, nor shall I give my allegiance to any other object. As long as thy story is told in the world, assuredly life will remain in my body. O Valiant Rāma, the Apsaras will recount thine history and all thy divine exploits and details to me. O Joy of the Raghus, O Lion among Men, and listening to them, O Great Hero, the nectar of thy deeds will dispel all mine anxieties, as the wind chases away a flock of clouds."<sup>25</sup>

And Rāma replies:

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 3:130. <sup>24</sup>Ibid., 3:368-9. <sup>25</sup>Ibid., 3:516.

"Undoubtedly, it will be so, O Best of Monkeys, as long as my story is current in the world, so long will thy fame endure and life stay in thy body. For every service thou hast rendered me, I would give up my life and still remain thy debtor, O Monkey. In mine heart, the memory of what thou has done for me will ever abide, O Hanumān."

Thereafter, taking from his neck a string of pearls from which an emerald as bright as the moon hung, Rāghava placed it around Hanumān's, and with that rope of pearls falling on his breast, the monkey appeared as radiant as Mount Sumeru when the moon passes over the summit of that golden peak.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 3:516.

## CHAPTER II

### HANUMAN'S ANTECEDENTS AND CHILDHOOD

There are two versions of Hanumān's birth. The simpler one attributes his birth to a decree of Brahmā's, whereby all deities are asked to beget sons to help Viṣṇu, in his incarnation as Rāma, to overcome Rāvaṇa. This is the version provided in the first book of Rmāyana. In the Kishkinda Kānda and the Uttara Kānda, however, we find much more colorful accounts of Hanumān's birth and early childhood. The Kishkinda account is provided by the king of the bears, Jambavan, when he reveals Hanumān's powers to him before he leaps to Lanka. The Uttara Kānda account is given by the sage, Agastya, to Rāma.

Both of Hanumān's parents are divine. His father is the Wind god, Vāyu, and his mother is the Apsara Punjika Thala, who was cursed to be reborn among the monkeys on earth. She was born the daughter of the monkey king, Kunjara, and became the wife of Kesarin. Renowned for her beauty, she was one day seen by Vāyu. Entranced, Vāyu embraced and when she protested and spoke of the ignominy that could befall her, a married woman, Vāyu promised her that she would ". . . bear a son endowed with strength and

intelligence, of immense energy, of noble nature, possessed of vigour and courage and in agility and speed equal to myself.'<sup>1</sup>

Hanumān was born endowed with immense physical powers. Once, when his mother was away, Hanumān got hungry and, mistaking the rising sun for a fruit, leapt toward it with the intention of devouring it. He was protected from the sun's scorching heat by his father, Vāyu, who cooled him with his breath. Seeing the monkey coursing through space, the demon of the eclipse, Rāhu, who thought the ape was going to deny him, Rāhu, his right to devour the sun, complained to Indra. Indra, accompanied by Rāhu, went to stop Hanuman from devouring the sun. Hanumān, mistaking Rahu for another fruit, relinquished his hold on the sun and leapt toward him. He also saw Airāvata, Indra's mount, and tried to appropriate him as well. Indra, to protect Rāhu and himself, loosed a thunderbolt which caused him to fall. The fall broke the monkey's jaw and this is how he came to be called Hanumān--he of the broken jaw.

Angered by the injury to his son, Vāyu was determined to seek revenge. In Jambavan's account of Hanumān's childhood, in the Kishkinda Kānda, Vāyu stopped the winds so that Hanuman could be avenged. In the Uttara Kānda account, on the other hand, Vāyu takes far more drastic measures and retires to a cave with Hanumān. This

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<sup>1</sup>Shastri, Ramayana of Valmiki, 2:320.

resulted in great suffering--sentient beings were unable to pass urine or excreta, they were deprived of breath leading to a dislocation of their joints, Vāyu stopped the floods, and all sacred duties and ceremonies had to be suspended.

The great god Brahmā himself was appealed to by the suffering creatures. Brahmā restored Hanumān to health and vigor and Vāyu was appeased. Brahmā then said to the other gods: "'Know the truth, I will impart it to you for it is important! Hear, all of you, Manendra, Agni, Varuna, Mahesvara, Dhaneshvara, and others--this child will carry out all you have to accomplish, therefore grant him every boon in order to gratify his sire.'" <sup>2</sup>

The various gods then proceeded to bestow on the monkey boons and powers--Indra named him Hanumān and gave him invulnerability from thunderbolts; Mārtanda gave him effulgence and eloquence; Varuna granted him immunity from harm coming of the waters and his noose; Yama gave him invulnerability, immunity from disease and the boon of not ever being slain in battle; Dhanada gave him the protection of his mace; Sankara gave him immunity from his shafts; Visvakarma made him invulnerable to celestial weapons and gave him enduring life; the final boon from Brahmā was immunity from all Brahmā's weapons. Returning the thus

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 3:495.

fortified Hanumān to his father, Brahmā blessed the child monkey:

"Thy son, Maruti, will be the the terror of his foes, the support of his friends, and invincible. Able to change his form at will, he will accomplish all he desires and go wheresoever he pleases with unimaginable velocity. In order to destroy Rāvaṇa and gratify Rāma, he will perform such feats of arms that will cause everything to tremble!"<sup>3</sup>

Here again, Jambavan's account of the incident differs in minor detail. There is no mention of Rāhu; rather, Indra in his wrath hurls his bolt at the leaping monkey and, seeing how he absorbed the impact of that, granted him the boon of choosing his own time of death. Brahmā gave him the boon of invulnerability in combat.

The sage's tale (in the Uttara Kānda) goes on to say how Hanumān, now practically invincible, resorted to all manner of mischief and greatly disturbed and harassed the venerable Ṛsis who put up with him: they knew the source of his powers. Finally, he was cursed by Ṛsis in the line of Bhṛgu and Angiras:

"Since, in the knowledge of thy power, O Plavangama, thou dost harass us, by the adverse effect of our curse, thou shalt become unaware of it for a long time, but, when it is remembered by thee, thou shalt be able to wield it effectively."<sup>4</sup>

Hanumān then grew up to be the close friend, ally, and minister of Sugrīva. He lived in ignorance of his

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3:496. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3:497.

capacities and so was unable to help Sugrīva in his fight against his brother, Bāli. To learn grammar, Hanumān went to the Sun god and applied himself with great diligence. He had knowledge of "the Sutras, their Commentaries, their meaning, and the synthesis."<sup>5</sup>

That prince of Monkeys became an accomplished scholar and none equalled him in the Sastras nor in the interpretation of the Prosody. In all the sciences and in the rules of asceticism he rivalled Brihaspati.<sup>6</sup>

It is generally held that the last books of Valmiki's Rāmāyana, i.e., the Bāla Kānda and the Uttar Kānda, are later additions to the epic. It is in these books that the divinity of Rāma is clearly indicated. On these grounds, one could say that Jambavan's story of Hanumān's childhood (which is the less elaborate one), found in the Kishkinda Kānda, is the earlier of the two accounts. The detailed version found in the Uttara Kānda is the story told by the sage to Rāma, who had inquired about this incredible monkey's ancestry.

While the version in the Kishkinda Kānda is somewhat low-key, it still establishes Hanumān as a superior monkey and the only one capable of undertaking the leap to Lanka. In the Uttara Kānda story, there are two references to Hanumān having been given his powers for the furtherance of Rāma's purpose. The first reference, quoted earlier, was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3:497. <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3:497.

when Brahmā gives the newly empowered Hanuman back to his father, Vāyu, and says that he will work for the destruction of Rāvaṇa and the gratification of Rāma. In another passage quoted earlier, there is a hint of Hanumān's powers being for an exalted purpose--this is at the point when Brahma asks the gods to grant him boons, for he would be the one to help them accomplish their tasks. The most explicit reference is at the end of the sage Agastya's narration of Hanuman's story to Rāma. Agastya says: "'O Rāma, on thine account, the gods created Hanumān and the other foremost of monkeys. . . .'"<sup>7</sup> This ties in with the first mention of Hanumān in the Bāla Kānda, where, once again, Rāma is clearly an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Here, Brahmā asks the gods to incarnate as the companions of Viṣṇu-Rāma, to help him overcome Rāvaṇa:

. . . the cherished offspring of Pavana was Hanumān, whose body was as hard as diamond and whose speed equalled Garuda's; and amongst the innumerable dwellers in the woods, he excelled in wisdom and courage.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, we find that only in the context of Rāma's indubitable divinity is Hanumān characterized as having been born for the purpose of helping Rāma. In both the earlier and the later versions of Hanumān's story, Hanumān's powers are accorded him because of the important functions of his father, Vāyu. Had Vāyu not

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 3:498. <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 1:45.

tormented the world so, Hanumān could not have received all the extra powers that he did from the gods. He would have had the powers he was born with, which themselves were not ordinary.

Nevertheless, with the powers he receives, Hanumān becomes a somewhat composite figure. Because of his mixed parentage, he should be casteless, but this same parentage makes him semi-divine. His natural prowess, a consequence of his being the son of Vāyu, is augmented by boons which give him the potential to be a practically invincible warrior. He has immunity from most divine weapons as well as the boon of not being slain in battle. This apart, from his father, he inherits immense physical strength and immeasurable speed.

Another facet of his personality is that of the learned scholar and the ability to be a wise and shrewd minister. His scholarship extends over astronomy, grammar, and the scriptures. This aspect of him is decidedly brahmin, while the warrior aspect covers the functions of a ksatroya.

In later mythology, Vāyu is mentioned as a Mārut: "As a Mārut, Vāyu is the only one to 'have great fame' in the sky, the other Māruts being distributed, one in the world of Indra, one with Brahmā, and four in the four directions

of the followers of Indra. . . ."9 The Māruts are the storm winds generally associated with Indra in his aspect of lord of lightning and thunder. Dumezil<sup>10</sup> points out that the Māruts become the celestial counterparts of the Vaiśya caste. Through his connection with the chief Mārut, Vāyu, Hanumān, too, could be seen as incorporating the Vaiśya aspect into himself.

In his role as the constant servitor, Hanumān also takes on the primary characteristic of the Śudra caste. While he is not restricted to carrying out only Śudra duties, the fact that a major part of his personality and role is defined in terms of service brings in the Śudra aspect.

The circumstances of his birth, i.e., his mixed parentage, make him an outcast in that he is casteless.

Thus, we find that Hanumān fuses and represents the castes and even the fifth level of the outcast. His varied functions are reflections of the fourfold division of caste functions in Hindu society.

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<sup>9</sup>E. W. Hopkins, Epic Mythology (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1969), p. 94.

<sup>10</sup>George Dumezil, The Destiny of a Warrior, trans. Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

## CHAPTER III

### VĀYU

A complete analysis and understanding of Hanuman is not possible without a careful look at his father, Vāyu, the Wind god. Hanumān has inherited many of Vāyu's traits and functions and these will be traced in the course of this chapter.

Vāyu is among the early gods of the Vedic pantheon. Many of the initially important gods of Vedic religion fell into decline with the rise in status and power of the dominant triad of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. As subordinate to these three great gods, the older, more elemental divinities became more like demigods. However, much of early Vedic mythology is devoted to detailing the exploits of the personified and anthropomorphized natural elements.

In the Vedic scheme of gods of the air, atmosphere and earth, Vāyu falls into the first category. A.B. Keith<sup>1</sup> distinguishes between Vāta and Vāyu, where for him, wind, as Vāta is the more elemental aspect while wind as Vāyu is the more divine aspect. Vāyu is the drinker of Soma,

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<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, The Mythology of All Races, 6 vols., ed. Louis Herbert Gray (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1917).

the elixir of immortality. He is often associated with Indra. Vāta, on the other hand, becomes the breath of the gods--he is heard but not seen. Vāyu is the gentle one, the bearer of perfumes, soft breezes, he comes in the early morning to drive away demons. Vāta is more associated with high winds. Both aspects are in essence dynamic, but while Vāyu is gentle, Vāta is more forceful. Hopkins<sup>2</sup> provides a detailed analysis of Vāyu and his functions. He points out that when the natural phenomenon is being referred to, then the names Vāta and Vāya are preferred, but the name Mārutā is what connotes the Wind divinity.

In the context of epic mythology, Vāyu is a complex character. While his primary role and function is that of the wind, there are a number of other things that he is associated with. He is referred to as "lord of life," and the soul of all as he is thought of as dividing himself and entering the body as the five pranas, i.e., the life-breaths. In this capacity, he is also called "devādeva," or "lord of the senses." He is thus bound up with the most fundamental aspect of being, as it is he who animates the body.

The longest passage to Vāyu in the Rāmāyana is in Agastya's account of Hanumān's childhood, when Vāyu has to be appeased after Hanumān has been struck down. Brahmā

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<sup>2</sup>Hopkins, Epic Mythology.

himself describes Vāyu thus:

" . . . and Vāyu, the bodiless, circulates in every body. A body bereft of Vāyu is like a piece of wood, Vāyu is the vital breath, Vāyu is felicity itself, Vāyu is the universe; without Vāyu the whole world cannot be happy; now that the universe is bereft of Vāyu, it is deprived of life; all creatures without breath are as boards. For not having honoured the son of Aditi, we must seek out Māruta, the author of our ills, lest we perish."<sup>3</sup>

Vāyu is typical of freedom. He cannot be bound. His essence is motion and it appears as though he is the essence of motion as well. In this context, he is called Satāgata and Sadāgatī. Vāyu moves through the air, he is the swiftest of beings, often described as "swift as thought."<sup>4</sup> Speed and strength are his primary attributes and many of his feats rely on the use of these powers.

In later epic mythology, and in the Purānas, Vāyu is depicted as a great moralist. He comes to be known for his moral eloquence and there are incidents of his discoursing on dharma. One of these is in the myth of Pururāvas, who ". . . with the wind god and Kasyapa, he holds learned conversations."<sup>5</sup> Here, Vāyu displays his learning and erudition and ". . . holds windy discourses on castes and kings. . . . He says he is 'the messenger of the gods' who speaks from the sky. . . . He tells how he retreated from

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<sup>3</sup> Shastri, Ramayana, 3:494.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

Angiras into the Agnihtra and lectures on privileges, Brahmā's birth, etc."<sup>6</sup> He is also mentioned in connection with sectarian tenets and teachings: "In Brahma's third birth (as logos), Nārada imparted it to the Ṛsi Suparna whence it came to Vāyu and from him to the Rsis Vighasasins . . . . The Bhr̥gu-Angirasa-Vamsajas 'not very angry,' while in cursing Hanumat, perhaps recognising in him the future scientist and grammarian. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

Besides all this, Vāyu is also a major warrior god. He is a warrior in that he is associated with Indra, the chief of the warrior gods. Vāyu is the strongest of the gods, stronger even than Indra himself. He has physical power, while Indra has fighting ability and wiliness. In his warrior capacity, Vāyu is the guardian of the north-western region.

After Vāyu is depicted as Vāsavaduta--the messenger of Indra, who is the lord of the Vāsus. The Vāsus and the Māruts are both fighting attendants of Indra and, though the number of names of the Vāsus vary in separate listings, Vāyu is always among them. The Māruts are storm winds that are associated with Indra and, here again, Vāyu is drawn into Indra's circle of influence. The clearest delineation of the Indra-Vāyu connection is displayed in the Vṛtra myth. After Indra's bloody battle with the demon, Vṛtra, Indra runs away, unsure of whether he has

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 95. <sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 179-80.

actually killed the demon. While all his other allies desert him, Vāyu stays and is sent as a scout to ascertain the death of Vur̥tra.

Dumezil<sup>8</sup> posits an extremely interesting theory with regard to the connection between Vāyu and Indra. He holds, that in pre-Vedic times, there were two separate, distinct warrior-god types, represented by Indra and Vāyu, that were fused in Indra in the period of the Rg Veda. The distinction between the two types of warriors that they patronize is continued and clearly shown in the Mahābhārata, through their sons. In the Mahābhārata, the son of Vāyu is Bhima and that of Indra is Arjuna: "Bhima, son of Vāyu 'the wind' is a brutal and not very intelligent Hercules, one who acts readily on his own, armed with a simple mace, but above all, sustained by his colossal force."<sup>9</sup>

In Dumezil's scheme of tripartite function, Indra and Vāyu represent the double aspect of the warrior function--the brutal and the chivalrous, each patronizing a different sort of martial behaviour: "Two varieties of physical force, bala and vīrya, the first certainly more athletic and brutal, are attributed to the two gods and the two heroes of the second function, Vāyu and Indra, himself, Bhima and Arjuna."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Dumezil, Destiny of a Warrior.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 73. <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

Apart from this, Dumezil also mentions Vāyu's function as Indra's messenger and scout:

. . . in the Vāyu-Indra relationship as it appears in the Rg Veda and certain rituals, Vāyu goes first; and his privilege is justified by the fact that, of all the gods, only Vāyu, confident in his vapidness, dared to act as a scout in the 'Urtra affair.'<sup>11</sup>

Dumezil also quotes the Markandeya Purāna, where Indra's killing of Urtra is a sin (he slew him after making a pact of friendship with him). Consequently, Indra's physical force escaped his body and entered that of Mārutā (Vāyu) "who penetrates all, invisible, the supreme divinity of physical force."<sup>12</sup>

Through the above analysis, Vāyu's warrior function is clearly established. But there are a number of other features and functions that Vāyu represents, nearly all of which are inherited by his son, the mighty Hanumān.

In the Rāmāyana itself, Vāyu makes a few minor appearances apart from the frequent references to him in the story of Hanumān's birth and childhood.

He comes to Lakshmana on the battlefield and advises him to use the Brahmā weapon against the demon, Atikāya. At another point in the battle, Rāma uses Vāyu's weapon, the Vāyavya, a weapon with the power of the wind: "Then Rāma, taking up another arrow named Vāyavya, loosed it against that ranger of the night and cut off the arm with

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.139. <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

which he held the mace."<sup>13</sup> Both these appearances are in his warrior capacity--he appears as such in the Mahābhārata, too, where he teaches Arjuna the use of arms. His final appearance, in the Rāmāyana, is at Rāma's coronation when he, along with various other deities, present gifts to Rāma. Vāyu's gift is a necklace: "Thereafter, on Vāseva's command, Vāyu bestowed on Rāghava a brilliant golden garland embellished with a 100 lotuses."<sup>14</sup> Here, again, Vāyu does things at Indra's command. Having analyzed Vāyu, Hanumān must now be placed in Vāyu's frame of reference to demonstrate how he parallels many of his father's roles and actions.

First of all, Hanumān has inherited all of Vāyu's physical powers. As Vāyu is the strongest of the gods, so Hanumān is by far the strongest of the monkeys. Hanumān has all of Vāyu's speed, and, while Vāyu is referred to as moving "swift as in thought" on a number of occasions, especially on reaching Lanka after his leap, Hanumān's movements occur in thought. For example, after he has found Sītā and then is captured and escapes from the demons, he wants to see her before he leaves. At this point, the narrative mentions that he is already with Sītā "in thought," implying the rapidity of his movements.

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<sup>13</sup>Shastri, Ramayana, 3:187.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 3:201

Hanumān clearly embodies Vāyu's warrior aspect. He is the mightiest of the monkey warriors and his feats as a warrior fall within Dumézil's<sup>15</sup> distinction of the Indra's and Vāyu warrior types. Hanumān is obviously a fighter who relies on his brute strength in battle, much like his half-brother and counterpart in the Mahābhārata, Bhīma.

Hanumān maintains Vāyu's connection with Indra through his own connection with Angad, the son of the slain Bāli. Indra is Bāli's father and, hence, Angad is Indra's grandson. The parallel in the connection continues--when Sugrīva, the monkey king, sends out troops of monkeys to locate Sita, he places Angad in command of the mission to the south. Even though Hanumān is the chief agent in this mission, the mission is, nonetheless, under the command of Angad. As Vāyu acted as a scout for Indra, so Hanumān is a scout for Angad--he always goes first (in keeping with Vayu's Rg Vedic function, as pointed out by Dumézil). Not only does he open up the unknown terrain; it is Hanumān who is sent to find Sītā in Lanka. He is entrusted with this task because of his speed, as Vāyu was entrusted with the task of checking on Vṛtra's death. The Vāyu/Indra, Hanumān/Angad parallel is practically complete.

Vāyu is the guardian god of the northwestern region. Hanumān's role as a guardian is most clearly delineated not in the Rāmāyana, but in a strange incident in the

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<sup>15</sup>Dumézil, Destiny of a Warrior.

Vana Parvan of the Mahābhārata.<sup>16</sup> Hanumān's half-brother, Bhima, is wandering in the forest trying to find flowers for Draupadi. He comes upon Hanumān, lying asleep with his tail across the path. Bhima wants to cross over him and continue along the path, but Hanumān stops him and says:

" . . . this road cannot be travelled by mortals, that is the reason why I am stopping you from going on this road, which is cherished by the gods, lest anyone assail and curse you, Bhārata. For this is a divine pathway, no humans travel it. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Hanumān's learning and erudition, a continuation of Vāyu's, is indicated in many places; first and foremost, by the fact of his being Sugrīva's minister. Hanumān is renowned as a grammarian and commentator. In his very first encounter with Rāma and Lakshmana, Rāma says of Hanuman:

"O Saumitri, answers Sugrīva's counsellor, who is eloquent and warmhearted and the subduer of his foes in courteous terms. Only one versed in the R̥g Veda and who is conversant with the Yajur and Sāma Vedes, would speak thus. He has studied grammar thoroughly and though he has spoken at length, it has been void of error. I see nought to offend, either in his mouth, his eyes, his brow, limb or attitude. His speech is neither lacking in fulness, depth, assurance or distinction. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>J. A. B. van Buitenen, The Mahābhārata, 3 vols. trans. and ed. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 2:504.

<sup>18</sup>Shastri, The Rāmāyana of Vālmīki, 2:174.

Hanumān reminds Sugrīva of his pact with Rama after the rains:

Seeing this, the resourceful Hanumān, the eloquent son of Mārutā, conversant with all that ought to be done and knowing the appropriate time for the performance of duty, approaching the king of the monkeys . . . spoke to him with confidence, in well-chosen words, inspired by respect and affection, words that were pleasing, full of good sense, practical, true, salutary, in accord with the law and duty, expedient and diplomatic.<sup>19</sup>

Then, again, Agastya describes him to Rāma:

"That Prince of Monkeys became accomplished and none-equalled him in the Shastras nor in the interpretation of the Prosody. In all the sciences and in the rules of asceticism, he rivalled Brhaspati. By thy grace, he will become a Brahmin conversant with the meaning of the most recent grammatical systems."<sup>20</sup>

As Vāyu discourses on dharma and duty, so does Hanumān. He advises Sugrīva (as indicated above), dissuades Angad from mutiny, and lectures Rāvana on righteousness. Once again, this particular ability of his is most clearly seen in the Mahābhārata incident with Bhima, when he discourses at great length on duty. He tells him of the system of Yugas and of the slow and inevitable decline of dharma: "Abiding by your own Law, you must learn and ascertain the highest law; for without knowing the law and attending to the old, even the likes of Brihaspati

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 2:242.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 3:497.

cannot understand the Law." He gives Bhima an insight into the condition of the world and provides him with a code to live by.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, we find that Hanumān continues the roles and functions of his father of Vāyu. In most aspects, Hanumān's role is not only a continuation of Vāyu's, but even an amplification and magnification of it. His feats and his powers appear to be on a much grander scale. The only exception to this, is Hanumān as a scout for Angad. Though technically he is Angad's lieutenant, in the larger scheme, he is Rāma's lieutenant. This could be due to the displacement of Indra by the higher god, Viṣṇu, or, perhaps, due to the Indra's decline in status. Hanumān is thus a close reflection of Vāyu, except that here the reflection appears to be in a magnifying mirror--perhaps because in the context of this epic, Hanumān has a more exalted task to perform than Vāyu ever did, even at the height of his career as a Vedic divinity.

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<sup>21</sup>van Buitenen, Mahābhārata, 2:507.

## CHAPTER IV

### HANUMĀN'S LEAP -- A COSMIC VOYAGE

The leap that Hanumān makes over four hundred miles of ocean to reach Lanka in search of Sītā is not only central to the plot and narrative of the Rāmāyana, but is also central to the development of Hanumān himself. The contention of this thesis is that this almost miraculous leap causes a qualitative change in Hanumān's personality and, thereby, in his status and function in all his subsequent appearances, both within and outside of Vālmīki's Rāmāyana. The most obvious reason for focusing on this leap is (as mentioned in the first chapter) the fact that Vālmīki has expended much time and effort on the description of this event, indicating that he felt it to be significant. Let us then look at the leap as he has depicted it.

The band of monkeys that had been southward to look for Sītā find themselves on the shore of the ocean. They know that Sītā is being held on the island of Lanka, four hundred miles out to sea:

Arriving at the northern side of the southern sea, those exceedingly powerful and heroic monkeys halted there. And seeing the ocean which at times appeared to be asleep, at others playful, sometimes covered with huge waves and thronged with

aquatic animals, causing their hair to stand on end, those foremost of monkeys were amazed and became despondent. Beholding that ocean, incapable of being traversed, even as the sky itself, the monkeys began to lament, crying: "What is now to be done?"<sup>1</sup>

Angad, the leader of the mission, calls on the monkeys thus:

"Who amongst you is of sufficient stature to cross the ocean? . . . . Which valiant monkey can leap the four hundred miles and deliver the leaders of the monkeys from their great anxiety?. . . . If there be any monkey capable of leaping over the ocean, then may he show his blessed form to us and deliver us from fear!"<sup>2</sup>

The monkeys then proceed to disclose the extent of their capacities, but none measures up to the occasion.

Finally, Jambavar says:

"O Warrior, this mission will be carried out without obstruction! I will call the one who is able to accomplish it!"

Thereupon that heroic monkey sent for the foremost of the apes, Hanumān, who was sitting tranquilly apart.<sup>3</sup>

Jambavan then recounts to Hanumān the story of his birth and childhood and reminds him of the boons he has been granted by the gods. Hanumān had forgotten his supranormal capacities because of a curse put on him by

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<sup>1</sup> Shastri, Ramayana of Valmiki, 2:316.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2:317. <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2:319.

the Ṛsis for his misbehavior. In a final exhortation, Jabavan says:

"Employ thy great valour, O Hero, for thou art most fitted to do so. Bestir thyself and cross the vast ocean, O Redoubtable Monkey; the entire monkey host is eager to behold thy prowess. Arise and leap over the mighty sea, for thou surpasseth all beings in motion. Canst thou remain indifferent to the despair of all the monkeys? Put forth thy strength, as did Visnu when traversing the three worlds with three strides, O Lion among Monkeys!"

Thus acclaimed, the mighty Hanuman expanded in size and waved his tail in pleasure, demonstrating his strength. Applauded by the older monkeys and filled with energy, he assumed an unparalleled shape. . . .<sup>4</sup>

At once reminded of his powers, Hanumān is filled with confidence and vigor and proclaims his identity to all:

"I am the son of him who shatters the mountain peaks and is the friend of fire, the mighty and incommensurable Vāyu, who circulates in space, Mārutā of impetuous bounds, rapid pace and great soul. A thousand times am I able without pausing to encircle Meru, that seems to lick the heavens. With my strong arms churning up the sea, I can inundate the world with its mountains, rivers, and lakes; with my thighs and legs, I can cause the ocean, the abode of Varuṇa, with its great denizens, to overflow. I can encircle Vaitaneya, revered by all, who feeds on serpents. . . . What is more, I am able to reach the sun which rises in glory crowned with rays before it sinks in the west and return without touching the earth. I can leap beyond the stars and the planets, suck up the ocean and rive the earth; I can shatter the mountains with my bounds and, in the immeasurable energy of my leaping, I can cause the sea to overflow. . . .

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:321-2.

"I shall dry up the ocean with my constant leaping. My powers are equal to the eagle's on the wind; I know of none that surpasses the King of the Birds, the wind god, or myself. . . . While crossing the sea, my form will resemble Visnu's taking his three strides. My heart foretells that I shall encounter Vaidehi; therefore, I rejoice."<sup>5</sup>

Hanuman was cursed by the Rsis to forget about his powers:

"Since, in the knowledge of thy powers, O Plavangama, thou dost harass us, by the adverse effect of our curse, thou shalt become unaware of it for a long time, but when it is remembered by thee, thou shalt be able to wield it effectively."<sup>6</sup>

The curse and its prophecy are now being fulfilled. Hanuman has the confidence to know that he can accomplish the mission ahead of him. Though he has rediscovered his powers, he has not yet fulfilled them or fulfilled his own potential. The fulfillment lies in the leap itself and in the consequent discovery of Sītā.

Never having used his powers to their fullest extent before, it is fitting that Hanumān uses them now, for the most exalted task he has so far been entrusted with. It could even be said that nothing he had to do up to this point required the utilization of his total potential. For this, the grandest of all his missions, he has to call upon all his reserves of energy and might. If one were to follow the argument that Hanumān was created specifically to

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2:322-3. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 3:497.

further Rāma's purpose, then this is the point where he comes into his own. And there is no doubt in his mind about this either. He is aware that he stands on the brink of something momentous: "And that agile and valiant monkey, endowed with great speed, the destroyer of his foes, filled with an exalted purpose, had already reached Lanka in thought."<sup>7</sup> He does not know what lies ahead of him, but he is confident of success. He leaps, then, with faith in himself and faith in his purpose.

Hanumān leaps off the mountain in a scene of great destruction and chaos--streams of gold and silver issue from the mountain, boulders, trees, and shrubs are uprooted, serpents spew poison, animals are upset and disturbed. Hanumān courses through the air covered with flowers that had been scattered by the leap--he appears variously as a mountain, the morning star, a mass of clouds, the moon.

Having undertaken the leap, the celestials now are on his side:

Seeing that Plavaga coursing with such speed the gods, Gandharvas and Dānavas, began to rain flowers on him, and, as he sailed on, the sun refrained from tormenting him and the wind ministered to him for the sake of Rāma's enterprise.<sup>8</sup>

It is as though because he is employing his capacities (capacities that he received independently of Rāma

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2:324. <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2:331.

and his design) for the benefit of the exiled prince, the gods throw their weight behind him, not so much to be instrumental in his success, or as guides, but more as concerned protectors.

The ocean, too, wishes to help and honor this valiant monkey who had taken on this tremendous task: "'If I do not lend assistance to this lord of Monkeys, I shall be an object of obloquy to all those gifted with speech.'"<sup>9</sup> He asks the mountain, Mainaka, to raise itself out of the sea that Hanumān may rest on its summit. Hanumān sees Mainaka as an obstacle and smashes its summit with his chest. The mountain then reveals himself to Hanumān in the form of a man and tells Hanumān that he, Mainaka, owes Hanumān obeisance because of the wondrous task he has undertaken in the service of Rāma and because Vāyu, Hanumān's father, had saved him from Indra's wrath. Hanumān declines his offer of rest, for his task is yet incomplete. The gods are pleased with both the ocean and Mainaka for offering assistance to Hanumān.

The celestials decide to test Hanumān and call upon Surasa, the mother of the serpents:

"The effulgent son of the Wind is crossing the main, it is for thee to delay him awhile. Assuming the form of a terrible Rākshasi, as high as a mountain with monstrous jaws and coppery eyes, do thou reach up to the sky. We desire to test his strength and

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 2:331.

measure his fortitude to see if he is able to overcome thee or if he retires discomfited."<sup>10</sup>

Surasa rises from the ocean and tells him that she has received a boon by which none may pass her alive and that he is destined to be her food and has to enter her mouth: "'I have received this favour from Brahmā, first enter my mouth then go thy way.'"<sup>11</sup> Hanumān tricks her into opening her mouth very wide and then reduces his size and flies in and out of it.

He continues on his journey that takes him through the many celestial worlds. The leap takes Hanumān through the higher reaches of the universe, to places where ordinary mortals, let alone magnificent monkeys, can never go alive.

. . . coursing through the air, which was filled with clouds, where birds ranged and which was frequented by lions, elephants, tigers, and winged serpents. And Māruti, scattering the clouds like the wind itself, sailed on like Garuda through that firmament, which was illuminated by flashes of lightning, resembling the five fires, inhabited by beings, who, by their merit, had conquered heaven, occupied by the Deity of Fire bearing sacrificial oblations. Adorned by the constellation of planets, the sun, the moon, and hosts of stars; thronged with Maharishis, Gandharvas, Nagas, and Yakshas; pure, stainless, immense; inhabited by Vishvavasu; trodden by the elephant of the King of the Gods; that orbit of the sun and the moon, the canopy of the world, stretched by Brahmā over the earth, was visited by countless heroes and aerial beings.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2:334. <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2:335. <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2:336.

His last obstacle is the female demon, Singhika, who secured her prey by grasping its shadow. Hanumān throws himself into her mouth, travels through her body, and rips up her entrails. After slaying her, Hanumān alights on a mountain on the shores of Lanka, the first part of his mission complete.

It is clear that Hanumān does not merely jump through the air and reach Lanka. His leap has definite cosmic proportions--not only by the fact of the regions through which it takes him, but also by the fact of what appears to be its purpose. The references in the description of the leap to Hanumān being like Viṣṇu making his three strides, or the fact of Hanumān constantly being referred to as a mountain, as well as its structure and some of its motifs, call for a consideration of these factors.

Seeing the leap as a cosmic voyage is not nearly enough. The fact of its being one must have a purpose, and surely the purpose cannot be as mundane as Hanuman's viewing pleasure! On one level, of course, the purpose of the exercise is the recovery of Sītā and then the subsequent destruction of Ravana and the evil that he embodies. But if this were its only motivation, the leap need not have been quite so elaborate or momentous. It is definitely more than a device for the furtherance of the plot and deserves to be treated as more than this.

## CHAPTER V

### HANUMĀN'S LEAP -- A PILGRIMAGE

It is possible to look at Hanumān's leap and his subsequent discovery of Sītā on the island of Lanka in a grove of trees, hidden (for the most part) as a pilgrimage. David Shulman provides a description of the structure of a pilgrimage in his book, Tamil Temple Myths. Using his account as a paradigm, we can compare his description with the structure of the leap.

To facilitate this comparison, it is necessary to quote exclusively from Shulman's model of the pilgrimage:

There is often, to begin with, the long, uncomfortable journey to the shrine, which may be defined as a form of asceticism, tapas. The journey is, however, only the prelude to a deeper sense of self sacrifice. . . . He will also usually undergo an initial purification by bathing. Once the pilgrim is through the gopura, the real journey begins. This is a journey into the self, and backwards in time. . . . The worshipper first circles around the temple compound, offering obeisance at minor shrines, . . . he circumscribes the centre in an individual act of demarcation, just as the stone walls forever mark its limits. At length he will penetrate into the recesses of the main shrine and come to rest before the garbhagriha, where the image of the deity is located.

There he has arrived at the farthest reach of his wandering; hidden away in stone and darkness, as in a cave in the bowels of the earth, lies the symbol of the god, which is imbued with a divine

power whose deeds are, by nature, esoteric, it is buried, lost, to be recovered from the depths of the sea or from the darkness of the earth. . . . But the garbha-griha is, literally, the "house of the womb"; at this spot the pilgrim is conceived afresh, to be reborn without taint, with all the powers latent in the newborn child. He is not, indeed, alone in this experience, as we shall see. The very deity whom he worships also suffers at this site, a new birth, preceded by violent conception. Life enters the womb in darkness, out of the disintegration into a chaos and death of an earlier existence.

Usually there is a practical aim to be furthered by the pilgrimage; the worshipper comes in contact with a power that aids him in his mundane existence. . . . On one level, we seem to find the archaic concept of exchange: the pilgrim gives something of himself to the god or goddess, and the deity returns this offering in a renewed form. . . . More generally, the pilgrim seeks the help of the god in response to his devotion, bhakti. The act of pilgrimage is itself an expression of bhakti for the god in his specific, located home. . . . The structure provides the devotee with both material reward (bhukti) and release (mukti). The former is a clear enough goal, while the latter would, on the surface, appear to coincide with the ideal of renunciation as proclaimed in the Upanishads and later texts. . . . Pilgrimage comes to substitute for Sannyasa.<sup>1</sup>

The structural parallel between Hanumān's leap and Shulman's description of a pilgrimage are quite noticeable. The long, arduous journey to the site of the shrine is clearly embodied in the leap itself--a task so difficult that none other than Hanumān was capable of performing it.

At a later point in the same book, Shulman describes the shrine itself thus: "The shrine exists as an island

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<sup>1</sup>David Shulman, Tamil Temple Myths (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) pp. 18-19.

surrounded by the chaos of the unredeemed; outside it, evil, death, and the Kalp Age persist unchanged. The cost of maintaining a refuge from the world is isolation."<sup>2</sup>

The shrine, for Hanumān, is Lanka, the place where Sita is hidden. It is literally an island, surrounded by unknown waters. Carrying the analogy further, and taking the shrine to be not the entire island of Lanka, but specifically the Ashoka grove, the parallel structure still holds. In fact, it works even better.

Coincidentally, the sacred Ashoka is a tall, slim tree with a tapering top. This fits Shulman's idea that the towering, tapered temple gates enclose the sacred area. Outside the Ashoka grove all manner of dissolution and decadence abounds in the palaces of Rāvaṇa and his men. The sacred area is thus surrounded by "the chaos of the unredeemed." Sītā is found on the metaphorical island of the grove of sacred trees, surrounded by evil, but not touched by it.

To find this sacred area, Hanumān had to search the entire island. This could be interpreted as the motif of circumambulating the sacred area before actually entering it. The grove is the garbhariha, where the deity itself is located. This symbol of the deity is hidden away and has to be sought. Hanumān's search for Sītā fulfills these

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

conditions--she is found located in the heart of the sacred area.

However, the basic presupposition for this incident to be seen as a pilgrimage, has to be the notion of Rāma's divinity and the related notion that his divinity is fulfilled and completed by his female aspect, Sītā.

The idea of the total divinity, the Absolute, having both male and female aspects is a common one in Indian mythology and is often depicted as the inseparable relationship between the male god and his female consort. The female consort is often thought to embody the mother goddess. The male god, especially, is never quite as complete or as omnipotent without his feminine aspect, and, in fact, becomes the Absolute only in conjunction with her.

With this in mind, it is easy to see how Hanumān's task is not an ordinary one--his leap and search for Sītā is an attempt to unite the temporarily sundered poles of the divinity so that the Absolute can once more be fulfilled. This task could be undertaken and accomplished only by a being of uncommon capacity, and that is precisely what Hanuman is.

This is not a far-fetched assumption. It is indicated in the seemingly ambiguous remark that Hanumān makes to the other monkeys on his return from Lanka: "I have

seen the goddess!"<sup>3</sup> This expression of triumph is not mere hyperbole, it is a fact.

Hanumān's pilgrimage accomplishes two purposes: On the one hand, it unites the male and female aspects of the Absolute, and on the other, it is a pilgrimage of discovery for and of himself. The second purpose feeds off the first one. The discovery that Hanumān makes for and of himself is complex, but it is undoubtedly a real phenomenon and can be proven from a close reading of the text itself.

By making the leap and finding Sītā, Hanumān has, firstly, accomplished Rāma's purpose--this purpose being uniting him with his feminine aspect and essential counterpart. By being instrumental in this, Hanumān has crossed an important frontier in his own life--there is a qualitative change in his personality from now on. In this sense, it has been a voyage of self-discovery for him. In the making of the leap, he has found and used his full potential, a potential that is now forever actualized, not to be lost or forgotten again as demonstrated by the two further leaps he makes to fetch medicinal herbs to heal the injured in battle. It is as though the leap and the discovery of Sītā have concretized his powers for him and for those for whom he acts. Once again, we find this analysis returning to Shulman's notion of the pilgrimage, where he notes that at

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<sup>3</sup> Shastri, Ramayana of Valmiki, 2:474.

the sacred spot the pilgrim is reborn "without taint, with all the powers latent in the newborn child."<sup>4</sup> It also brings us to his idea of the encounter with the deity leading to an exchange between the individual and the deity. Hanumān brings to Sītā his phenomenal prowess and capacities, and Sītā returns these to him, renewed and strengthened. While this does not literally occur in the Rāmāyana text, it does occur functionally, for from this point on, Hanumān lives and acts with complete self-awareness of his potential.

In this sense, he begins a new life--a life of self-knowledge and self-awareness. To return to Shulman again, the new life has entered the womb out of the destruction of the previous existence. In the incident of Hanumān's leap, this is practically literal--Hanumān's departure from the summit of Mount Mahendra is the scene of great chaos and destruction. (This passage has been quoted earlier.) Rising from this destruction, Hanumān flies through the air, slays Singhika (again, destruction), and then reaches Lanka, where he enters the "womb," (the Ashoka grove), and returns from Lanka with his newly discovered potential as a now permanent and integral part of his personality. His old existence is conclusively over, and its symbolic destruction is the chaos around him at the start of his voyage and also at his departure from Lanka.

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<sup>4</sup> Shulman, Tamil Temple Myths, p. 19.

A few other pilgrimage structures, not connected with Shulman's analysis, can also be included. Diana Eck<sup>5</sup> points out that the term for pilgrimage, "tirtha-yatra" means "ford-journey," tīrtha," or the site of the pilgrimage meaning "ford." In leaping to Lanka, Hanumān has forded a body of water. While pilgrimage fords are usually connected with rivers, Hanumān crosses the ocean, a much larger water mass, in keeping with the cosmic nature and the greater significance of his pilgrimage. The importance of his pilgrimage lies in the fact that he makes it for himself as well as for Rāma, and because this is no ordinary pilgrimage, his fording, too, is more arduous and over a greater obstacle.

Hawley<sup>6</sup> includes two other structural motifs in his notion of pilgrimage. First, the act of traveling a distance to meet another is in itself a gesture of homage and it is usually the lesser or the younger of the persons involved who does the traveling. Hanumān, the lesser of the two beings, demonstrates his reverence in the very act of his leap, that great journey through the higher reaches of the cosmos. Secondly, Hawley claims that the goal of the pilgrimage is "darśan," which he translates as

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<sup>5</sup>Diana Eck, "Rivers and Tirthayatras," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, D.C., 23 March 1984.

<sup>6</sup>John Hawley, "The Shaping of Vision in the Poems of Urindavan," paper presented at same Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, D.C.

"auspicious sight." This is obvious in the structure of Hanumān's leap: He leaps with the objective of finding Sītā, i.e., of doing darshan; of course, the sight is auspicious as she is the goddess.

There are more indications of the change in Hanumān after he has made the leap/pilgrimage. But there are one or two other factors in the structure of this pilgrimage that are worth considering. The voyage is made over water, the great purifying agent (Hopkins), and Hanumān's passage over it could be seen as a purifactory process. This, too, matches Shulman's analysis of the pilgrimage, where the pilgrim has a purifactory bath before entering the shrine. Even if this analogy is seen as stretched, as Hanumān never actually touches water, he courses through space, and air is another purifying agent. Also, the ocean is a common symbol for Māya--Hanumān is thus crossing the ocean of Maya, which is a common bhakti motif.

This is the crux of the issue: Can it be safely suggested that the leap makes Hanumān a bhakta? A careful reading of the text would appear to support this. The contention, then, is: before leaping to Lanka, Hanumān is an extraordinary monkey, with capacities that seem to indicate that he has a vital role to play in the further development of the narrative. He is then called upon, on the strength of his ability, to perform this superhuman task of leaping across the ocean to Lanka. It is at this point that he

discovers his full potential. He makes the great leap and emerges from it a changed being. We find that the leap has the structure of a cosmic pilgrimage, and, surely, this structure is not accidental. The leap-pilgrimage unites the two roles of the Absolute (represented by Rāma and Sita), and through being the agent of this unification, Hanumān becomes a bhakta.

That the Rāmāyana, even as it was written by Vālmīki, is a work of implicit bhakti, will be disputed by few, if at all. The bhakti nature of the text is unquestionably revealed by the addition of the first and the seventh books, the Bāla and the Uttara Kāndas, where Rāma is established as the avatara of Viṣṇu. It is even more clearly established in the future retellings of Rāma's story--the Hindi Rāmcaritmānas and the Tamil Irāmavatāram of Kamban.

Thus, we find Hanumān as a major actor in a work that has a definite bhakti orientation and framework. One must now look at the text of the Rāmāyana to see how Hanuman has changed after making the leap and finding Sītā.

## CHAPTER VI

### HANUMĀN AS A BHAKTA

The first indication of the change in Hanumān is (as mentioned earlier) the fact that after his leap his extraordinary powers are crystallized into an integral part of his personality. This is the most obvious and the most visible change. He is called upon twice more in the Ramayana to make journeys of a similar miraculous nature to fetch medicinal herbs from far-away mountains. These incredible journeys are no longer anything out of the ordinary for this great monkey, and he performs them with facile ease and with none of the fanfare and momentous announcements that were such a large part of his first attempt. It is not farfetched to assume, then, that the leap to Lanka and the discovery of Sītā have allowed him not only to discover his full potential, but also, henceforth, to live and act with the complete awareness of it. The leap has been a voyage of self-discovery for the monkey.

In the first chapter of the Yuddha Kānda, Rāma felicitates Hanumān on his successful return from Lanka. In this passage, Hanumān is described thus:

. . . Rāma, trembling with joy, clasped Hanuman in his arms, who, master of himself, his mission fulfilled, had returned."<sup>1</sup>

This is the first time in the narrative that Hanumān has been called "master of himself" and surely it is of significance that he is described thus only after his leap and voyage of discovery.

But the voyage of self-discovery for Hanumān has revealed to him more than his own physical capacities. It has given him a new identity--the identity of being Rāma's instrument and messenger. Prior to his leap, he had always thought of himself and introduced himself as Sugrīva's minister and son of the Wind-god. In every incident after the leap, Hanumān introduces himself as Rāma's servant or messenger. It is as though he now functions first in that capacity and then as Sugrīva's minister. For example, in Lanka, when he introduces himself to Sītā, he says: "I am the messenger of the son of Dasratha and have come here to thee, to carry out Rāma's purpose. Know me to be Sugrīva's minister and the wind-god's son!"<sup>2</sup>

When he is attacked by Rāvaṇa's forces in Lanka, he proclaims: "I am the servant of the sovereign of Koshāla, Rāma of imperishable exploits!"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Shastri, 3:3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:417.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:440.

When brought before Rāvāna, he says:

"I permitted the Kinkaras to capture me in order to further Rāma's design for the purpose I have entered the king's presence. Knowing me to be the messenger of Rāghava, whose power is limitless, listen to my words. . . ."4

While recounting his adventures in Lanka to the other monkeys, he tells them that he spoke thus to Rāvāna: "'Know me to be Rāma's messenger and the minister of Sugrīva. It is to carry out Rāma's design that I stand before thee!'"5

There is a corresponding change in the attitude of the other monkeys towards Hanumān himself. While they had earlier regarded him with the respect due to an extraordinary comrade and colleague, there is now a distinct feeling of reverence and awe in their attitude towards him. They even start paying obeisance to him, definitely a mark of the change in his status as far as they are concerned. Some examples of this are quoted below:

Then instantly all the monkeys with glad hearts began to gather round the magnaminious Hanumān, encircling him, their faces shining with joy, drawing near to him in the excess of their felicity. Then, offering obeisance to him, they brought roots and fruits to that greatest of monkeys, born of Marūtā. . . .

And honoured by them all, as he had merited to be. . . .6

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:456. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2:482. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 2:474.

. . . their eyes fixed on the highly powerful Hanuman, gifted with velocity, having control of his senses, and honored by the Siddhas.<sup>7</sup>

This passage also indicates another change in Hanumān--he now has control of his senses, something not mentioned in pre-leap descriptions of him.

Hanumān has also discovered certain things about Rāma in the course of this incident. He has found that Rāma is "cognisant with the self"--again, something that was not alluded to earlier. There is an extremely explicit passage in which Hanumān reveals this discovery of his. His tail has just been set on fire but he notices that he feels no pain:

"In sooth, this is a wonder due to Rāma's power which I witnessed when crossing the main. If the ocean and the virtuous Mainaka acted in such a manner in reverence for him, what will the God of Fire not do? It is on account of Sītā's virtue, Rāghava's power, and my sire's affection for me, that Pāvaka does not burn me!"<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, Hanumān has found out about Rama's power in the course of his leap and not at any other time. This leads to yet another interesting feature about the leap. It appears as though this is the point at which there is a change in the orientation and the atmosphere of the story. Now things obviously begin to occur to further Rāma's design. The gods and the celestials throw their weight be-

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2:488. <sup>8</sup>Ibid., 2:463.

hind the enterprise to help Rama. Earlier, they remained largely out of the picture of the main narrative, but from the moment at which Hanumān makes the leap, they begin to be slightly more active in the story. Hanumān, too, has now Rāma's design as his sole (and soul!) motivation:

Seeing that Plavaga coursing with such speed, the gods, Gandhavas and Dānavas, began to rain flowers on him and, as he sailed on, the sun refrained from tormenting him and the wind ministered to him for the sake of Rāma's enterprise.<sup>9</sup>

The ocean decides to help him, also, for the sake of Rāma. Mainaka says to him: "The ocean king was born in the House of Raghu and, seeing thee engaged on Rāma's behalf, offers obeisance to thee."<sup>10</sup>

Indra lauds Mainaka for helping him: "It is on Rāma's behalf, the son of King Dasratha, that the monkey had undertaken this journey and thou hast welcomed him to the best of thy power, I am well pleased with thee!"<sup>11</sup>

The celestials test Hanumān in the course of his leap and call upon Surasa to delay him: "We desire to test his strength and measure his fortitude to see if he is able to overcome thee or if he retires discomfited."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the leap is a turning point not only for Hanumān, but also in the tone of the narrative. It is here that bhakti notions begin to appear and then are sustained

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 2:331. <sup>10</sup>Ibid., 2:332. <sup>11</sup>Ibid., 2:334

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 2:334.

throughout the remainder of the story. While bhakti notions are not totally absent prior to this, now they appear far more clearly and distinctly. For example, the obeisance paid to Hanumān, not only by the other monkeys, but also by the celestials, on his accomplishment. The gods begin to aid the enterprise, apparently because of Rāma's divinity and Hanumān is worthy of their veneration as the chief agent of the enterprise. This is in keeping with the bhakti notion that a bhakta and a true knower is worthy of reverence as well. Having established that there is a change in Hanumān and that this change is acknowledged by those who know him, it is now to be seen whether he has changed into a bhakta or not.

The contention is that Hanumān becomes a bhakta because he discovers the goddess and, through that, discovers the unity of the Absolute and, in the final sense, discovers himself. The indications that he has realized Rāma's special status, and his own position in reference to that status, have already been mentioned. This contention will further be substantiated from Hanumān's own perspective.

Hanumān is aware that he is the instrument of the union between Rāma and Sītā. He convinces himself to keep searching for Sītā in Lanka by thinking: "If I live, the reunion between Rāma and Sītā will be effected."<sup>13</sup> He

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 2:368.

tells Sītā: "I shall win renown for having found thee, O Goddess. . . ." <sup>14</sup>

After finding Sītā, Hanumān becomes aware of the possibility of divine grace being on his side: "With tidings of thee, I shall by divine grace be able to dispel the grief of the monkey host. . . ." <sup>15</sup>

At this juncture, Sītā seems equally aware of her divinity, for she remarks to him: "O Best of Monkeys, thou hast merited association with me, since Rāma, the knower of the self has dispatched thee as his messenger." <sup>16</sup> In fact, in the Lanka episode, Sītā is clearly not ordinary, for she is not burnt in the conflagration that Hanumān ignites on the island. She also beseeches the god of fire, by the power of her austerities, not to harm Hanumān. Hanumān acknowledges her merit, as do the Charanas.

Clearly, then, Hanumān has found the goddess, and in doing so, has found Rāma's divinity (so far unmanifest because of his separation from his feminine aspect) and himself as a bhakta. All this is indicated in the changes in him mentioned in the earlier part of the chapter. There are a number of bhakti motifs in the section on the leap and the search for Sītā. The most obvious one is the crossing of the ocean. In bhakti terminology, it is the ocean of Māyā that has to be crossed before there can be

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 2:419. <sup>15</sup>Ibid., 2:418. <sup>16</sup>Ibid., 2:410.

knowledge of the deity. Hanumān leaps across four hundred miles of ocean to find Sītā. Then there is the bhakti notion of the constant searching for the deity, which is incorporated in Hanumān's frantic search for Sītā in Lanka. And, finally, the important bhakti notion of humility, embodied by Hanumān in his constant and selfless service to Rāma after making his leap.

## CHAPTER VII

### HANUMĀN AND THE THREE STRIDES OF VIṢṢU -- Establishing a Universe

In the Satapatha Brahmana, there is a myth in which Viṣṣu takes the form of a dwarf in order to regain the three worlds from the demons who had snatched it away from the gods. The myth runs as follows: The demons were in control of the Triloka. This was against the natural order of things, and so the gods were bound to resume sovereignty of the region. However, they were helpless against the might of the demons. Finally, Viṣṣu assumed the form of a dwarf (Vāmana) and asked the demon king that he might receive all the land he could cover in three strides. Once this request had been granted, the dwarf began to expand in size until he had reached gigantic proportions. With three strides, he covered the earth, the atmosphere, and the heavens, thereby regaining the Triloka for the gods. Prior to this myth, there are allusions in the Vedic hymns to Viṣṣu making three strides. Radhakrishnan quotes the MacDonell translation of Hymn 1.154:

"I will proclaim the mighty deeds of Viṣṇu,  
of him who measured out the earthly spaces;  
who, firmly propping up the higher station,  
strode out in the triple regions, widely  
pacing."<sup>1</sup>

The dwarf myth carries Viṣṇu's Vedic function but elaborates and contextualizes it. On the surface of things, this is a simple tale of the triumph of good over evil. But this is not the entire picture. In his detailed studies of Indo-European myth, Dumézil<sup>2</sup> has spelled out a number of structural parallels that are of great significance. In the matter of the three strides, Dumézil's theory is that the strides represent a stepping forth, an opening out of new and uncharted territory. On the one hand, the new space is opened up for conquest, and, on the other, the new space is sacralized. In both cases, there is an implicit ordering of the cosmos, a definite establishment of a particular universe that is undertaken by the strider. Thus, the strider has a crucial cosmogonic function and, while he may not explicitly create, he performs the important task of first expanding, and then delimiting the boundaries of the sacred space.

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<sup>1</sup>S. Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, ed., A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>2</sup>Dumézil, Destiny of a Warrior.

Holding Dumézil's basic theory, Hildebeitel<sup>3</sup> draws attention to certain important differences in the Viṣṇu myth. He notes that in the R̥g Veda, Viṣṇu's steps open up the cosmos for the conquering Indra, but it is in the Purāṇas that Viṣṇu's strides restore the world to the gods. The important variations here are: (1) the fact that the strides are not a stepping out into totally unknown territory, but are taken from within it, but in an outward direction; (2) the territory is conquered not for the gods, but for the strider (Viṣṇu) himself, on behalf of the gods. Despite this, the implicit functions of establishing and sacralizing the space that has been "strided over" remain intact.

This function, though usually associated with a particular deity, can be taken over and performed by various other figures in a separate context. It could be argued that Hanumān in the Rāmāyana, when making his great leap to Lanka, does the same thing. He establishes the bhakti universe.

In Vālimīki's description of Hanumān's leap, there are a number of references to Hanumān appearing like Viṣṇu. For example, when Jambavan reveals to Hanumān his parentage and his powers, as a consequence of which he is the only one capable of undertaking the leap to Lanka, says:

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<sup>3</sup> Alf Hildebeitel, The Ritual of Battle (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

"Put forth thy strength, as did Viṣṇu when traversing the Three Worlds with three strides, O Lion among Monkeys."<sup>4</sup>

Just before he leaves, as he is expanding his form, Hanumān himself says: "'While crossing the sea, my form will resemble Viṣṇu's taking his three strides.'" In the course of the leap, Hanumān appears thus: ". . . that lion among monkeys seemed to be separating heaven and earth."<sup>5</sup>

On reaching Lanka, after overcoming various obstacles on the way, it is said of Hanumān: "Abandoning his gigantic dimensions, he took on his native form, as did Viṣṇu, the depriver of Bāli's power, when he made the three strides."<sup>6</sup>

Hopkins mentions that Hanumān is called Śiṣu and Śiṣuka, which is the name often given to Viṣṇu as the dwarf. Hopkins notices that Hanumān has ". . . a resemblance to Śiṣu in his leaping and roaring, and being formally likened to him, 'roaring like Śiṣu on his bed of reeds.'"<sup>7</sup>

There are other scattered references to Hanumān and Viṣṇu throughout the book--they all liken him to Viṣṇu in his role of the dwarf. If the references are not directly related to the three strides, they are about Viṣṇu's prowess in the destruction of the demons' power, e.g.,

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<sup>4</sup> Shastri, The Ramayana of Valmiki, 3:138.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2:330. <sup>6</sup> Ibid., 2:338.

<sup>7</sup> Hopkins, Epic Mythology, p. 14.

". . . while that great Plavaga, born of Mārutā, returning to his own companions, having slain the titan, enjoyed the same renown in battle as Viṣṇu when he overcame the mighty Asura of immense power. . . ." <sup>8</sup> It should be noted that all the instances of comparison between Viṣṇu and Hanuman are after Hanumān has made his leap to Lanka. Before this, in various hyperbolic passages, Hanumān is likened to various other hero and warrior gods, but never to Vāmana-Viṣṇu.

The fact of these references to Viṣṇu indicates that drawing a parallel between Viṣṇu's strides and Hanumān's leap is not fanciful. There are also some structural similarities between the two feats that should be noticed. To begin with, both incidents pit Viṣṇu and Hanumān against demons. With Viṣṇu, the confrontation is direct, while in the Hanumān story, though his leap is not a direct challenge to Rāvaṇa, he has to undertake the leap because of Rāvaṇa's actions. In both cases, then, the respective feats are necessitated by certain adharmic occurrences-- in Viṣṇu's case, it is the ruling of the three worlds by the demons, and in Hanumān's case, it is the abduction of Rāma's wife by a lustful and dissolute creature. Secondly, both the feats are accomplished by the subject when he assumes a gigantic form. Viṣṇu approaches Bāli as a dwarf

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<sup>8</sup> Shastri, Ramayana of Valmiki, 3:138.

and then expands into a huge figure; Hanumān expands his form prior to making the leap. Hildebeitel remarks that:

For if the wide strides of the Vedic god imply a great manifestation, it is only when he grows from the stature of a dwarf to that of a being who encompasses the three worlds that the nature of this manifestation as an expansion becomes explicit. . . . After the dwarf reveals his "divine, marvelous form" the gods thereby become manifest and the universe was called Vaiṣṇava.<sup>9</sup>

The expansion of the form, while it obviously helps to facilitate the accomplishment of the huge tasks, also indicates something more. It appears to be a cosmicization of the subject (i.e., Viṣṇu and Hanumān). It is not only a great manifestation, it is also a revelation of cosmic aspect--the aspect in which they are capable of founding and establishing their various universes. It indicates not only their own inherent greatness, but also sets up their identity with the universes they established.

The third similarity is in the use of the number three. While Viṣṇu makes three strides, Hanumān encounters three major obstacles in his leap--Mainaka, Surasa, and Singhika. Viṣṇu's three strides do not explicitly mark off or create the three regions, these regions are already established. What Viṣṇu does do, then, is sacralize them, and return them to the jurisdiction of the gods, and

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<sup>9</sup> Hildebeitel, The Ritual of Battle, p. 137.

the side of right. In Hanumān's leap, however, there is a direct reference to him "separating heaven and earth."

This ties in with the points made by Hildebeitel<sup>10</sup> about the movement from the inside in an outward direction, and the conquest of space by the subject for himself. Here, though the structure of the incident has remained the same, a difference has been introduced. While Viṣṇu recaptured known territory, Hanumān opens up unknown, alien, and hostile territory for conquest (both physical and spiritual) by Rāma. Viṣṇu conquers for himself; Hanumān goes on Rāma's behalf and literally opens up the space so that Rāma can move in with his troops and take over the new lands.

From this analysis, it appears that Hanumān fits Dumézil's Indo-European model more closely than does Viṣṇu. He steps out into new and uncharted territory; he appears to separate heaven and earth, which is a cosmogonic function; he encounters three major obstacles, each of which he overcomes (these obstacles could be seen as the concrete equivalents of the three areas of space), and, clearly, he opens up the new region for temporal and spiritual conquest by another.

Having established the fact that Hanumān indeed plays a cosmogonic role, it is now necessary to determine the nature of the universe he establishes. The fact that he

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

establishes a sacred universe is indicated by the references to mountains and by the fact that Hanumān transports mountains into this new region.

The sacralizing function of mountains has been discussed by Eliade.<sup>11</sup> This axis plays an integral role in the sacralizing of the universe that a particular group of men choose to inhabit. There are a number of objects that can function as this axis, and the sacred mountain is one of them. In Indian mythology, Mount Meru is the true axis mundi, other mountains can take on the role of the axis. Hawley, in his recent book, "Kṛṣṇa: The Butter Thief," has shown how Kṛṣṇa's lifting of Mount Govardhana amounts to the sacralizing of that particular region. The same theory can be applied to Hanumān's actions with other mountains. Not once, but twice, Hanumān brings entire mountains from the Himālayas to the shores of Lanka--a process that involves the bringing of the mountains from an already ordered and established space into an area that is to be ordered and sacralized.

Apart from bringing mountains to Lanka, in the course of his leap and at various other places in the narrative, Hanumān himself is called a mountain. For example, ". . . the monkey Hanumān, resembling a glorious mountain,

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<sup>11</sup> Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1959).

was wonderful to behold."<sup>12</sup> This is a description of Hanumān as he flies through the air on his way to Lanka. Then, again:

. . . that monkey shone like a cloud or a hill aglow with fireflies. . . .

. . . Hanumān shone like the star of day, encircled by a halo of rays and his plump form, of a coppery hue, caused him to resemble a mountain which is being excavated of its deposits of red ochre."<sup>13</sup>

Everywhere the son of Mārutā could be seen cleaving the air like the King of the Mountains with wings."<sup>14</sup>

Hanumān is thus not only bringing the axis mundi to Lanka, but seems to function as this axis himself. This has relevance in the context of him establishing a new sacred area: he, himself, becomes the axis around which the universe he establishes centers.

On the basis of this, it is possible to conclude that Hanumān not only establishes a sacred universe, but centers that universe by bringing in an axis mundi, or himself, functioning as the axis. The next chapter will discuss how this universe is a bhakti universe.

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<sup>12</sup> Shastri, The Rāmāyan of Vālmiki, 2:320.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 2:330.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 2:336.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HANUMĀN AND THE BHAKTI UNIVERSE

We have seen how it is possible to view Hanumān as the establisher of a universe in the last chapter. Having also established that his pilgrimage leap makes him bhakta, it could be argued that Hanumān sets up a bhakti universe by being the first one to make that leap.

This leap is the vehicle of the establishment of new universe. But the leap is not the beginning of the expansion of the known cosmos. The expansion starts with the band of monkeys under Angada being sent in the southern direction.

From the Vedic period, the north has always been the direction of the sacred and the sanctified, and the southern direction, while not completely unknown, is a region of uncertainty. While it is not categorized as strictly evil, there prevails here a certain ambivalence, and a definite danger to ordinary mortals.

Sugrīva chooses the monkeys for the southern mission with great care and ". . . sent out those endowed with

speed and valour,"<sup>1</sup> among whom were Angada and Hanumān. It should be noticed that the leaders of the mission, Angada and Hanuman, are the sons of Indra and Vāyu, respectively. This holds the Vedic connection between Indra and Vāyu and also perpetuates their functions. Indra is the great conquering god of the Vedas, and Vāyu is the one who always goes before him and is, in many ways, under the command of Indra. Under the command of Angada, Hanumān goes first in the search, opening up the area for the other monkeys and finally for Rāma.

Before sending the monkeys out, Sugrīva describes the region they are to enter. They have to cross the Vindhya mountains, Mount Ayomukha, the rivers Narmada and Kaveri, Mount Malaya (where they will find the last of the Ṛsis, Agastya), and then, finally, Mount Mahendra in the center of the ocean.

On the other side of the sea is an island, four hundred miles in length, inaccessible to men, and splendid to look upon; search there with particular care, it is the abode of the wicked Rāvaṇa,<sup>2</sup> who merits death, the lord of the Titans. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Beyond Lanka lie the regions of the Celestials, the serpents, the Gandharvas, and, finally, the abode of the Pitrs. All the regions beyond Lanka are closed to mortals and embody danger for those who cross their bounds. As

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<sup>1</sup> Shastri, Ramayan of Valkini, 2:216.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2:277.

Sugrīva mentions, Lanka, too, is inaccessible to men, but there is no mention of it being out of bounds for them, as the other regions clearly are. In fact, Sugriva exhorts the monkeys to search "all those regions which are accessible to you."<sup>3</sup>

The last bastion of sacralized space seems to be the point from which Hanumān takes off for his leap. Lanka is beyond the sacred space; it is the lair of the demons under Rāvaṇa. It is separated from the rest of the area by the ocean. Also of importance is the fact that the last sacred point is a mountain, set there by Agastya, no doubt, as the last of the axis mundi figures, a boundary marker. By leaping from this point, Hanumān is obviously making his way into previously unsacralized territory. By being the first one in the region, it is he, and not anyone else, who is responsible for the new universe that he sets up there. This is made explicit by the comparisons between him and Viṣṇu.

Curiously enough, the monkeys are called "Deer of the Trees" in the Rāmāyana. The first mention of this strange appellation is in the early part of the Kishkinda Kānda, when the monkeys loyal to Sugrīva first see Rāma and Lakshmana coming towards them: "In their terror at the sight of Rāma and Lakshmana, those monkeys concealed themselves in that pleasant solitude, the refuge of the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2:278.

Deer of the Trees."<sup>4</sup> Another use of this nomenclature is in the story of Bāli and Dundhubi, where Dundhubi addresses Bāli as "King of the Deer of the Trees."

The simple explanation for this would be that they are called such because they inhabit the trees and flit through them, much as deer live in the forest and roam freely through it. But this name takes on a significance in light of two other factors about deer. The first is that the Laws of Manu mention that the most glorious and most sacred region on earth is Āryavarta, the place where deer and antelope roam freely. This sets up a connection between deer and sacralized regions. The black antelope is also a symbol of Vedic culture and represents the Brahmin.<sup>5</sup>

The second factor is that the word for deer, "mṛga," and the word for path, "mārga," are etymologically related<sup>6</sup> and deer can be seen as pathfinders. In that sense, they are ones who open up areas, to be followed by others.

Hanumān, then, is the quintessential "Deer of the Trees," for he performs this task perfectly. Hanumān's connection with the deer and pathfinding is strengthened by his father, Vāyu. In the Māhābhārata, when Kunti is

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2:170.

<sup>5</sup>Alf Hiltebeitel, lectures on Hindu mythology, George Washington Univ., Washington, D.C., Spring 1983.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

impregnated by various deities, Vāyu comes to her, riding on a deer. The child of this liaison is the mighty Bhuma, held to be Hanumān's counterpart in the Mahābhārata by Dumezil. In Dumezil's analysis, Vāyu is the one who goes first, before Indra, and thus his connection with the deer, in the context of the deer as path-finder, is logical.

Even though Hanumān typifies this attribute of path-finding most clearly, the other monkeys participate in it as well, as they enter the southern region and even Lanka before Rāma and Lakshmana.

As a "Deer of the Trees," i.e., a path-finder and an inhabitant of sacred space, Hanumān is qualified to open up the bhaki universe. To add to this, he is also a guardian figure.

In mythology, this is clearly seen in his encounter with Bhima in the Mahābhārata, where he is asleep, guarding the path not open to mortals. In the Rāmāyana, he reaches Lanka, a spot inaccessible but not forbidden to men, beyond which lie the regions into which mortals may not enter. In both places, then, he is found on the boundary, the last edge of the space accessible to man.

Hanuman as a guardian continues to play a role in contemporary Hinduism. A. B. Keith<sup>7</sup> mentions that he is found in most villages in that capacity. Images of Hanumān are also found outside temples. Once again, in

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<sup>7</sup> Keith, Mythology of All Races.

a continuation of his mythological function, i.e., marking off the sacred space, the ordered cosmos, from chaos around.

Not only does he open up and demarcate the sacred space, he centers it as well. His bringing of mountains, symbolic of the axis mundi, to the battle-fields of Lanka has already been discussed in this context. The numerous references to Hanumān appearing as a mountain in his passage through space could be interpreted in this light as well, i.e., on his way to setting up the new universe, he himself functions as the axis mundi, sacralizing the area over which he passes. The fact that he centers the universe around himself is further confirmed in the accounts of his departure from Ayodhya. In both the accounts, with the necklace around him, he is likened to a mountain. In the Uttara Kānda, he is compared to nothing less than Mount Sumeru.

In the process of his leap, Hanumān has opened up, established and sacralized new territory. In the course of the same leap, he has himself become a bhakta and he imparts his new identity to the new universe. Rāma makes a temporal conquest of the territory opened up by Hanumān, and this can be seen as a symbol of his spiritual conquest of the same area. Hanumān brings bhakti to the new frontier and his pioneering effort is followed by the object of his devotion, the divinity himself. In a sense, Hanumān

has created the bhakti world for Rāma to walk into and claim as his own. He also creates this new space for other bhaktas, the first of whom is perhaps Vibhiṣana, who comes into it from the outside from what was previously the space of chaos. His defection to Rāma and the side of right is an acknowledgement of Rāma's temporal and spiritual authority. He is entering Rāma's spiritual domain and, like Hanumān, he, too, is starting a new life after this. Literally, the new life is as king of Lanka, but he also accepts Rāma's temporal power, and with it, his spiritual power.

The rest of Rāma's companions and aides slip into the bhakti universe easily. Literally, they walk into it behind Hanumān and metaphorically they confirm Hanumān's new insight and knowledge of Rāma.

For Shulman,<sup>8</sup> pilgrimage itself is an act of bhakti. In performing the pilgrimage-leap, Hanumān is expressing bhakti from the very outset. Along with Dumont,<sup>9</sup> Shulman<sup>10</sup> argues that the renunciation of sannyāsa has been replaced by bhakti. The pilgrimage itself is a substitute for the goal of sannyāsa. By establishing the bhakti universe,

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<sup>8</sup>Shulman, Tamil Temple Myths.

<sup>9</sup>Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, trans. Mark Sainsberry, Louis Dumont, and Basia Gulati (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>10</sup>Shulman, "The Cliche as Ritual and Instrument: Iconic Puns in Kambans Irāvataran," Nunen, vol. xxv (August 1978), pp. 135-155.

Hanumān is responsible for changing the orientation of Hinduism from the esoteric and highly philosophical aspirations of the Upanisads to an emotion-based creed. If bhakti does indeed replace sannyāsa and is a substitute for it, then Hanumān embodies renunciation in two ways--first, by making the pilgrimage, and, secondly, by the fact of his being the perpetual brahmachari, the renunciant of worldly comforts and bonds.

Shulman<sup>11</sup> also holds that bhakti orients the individual towards life in this world by sanctifying the social structure. Hanumān portrays this clearly enough by not once mentioning mukti or anything other-worldly. He is perfectly content to serve Rama in this life to the best of his ability.

Hanumān is amply rewarded for his important function by his deity, Rāma. As long as Rāma's story is told on earth, Hanumān shall have life. Clearly, Hanumān is being offered immortality for what he has done. This immortality is placed squarely within Rāma's frame of reference and sphere of influence. Outside of this, Hanumān's performance is of lesser value.

In conclusion of this section, we find that the Rāmāyana ends with Hanumān as a cosmogomic figure, and this elevates his status. This new status is reflected in his

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

further appearances outside the Rāmāyana. We have looked at his appearance in the Mahābhārata, where he is lauded by his half-brother, Bhīma, for being an exalted personage, not only for his superhuman feats, but because of his position as a bhakta. A bhakta is worthy of respect and veneration and it is this attitude that colors his depiction in the Ramcaritmanas and the Hanumān Cālīsa.

PART TWO  
HANUMĀN IN THE RĀMCAṚITMĀNAS

## CHAPTER I

### HANUMĀN IN THE RĀMCA<sup>~</sup>RITMĀNAS

Tulsidās acknowledges the change in Hanumān and, thus, the Hanumān in his Rāmcaritmānas enters the narrative as the foremost of the bhaktas. In fact, all the characters in the Rāmcaritmānas are already within the bhakti universe established by Hanumān. In the Rāmcaritmānas, the bhakti is blatant, unlike the subdued emotion in the Rāmāyana. Rāma is Viṣṇu himself, both in his absolute and his personalized form. With this change in Rāma, and in the tone and atmosphere of his story, Hānumān is the servitor-bhakta par excellence.

Tulsidās has gleaned the bhakti character of Hanumān out of the other detail that surrounds him in the Rāmāyana. Gone is the elaborate tale of his childhood and the boons bestowed on him. Gone, too, is the graphic description of Hanumān's leap--the very incident that establishes Hanumān in the Rāmāyana. It is primarily Tulsis' virtual glossing over of the leap that indicates that he deals only with the post-leap Hanumān--the Hanumān who has become the bhakta and the Hanumān who has established the bhakti universe for all the other characters to perform in.

Hanumān, in the Rāmcaritmānas, becomes the vehicle and the medium for the expression of bhakti--its dominant attitude and emotions as well as its tenets. This is Tulsi's vision of Hanumān, and he exploits the character of Hanumān as he comes out of the Rāmāyana, with fully developed bhakti personality, to its fullest. Hanumān would have been the obvious choice, in any case, to express Tulsi's bhakti creed of service, but it is Tulsi's handling of the character that makes one feel that he has assumed the incidents of the Rāmāyana as Hanumān's history and tells the same story but in a new context. All the incidents in the Rāmāyana that exemplify Hanumān's role as servitor and potential devotee, the very feats that define his personality (notably, the leap to Lanka and the carrying of mountains to Lanka) are of minor importance in the Rāmcaritmānas. One gets the feeling that Tulsi, having accepted that Hanumān emerges from the Rāmāyana a bhakta, decides to extend his role to its next logical development, i.e., that of the ideal bhakta and that of the medium of bhakti impression. We shall see how he does this by a close reading of the text of the Rāmcaritmānas.

## CHAPTER II

### HANUMĀN'S CHANGED ROLE IN THE RĀMĀYANA

A careful look at the text of the Ramcaritmanas will indicate how Hanumān's role here differs from his role in the Rāmāyana.

Hanumān is mentioned in the opening sloka of the Rāmcaritmānas, where the poet is paying homage to various gods and saints: "Homage to the lord of poets and the lord of monkeys, of perfect purity and wisdom, who haunt the holy forest that is the excellence of Rāma and Sītā."<sup>1</sup> Hanumān is immediately placed in exalted and sacred company, a definite sign of his high status and special position in this text. Later, in the opening chapter, Tulsi says:

(C17) . . . and to the mighty warrior, Hanumān,  
I make the petition, whose glory Rāma himself has  
celebrated. Yea, I do reverence to the Son of the  
Wind, very wise, a fire to the forest of evil doers,  
in whose heart Rāma, bearing bows and arrows, makes  
his home.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. D. P. Hill, The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rāma,  
(London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

Once again, Hanumān becomes a major actor in the narrative from the Kishkinda Kānda onwards. His first meeting with Rāma differs from the Rāmāyana version. He asks two princes who they are, and when they introduce themselves:

(C2) Hanumān recognized the Lord and fell and clasped his feet. His joy, Uma, no tongue can tell. He trembled with emotion, nor could he utter a word as he gazed on the form of their charming disguise. Then, composing himself, he sang their praises; glad was he at heart when he recognized his lord. (C3) "Master, though many a fault be found in me, yet not my lord forget his servant. Lord, the soul of man is bewildered by your illusive power; only your grace can release it. Moreover, I swear by Raghubir, I know no other mode of worship. A servant dwells secure if he have confidence in his master, and a son if he trusts his mother, even so can the Lord protect his own." So saying, he fell at his feet, overcome with emotion. He revealed his natural form and his heart overflowed with love.<sup>3</sup>

And in response, Rāma says:

"(C3) Harken monkey," he said; "yield not to despair. You are twice as dear to me as Lakshmana. All men call me impartial, but that servant is dear to me who looks to none other for salvation."<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, here Hanumān is operating out of a frame of reference different from that of the Rāmāyana. He is already the bhakta, has already recognized Rāma's divinity. Equally, Rāma recognizes Hanumān as his devotee and servant, even though there has been nothing in the story

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 325. <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 325.

itself up to this point to indicate any earlier interaction between the two. The only possible explanation for this already-defined relationship are the occurrences in the Rāmāyana. Taking these as a background, and accepting that Hanumān at the end of the original epic is a bhakta, we can see how this first meeting between two total strangers becomes a moment of significant recognition and definition. Obviously, the characters are interacting from within an already established bhakti world. This is a further confirmation of the fact that Hanumān has already set up this frame of reference in the Rāmāyana.

Hanumān, then, concludes an alliance of mutual aid between the princes and Sugrīva. He reminds Sugrīva of his pact with Rāma after the monsoons and then sends envoys to the other monkey leaders. The groups of monkeys go off in different directions to look for Sītā:

(C23) Last of all, the Son of the Wind made his bow, and the Lord, knowing what he would do, called him to himself and, touching his head with his lotus hands, gave him the ring from his finger, trusty servant as he was. . . . Hanumān felt this to be the crowning moment of his life, and set out with the image of the gracious lord upon his heart. Although the Lord knows all things, yet as protector of the gods, he observed the rules of royal conduct.<sup>5</sup>

The account of the search for Sītā in the southern regions in the Rāmcaritmānas is similar to that in the Rāmāyana, though it lacks the detail and the graphic

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 335.

descriptions of the former. The monkeys reach the seashore and, once again, Jambavan calls on Hanumān to leap across the ocean:

"(C30) Now listen, Hanumān," continued the king of the bears; "why do you remain silent, you who are so strong? You are the Son of the Wind and like wind for strength; in you is a store of understanding, sound judgement, and great wisdom. What feat is there in the world, my friend, too difficult for you to perform? It was to serve Rāma's purpose that you became incarnate."<sup>6</sup>

Here, Jambavan does not tell him of his powers or his childhood. It appears that Hanumān's powers are already known to all as a part of his personality and purpose. Neither is this a moment of great revelation for Hanumān, unlike in the Rāmāyana. At this point in the story, Hanumān and everyone else is aware of his capacities, which are no longer merely his potential, but his actual capability. Once again, this presumes the incidents in the Ramayana, through which Hanumān's potential power is crystallized into fact.

In reaction to Jambavar's words:

(C30) Thereupon, Hanumān became as huge as a mountain, with a body of golden hue and splendid majesty like that of a second mountain king. Roaring like a lion again and again, he cried, "I will leap across the salt ocean--it is child's play to me! And when I have slain Rāvaṇa and all his allies, I will root up Mount Trikuta and carry it back here!"<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 338. <sup>7</sup> Ibid., 338.

(C1) With his thoughts fixed unceasingly on Raghubir, the Son of the Wind leapt therefrom with a mighty bound.<sup>8</sup>

Tulsi devotes a mere five verses to the description of the leap. The main encounters with Mainaka, Surasa, and Singhika are mentioned briefly. It is not the miraculous spectacle that was in the Rāmāyana--there are no references to Viṣṇu or the three strides--perhaps because this has already been dealt with and established in the sanskrit epic. Considering that this is one of the major focal points of the Rāmāyana, and definitely the zenith of Hanumān's role and career, Tulsi treats it with seeming indifference, and this despite the special status that Hanuman has in Tulsi's bhakti and the special relationship that the poet shared with him. The indifference to the crowning achievement of the figure that was obviously his mentor can be explained only if it is seen as presuming Hanumān's greatness. This indicates a change in Hanumān's function in this version of Rāma's story. In the Rāmāyana, Hanuman's purpose was the establishment of the bhakti universe, but in the Rāmcaritmānas, his function is as the paradigm for the individual Rāma-bhakta and servitor. The Rāmcaritmānas, thus, assumes Hanumān's prior function and proceeds to deal with the new Hanumān, the bhakta.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 339.

In Lanka, Hanumān meets Vibhiṣaṇa (who is also already a bhakta of Rāma), who tells him where Sītā is to be found. Because of this, Hanumān has no need to go through the extensive search that he had to in the Rāmāyana. Once again, the pilgrimage motif is absent, pointing to its irrelevance in this context. It is irrelevant perhaps because its purpose has already been fulfilled in the Rāmāyana.

On seeing Hanumān: "(C14) She recognized him to be Hari's votary and loved him very dearly."<sup>9</sup> It is Hanumān who refuses to rescue Sītā from Lanka: "(C16) This very moment, mother, would I take you hence, but--I swear it by Rāma--the Lord does not will it so."<sup>10</sup> This is different from the scene in the Rāmāyana, where it is Sītā who seems to be more aware of Rāma's plans or, at least, is cautious about the rescue. She blesses him:

(C17) Sītā was comforted and gave him her blessing, for she knew him to be dear to Rāma: "May you abound, dear friend, in strength and goodness; grow not old nor die, my son; increase in virtue; may Raghunāyak be most gracious to you, and the lord show you his favour!"<sup>11</sup>

Hanumān is finally captured by the demons after causing immense destruction in Lanka. He is taken before Ravana, to whom he preaches bhakti:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 345. <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 346. <sup>11</sup> Ibid., 346.

"(C22) . . . err no more, but worship him who relieves his worshippers of fear. . . . (C23) Lay Rāma's lotus feet upon your heart and hold undisputed sway in Lanka. . . . (D23) Delusion is a root from which spring many woes; abandon the dark sin of arrogance and worship Rāma, chief of the house of Raghu, ocean of grace, the Blessed Lord!"<sup>12</sup>

In the Rāmāyana version of the same incident, there is no preaching of bhakti; rather, Hanumān warns Rāvana of the danger of challenging Rāma's temporal authority. While the implications of Rāma's spiritual universe being superior may be visible in the Rāmāyana, here nothing is left to the imagination. Hanumān comes right out and preaches Rāma-bhakti to Rāvana.

On his return from Lanka, Hanumān is honored by the other monkeys. They return via Madhuvana to Kishkinda, where Hanumān gives Rāma news of Sītā:

(C30) Jambavan then proceeded to relate to Raghupati Hanumān's glorious exploits; and when he heard them, the gracious Lord was pleased beyond measure and once more gladly clasped Hanumān to his bosom.

(C32) "Hearken, monkey," said Rāma; "no god or man or sage or any mortal creature has done me such a service as yourself. What service can I do you in return? There is none that I can think of equal to yours. Believe me, my son, think as I may, I realise I cannot pay my debt!"<sup>13</sup>

Rāma expresses a similar sentiment to Hanumān in the Rāmāyana, except that he does so at the time when

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 340. <sup>13</sup>Ibid., 353.

Hanumān is leaving Ayodhya. In the Rāmcaritmānas, he expresses this same emotion much earlier.

Hanumān's response to these words of praise is as follows:

(D32) When Hanumān heard what his lord had said and looked upon his face and trembling limbs, he was overjoyed and falling at his feet cried out in rapturous devotion, "Save me, save me, O Blessed Lord!" (C33) Time after time the Lord would fain have raised him to his feet, but he would not be raised, so absorbed was he in love.<sup>14</sup>

When Rama asks him how he destroyed Lanka, Hanuman replies:

"(C33) . . . all this was done by your power, Raghurai; the might I displayed, Lord, was in no sense my own. (D33) Nothing, Lord, is impossible to him to whom you show your favour; (C34) Grant me, O Lord, of your grace that imperishable faith that brings with it the highest bliss!"<sup>15</sup>

The monkeys prepare for battle. Vibhiṣaṇa decides to join forces with Rāma because he has recognized the divinity in him. In the Rāmāyana, Hanumān advises Rāma to allow the demon to explain himself, but here, Rama receives and accepts Vibhiṣaṇa the way a deity would accept an individual who comes to him for refuge:

"(C48) Hearken, my friend, while I declare to my nature. . . . Even though a man should be the enemy of all creation, if he comes to me in awe and looks for refuge, abandoning all pride, delusion, guile, and hypocrisy, then right speedily I make him like a saint!"<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 353. <sup>15</sup>Ibid., 353. <sup>16</sup>Ibid., 360.

The monkeys cross over to Lanka by building a bridge. Angada goes to Rāvaṇa as an envoy and says this of Hanumān:

"(D26) Hanumān is leaving Ayodhya. In the Rāmcarit-mānas, he expresses this same emotion much earlier. And was that Hanumān, a mere monkey, you fool, who crushed your pride and that of your army, laid waste your grove, set fire to your city, and slew your son and so returned?"<sup>17</sup>

The battle begins, and, once again, Hanumān is the cause of much destruction in the demon army. In the midst of battle, Meghānanda fells Lakshmana with his lance. At this point, there is a strange account of Hanumān being sent to fetch the healing herbs--it combines the two separate herb incidents of the Rāmāyana and adds a little more bhakti color to them.

Jambavan sends Hanumān to Lanka to fetch the physician, Sushena, who bades him fetch the herb from an unnamed mountain. Hanumān sets out, but Rāvaṇa is informed of this. The demon king goes to Kālanemi and asks him to stop Hanumān. Kālanemi is aware of Rama's true nature, and so decides that he will help Rāvaṇa because "(D56) Better were it to perish at the hands of Rāma's messenger; this villain is devoted to nothing but vice."<sup>18</sup> So he creates the illusion of a beautiful garden and disguises himself as a sage. Hanumān stops there to rest and goes to bathe in the river, where he kills a crocodile who is saved by dying

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 378. <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 392.

at his hands. She reveals to him that the sage is actually Kālanemi, so Hanumān goes back and kills him. Kālanemi dies with Rāma's name on his lips, and so he, too, is saved.

The changed version of this incident in the Ramcaritmanas is packed with bhakti motifs. Primarily, it indicates indubitably, Hanumān's special status. Death at the hands of Hanumān is liberation--he is clearly already a bhakta of great importance and power.

Hanumān cannot identify the herb on the mountain, and so he picks up the mountain and flies with it through the air. As he flies over Ayodhya, Bharata mistakes him for a demon and shoots him down with an arrow. Hanumān swoons, calling out to Rāma. Bharata runs towards him, and, seeing him in pain, says:

"(C59) . . . if Raghupati is graciously inclined towards me, may the monkey recover from his weariness and pain!"<sup>19</sup>

Bharata sends him on his way back to Lanka, seated on an arrow. Hanumān is skeptical:

"(C60) How," he thought, "can the arrow travel with my weight up on it?" Then, remembering the power of Rāma, the monkey did reverence to his feet. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Hanumān reaches Lanka in time for Lakshmana to be revived.

Here, we find that the theme of bringing the mountain into Lanka is underplayed. More important than the fact of

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 393. <sup>20</sup>Ibid., 393.

bringing the mountain to Lanka is the fact that Hanumān is able to display his bhakti at so many points in this complex incident, indicating the change in the orientation and the purpose of the incident. The analysis of the same incident in the Rāmāyana brought us to the conclusion that the mountains being carried to Lanka was a gesture of the final and concrete establishment of a universe. The lack of emphasis on the mountain-carrying in the Rāmcaritmānas can be seen as the redundancy of restating a point already made. Hanumān has already established the bhakti universe and, hence, the mountains coming to Lanka in the Rāmcaritmānas do not have the same import.

Rāvana decides to rouse his brother, Kumbhakarna, to help him in battle, but even this demon has recognized Rāma. He says:

"Even now, brother, swallow your pride and worship Rama; then all will be well. Can Raghurāyak be no more than a man, Ten-headed, when one like Hanumān is his messenger?"<sup>21</sup>

This demonstrates that even the other characters in the Rāmcaritmānas perceive Hanumān's prowess as a consequence of his being a Rāma-bhakta. In the Rāmāyana, Hanumān's powers themselves are independent of Rāma, even though it is his becoming a bhakta that makes them a permanent part of him.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 395.

As the battle continues, Vibhiṣaṇa challenges Rāvaṇa. Hanumān also joins the fray when he sees how exhausted Vibhiṣaṇa is. He rushes forward with a mountain in his hand to attack Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa catches hold of Hanumān's tail--Hanumān leaps into the air, taking the demon with him, and they continue to fight in the skies:

(C95) As they employed all their force and wiles in the upper air, it looked as though Sumeru were clashing with a mountain of soot. When the demon could not be cast down either by force or stratagem, the Son of the Wind thought on his lord." 22

Again, it is clear that Hanumān's prowess is the result of Rāma's divinity in the Rāmcaritmānas--all his marvelous feats are performed with his mind on Rāma and it is through this concentration on his deity that he is able to accomplish what he does.

Rāvaṇa is finally killed. Rāma sends Hanumān to Sītā with the news of the victory: "(C106) When Hanumān entered the city, the demons, male and female, heard of it and ran to greet him. They did all possible reverence and showed him where Jahaka's daughter was." 23

When Sītā hears the good news, she blesses the monkey: "'(D107) Hearken, my son,' said she; 'may every virtue, Hanumān, abide in your heart and may the king of Kosāla and Lakshmana ever be gracious to you! . . .'" 24

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22Ibid., 413. 23Ibid., 421. 24Ibid., 421.

Hanumān is then sent ahead to Ayodhya to tell Bharata of the imminent arrival of Rāma and Sītā. Bharata greets him thus: "'(C2) Monkey, at the sight of you all my sorrows have passed away, for today I have met in you my beloved Rāma.'"<sup>25</sup> This, again, confirms Hanumān's special status, for in bhakti, the sight of a true bhakta is as rewarding as the sight of the deity himself.

After Rāma is crowned king of Ayodhya, of all the monkeys, only Hanumān is allowed to stay on with him as servitor. In the rest of the story, he functions mainly to ask Rāma to discourse on bhakti and thus bring joy to his devotees. Hanumān is described in the Uttara Kanda thus: "'(C48) None, O Girija, so blest as Hanumān, none so devoted to Rāma's feet! How often has the Lord with his loving lips lauded his loving service.'"<sup>26</sup>

Through this examination of the text of the Rām-caritmānas, we find that, though the roles of Hanumān in this story and in the Rāmāyana are broadly and superficially the same, it is their implicit function that differs, and therein lies the key to understanding Hanumān's role in the Rāmcaritmānas as another step in his progression towards a higher status.

From a pioneering pilgrim who establishes a universe in the Rāmāyana, Hanumān in the Rāmcaritmānas comes to exemplify and be the model for the individual who wishes

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 421. <sup>26</sup> Ibid.

to participate in the new universe. In the Rāmāyana, while bhakti is not introduced into the narrative with the appearance of Hanumān, his presence allows this bhakti to continued to grow and reach its peak with his leap and discovery of Sita. After this, it remains as the substructure on which the rest of the narrative stands and comes to the surface at various points.

In the Rāmcaritmānas, the bhakti ambience precedes Hanumān's entry into the main story. The narrative now becomes a means to express bhakti--it is no longer the substructure, but rather, the superstructure in which the story itself makes appearances. However, while the creed of service is expounded on long before Hanumān's entry into the mainstream, none of the characters embody it or typify it as overtly as Hanumān. Rāma's immediate companions, i.e., Lakshmana and Sītā, are divine themselves, though Rama is the highest divinity. Other minor characters are well within the bhakti universe, in that everyone (except Ravana) recognizes Rāma's divinity and acts accordingly. Most of the demons, too, are aware of Rāma as the lord and accept their fate, hoping to die at his hands or at the hands of his chief aides, i.e., his bhaktas. This is quite different from the Rāmāyana, where Hanumān seems to be the first of the ordinary beings to recognize Rāma's true nature (the Ṛsis having known it already), and then is implicitly followed by others. The

demons, especially, accept Rāma's spiritual precedence allegorically, by accepting his temporal authority.

The fact that the bhakti atmosphere precedes Hanumān's entry in the Rāmcaritmānas points to it continuing from the Rāmāyana. Tulsi carries forward the bhakti established by Hanumān in the Rāmāyana and magnifies it to make it the all-pervasive message of the Rāmcaritmānas.

Similarly, Tulsi carries forward and magnifies Hanumān's role in the Rāmacritmānas. As Hanumān emerges a bhakta from the Rāmāyana, so he enters the Rāmcaritmānas in this capacity. There is nothing that occurs in the Rāmcaritmānas to make him bhakta--all this has already taken place in the Rāmāyana. Hanumān's immediate recognition of Rāma as the diety makes sense only if he is already a bhakta when he meets Rāma, and since there is nothing in the Rāmcaritmānas to account for this, one must assume that Tulsi takes the Rāmāyana occurrences as given.

In the Rāmcaritmānas, there is a definite sense of the determined, of the predestined. On reading the text, one gets the feeling that Rāma, especially, is re-enacting the entire scenario and drama for the benefit of the faithful. If this is the case, then Tulsi has undoubtedly taken the Rāmāyana as a history for the writing of his own work. His emphasis is not so much on the telling of the tale as it is on projecting bhakti--and, of course,

the instrument of this projection is none other than Hanumān.

Hanumān embodies the best of Tulsi's bhakti. He is the loyal and utterly devoted servant, totally selfless, surrendering his will to that of Rāma's. While in the Rāmāyana, Hanumān displays a certain amount of independence of thought and action, in the Rāmcaritmānas he acts only as Rāma's instrument. He finds fulfillment only in the performance of the deity's will and acts solely on that motivation. If one is following the development of Hanumān as a bhakta, then the Rāmcaritmānas must represent the high point of the monkey's career, for it is here that his self-surrender to Rāma is so complete that everything he does, and even everything he is (i.e., the fact that his powers are the result of Rāma's omnipotence), is a consequence of his bhakti.

In keeping with his development as a bhakta, Hanumān's reward at the end of each story differs. At the end of the Lanka Kānda in the Rāmāyana, Hanumān leaves Ayodhya with Sītā's own necklace, as an acknowledgement of his great service. In the added Uttara Kānda, where Rāma's divinity is announced, there is a more elaborate version of his departure--i.e., he swears eternal devotion to Rāma and claims that Rāma's story will ever dispel his anxieties. Rāma gives him his own necklace and grants him the boon of eternal life, i.e., as long as Rāma's story is

told, Hanumān shall live. In the Rāmcaritmānas, however, Hanumān is the only monkey who is allowed to stay on in Ayodhya with Rāma, thus achieving the bhakta's ultimate wish--to live in proximity of the deity and be of constant service to him. As his bhakta status is elevated, so his reward is greater.

All Hanumān's other functions in the Rāmāyana, i.e., those of guardian, warrior, scholar, and minister, are subordinated to his function as servitor in the Rāmcaritmānas. In the Rāmāyana, he inherits most of his powers, facets of his personality, and individual roles and functions from his father, Vāyu, but in the Rāmcaritmānas, his entire personality is a consequence of his devotion to Rāma. Tulsi has thus chosen to concentrate on and amplify Hanumān's dominant strain. The choice of bhakti as the dominant strain could not have been an arbitrary one. The fact that Tulsi chose to amplify this and not any other aspect of his personality gives credence to the idea that Hanumān acted definitively in bringing bhakti to the forefront Rāmāyana. And, again, the very choice of Hanumān to exemplify bhakti--Tulsi could easily have chosen any other character (notably, Lakshmana, who is Rāma's constant companion, eager to do his bidding and as enthusiastic about listening to Rāma expound bhakti) to be the model devotee. His choice of Hanumān is significant and, once again, indicates the possibility that the functions at-

tributed to Hanumān in the discussion of the Ramayana helped to make the monkey the only choice.

## CHAPTER III

### TULSIDĀS' BHAKTI

Some say it is possible to find the roots of bhakti in the more devotional and worshipful hymns of the Rg Veda, in which a particular deity is exalted above all the others and is appealed to for protection. The development of the attitude of bhakti has been described in the following way:<sup>1</sup> Bhakti begins with a sense of awe and wonder at creation, which grows into a feeling of reverence and admiration for the object thought to be the creator. The central feeling on the part of the individual becomes the emotion of sraddha, which can be loosely translated to mean faith inspired by awe and reverence.<sup>2</sup> This sraddha manifests itself predominantly in the form of love for the deity who is presented as loving and full of grace. The attainment of this divine love is the attainment of perfect satisfaction and immortality through the release from recurring births.

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<sup>1</sup>p. Thirugnanasambandhan, The Concept of Bhakti, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, n.d.).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

While one cannot go as far to say that the bhakti attitude is present in its developed form in the Rg Vedic hymns, it is possible to see its roots. These hymns acknowledge the power of the agents of creation, who are viewed with awe and reverence. The counterpart of this attitude is the feeling of creatureliness on the part of the individual.

The early Upaniśads develop the speculative and philosophical aspects of the Vedic tradition and lead into an all-encompassing absolutism. But in the later Upaniśads (especially the Śvetaśvatāra and the Kathā), a distinctly theistic trend is observable and it is likely that this tendency, along with the emotions already manifest in the hymns, became the foundation for what was to become a full-fledged and intensely devotional religion.

While the historical development of the core of Hinduism lies outside the purview of this paper, it will be necessary to look at basic bhakti tenets to place Tulsi within this context. The two great epics were current at the same time as the later, more theistic Upaniśads. Thus, we find theistic, and more distinctly bhakti, themes and motifs interwoven in the narrative fabric of these immense poems. In fact, it is the Bhagavad Gītā that is regarded as the clearest and most concentrated expression of bhakti tenets.

The cult of devotion continued to develop but received a major impetus around the tenth century A.D., when it erupted in a violent reaction to the monistic and absolutistic interpretation of the Vedānta by the great philosopher, Śaṅkara. While sectarian devotional groups of poet-saints were already in existence, it was in the medieval period that bhakti became the religion of the masses. In this period, it exploded into vast outpourings of devotional literature, the works of innumerable poet-saints, who expressed their love for the deity in the regional vernaculars. One of these was Tulsidās, who lived in the sixteenth century, A.D.

By this time, bhakti was firmly established as an integral part of the religion of the common man. The basic tenets of the religion<sup>3</sup> involve a highly personalized relationship between the individual and the deity. The deity is loving and responsive and, in his devotion, the individual transcends his worldly desires. The only desire he now has is the desire to serve and adore the deity constantly. The devotee realizes his creatureliness, and is utterly dependent on his god. All his actions, both religious and secular, now conform to the Divine Will. The virtue of humility is emphasized, and this emotion is

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<sup>3</sup> P. Thirugnanasanbandnan, Concept of Bhakti (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, n.d.).

generated by the knowledge of the perfect nature of the deity.

The devotee gets totally immersed in his love for the deity and is protected against all odds and misfortunes as the deity reciprocates the love and is committed to helping those who seek refuge in Him and His Will. The deity's unlimited grace is both the cause and the inspiration for liberation. The path to salvation (i.e., the release from endless rebirths) consists of a joyous self-surrender to the Lord.

The relationship between the deity and the individual takes many forms, but the dominant type in Rāma-bhakti is the model of master and servant. The Rāma-bhakta fulfills himself in constant service to the lord. The service he performs for the deity is an end, a reward, in itself. His sole motivation is to live in the Lord's proximity and to serve him.

The sight of the deity and the hearing and chanting of his name bring untold happiness to the devotee. Another central feature is the constant remembrance of the deity-- this is achieved through the chanting of his name, pūja, the listening to and telling of his glory and splendour, seeking the company of holy and virtuous men, and the avoidance of evil and dissolute company. All this helps the individual to overcome and transcend the obstruction of maya and achieve bhakti. For him, the devotee's love

for the deity is manifest in constant and selfless service to Rāma.<sup>4</sup> Even though the servant/master relationship is not regarded as the highest form of bhakti, for Tulsi, this is the most important, and perhaps the only possible relationship. Just as a loyal servant is willing to give up everything for his master, so the devoted bhakta is prepared to give up all and surrender himself entirely to the service of the Lord.

In most bhakti philosophy, the worship of the formless Absolute is held in low regard,<sup>5</sup> sometimes as a result of the conceptual and emotional difficulty involved in the adoration of a formless entity. The personal deity is not only the focus of the individual's life and being, but is also the First Cause, the Prime Mover, and the Summun Bonum. The claim of the bhakta's is that only such a deity is worthy of worship and adoration, because, as the supreme person, he is capable of responding.

Here, Tulsi represents a slight departure from the general tradition.<sup>6</sup> While mainstream bhakti professes little interest in the Absolute aspect of the deity, Tulsi sees Rāma as the earthly form of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, who is himself the Absolute. This aspect of him is as

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<sup>4</sup> W. D. P. Hill, The Holy Lake of the Acts of Rāma (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

worthy of worship as the personal aspect. While the personal form is easier to grasp for the individual, Tulsi never explicitly rejects the Absolute form. He sees it, rather, as adding to the splendour and majesty of the Divine Person. There are four kinds of moksha, or four possible states of liberation: absorption into the deity; resembling the nature of the deity; proximity to the deity, and residence in the same sphere as the deity. Tulsi accepts all four possibilities. He is able to accept the possibility of absorption into the deity because his notion of the deity includes the absolute conception with which the individual soul can be united on liberation. Other bhakti schools (especially Madhva's school) reject this possibility outright, as they hold that the individual soul can never be identical with the Supreme Person.

In keeping with his own bhakti frame of reference that includes all the features discussed so far, Tulsi retells the story of Vālmīki's Rāmāyana using Hanumān as the primary vehicle of the expression not only of his own bhakti creed, but also as a paradigmatic figure of the individual Rāma-bhakta.

## CHAPTER IV

### HANUMĀN AS THE IDEAL BHAKTA

We have seen that Tulsi regards Hanumān as the ideal bhakta, after taking as given that he is indeed a bhakta on his emergence from the Rāmāyana. Tulsi then uses him to exemplify this own bhakti creed of service discussed in the previous chapter. We shall now look at the way in which Hanumān does this.

Regarding the emotions of the individual towards his god, Hanumān, without a doubt, displays awe and reverence. The counter-emotion on the part of the devotee, i.e., the feeling of creatureliness, is found in Hanumān's utter humility and his perception of himself as a mere monkey, who, by the grace of his lord, has been allowed to perform service for Him, and because of this has been granted a number of powers. He recognizes his dependence on the deity.

He is utterly secure in Rāma's protection because of which he is fearless. He knows that he is protected against all odds because he has taken refuge in Rama.

Hanumān further embodies the goals of bhakti. He finds fulfillment only through service to Rāma, and this is

itself his reward. Apart from service, his only other desire is to live in proximity to Rama.

Hanumān experiences extreme joy at the sight of Rāma. He is enthusiastic about chanting Rāma's name and usually has Rāma's name on his lips in everything he does. He tells Rāma's exploits whenever he can and listens eagerly when others speak of his splendour. He rejects the company of those who do not acknowledge Rāma. All these features help an individual transcend the ocean of māyā, which Hanumān literally does by leaping to Lanka. The transcendence of maya allows the individual to reach his deity--Hanumān reaches Sītā, the incarnation of the goddess, Sri, on the completion of his leap.

As a consequence of his being so devoted, Hanuman is allowed to stay with Rāma in Ayodhya and thus achieves his desire of living near the deity.

Throughout the narrative, Hanumān and others pay homage to the feet of Rāma and, from his action, Hanumān derives great joy. Adoration of the deity's feet is an important bhakti motif and Hanumān fulfills it.

The many times that Hanumān escapes death in the Rāmcaritmānas, on the one hand, displays the deity's protection, but can be interpreted, on the other hand, as a function of the immortality that accrues through liberation because of devotion. A measure of this

immortality and freedom from harm occurs at the end of the Rāmāyana, where Rāma grants him life for as long as the story of Rāma is told.

In the earlier section, in the discussion of Hanumān's birth and childhood, the idea of Hanumān being casteless had been mentioned. This castelessness has special relevance in the bhakti context. Bhakti strove to be casteless, to offer the possibility of salvation to all, as a reaction of the exclusivistic salvation mechanisms of the Brahmanic tradition. In this frame of reference, Hanumān, on the one hand, being casteless by virtue of his mixed parentage, and on the other hand, through the incorporation of the definitive functions of all the four castes into his personality, stands as a perfect example of the universalism of bhakti. By representing all the castes and no caste, he is the symbol of salvation being open to all, irrespective of restrictions imposed by birth and society.

Bhakti's rejection of caste should not be seen as an aspiration towards greater individualism. In this regard, Shulman<sup>1</sup> claims: "One might, therefore, be tempted to see bhakti, with its universalist message and seeming indifference to social categories, a force working towards

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<sup>1</sup>David Shulman, "The Cliche As Ritual and Instrument: Iconic Puns in Kamban's Iramavataram," Numen vol. xxv (August 1978): p. 150.

greater individualism, as well as social iconoclasm."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to reject this notion and Dumont's theory, which Dumont sees bhakti as a ". . . sannyāsīc development, an invention of the renouncer."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to claim that sannyasa was the beginning of a movement towards individualism by having as its goal individual effort for the liberation of the essence of the individual, i.e., the Ātmar.

Shulman rejects this on the grounds that the liberation of sannyāsa is the realization of the ultimate non-existence of identity through the dissolution of the personality. He further holds that since bhakti has replaced the ideal of sannyāsa, it, too, has as its basis the losing of individual identity: ". . . bhakta must lose himself as he recognises his inner identity with his god who replaces the transcendental Absolute of mokṣā."<sup>4</sup>

In view of these complex analyses of bhakti, the composite caste structure of Hanumān's personality becomes an even stronger symbol. By making up the castes and by representing all of them at once, Hanumān becomes a figure that embodies the loss of identity. This is

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Dumont, as quoted by Shulman in "The Cliche as Ritual and Instrument."

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

reinforced further when one notes another point that Shulman makes:

. . . according to the Hindu theory the individual derives essential attributes of his identity from his affiliation to his caste. Each caste (jāti rather than varṇa), offers its individual members a nature (syabhāva), which is theirs, indeluctably, from birth.<sup>5</sup>

Hanumān appears to have been born to play the role of every caste, from brahmin to warrior to servitor, and, hence, becomes the quintessential embodiment of the possibility of universal salvation.

Dumont<sup>6</sup> puts forward the idea that brahmin's interiorizes the sannyāsa ideal by adopting sannyāsa ideals and values. If this notion is looked at, together with Shulman's concept of bhakti replacing sannyāsa, then Hanuman becomes the perfect candidate for his position from yet another angle. Hanuman takes the form of a brahmin on several occasions in the course of both the Rāmāyana and the Rāmcaritmānas. Apart from this, he has many brahmanic, and even sannyāsic, qualities--he is extremely learned, which qualifies him to be Sugrīva's minister; he is the eternal celibate, the brahmacāri, and he appears to be an ascetic. By embodying the qualities of both, he fits the models that Shulman and Dumont put

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus.

forward. He first fits Dumont's brahmanic-sannyasic role, and, then, when this is replaced by bhakti, according to Shulman, Hanuman fits that as well.

Thus, we find that both within and without Tulsi's bhakti, Hanuman is an exemplar figure. At the end of this section, we find that we have seen Hanuman grow from a pilgrim who discovers himself and his deity and through that, sets up a new universe, to a figure who is the bhakta par excellence. From establishing the bhakti universe in the Rāmāyana to embodying the perfection of its participant in the Rāmcaritmānas, Hanumān has developed in role status and function. The highest stage in his development is demonstrated in the Cālīsa, which will be dealt with in the next section.

## CHAPTER V

### HANUMĀN'S ROLE IN TULSI'S LIFE

Hanumān played a special and unique role in Tulsi's own life--yet another indication of his special status. This could be seen as a further extension of Hanumān's roles and functions--from becoming a bhakta in the Rāmāyana, through being the ideal bhakta and the expressor of Tulsi's bhakti in the Rāmcaritmānas, to being an intercessor between the devotee and the deity in the devotee's personal life. The role of the intercessor is the consequence of his singularity as the bhakta par excellence in Tulsi's frame of reference.

It is obvious that the following accounts of Hanumān playing a part in Tulsi's life are gleaned from popular legend. W. D. P. Hill<sup>1</sup> quotes Hanumān from Priyādās' commentary on the Bhaktamala of Nābhāji.

In the first story, a ghost who lived in a mango tree that Tulsi cared for granted him a boon in gratitude for the daily nourishment he received. Tulsi asked for a vision of Rāma. The ghost directed him to a certain temple, where he would meet Hanumān, who would show

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<sup>1</sup>Hill, The Holy Lake.

him his Lord. Hanumān sends the poet to Chitrakuta. There, Tulsi witnessed a performance of the Rām-Līlā but did not encounter Rāma. Disappointed, he set off for home. On his way, he met Hanumān in the guise of a brahmin, and told him of the beauty of the Ramlila he had seen. The brahmin points out to him that it was not the season for the performance. Tulsi returned to Chitrakuta to try and find the actors, but they had disappeared. He then realized that what he had seen was Rama himself and not a performance. It is interesting to note that, to get to Rama (i.e., to have a vision of the Lord), Tulsi had first to approach Hanumān, who directs him further and then makes him realize what it was that he saw.

The second story displays Hanumān as a protector. Tulsi is said to have revived a dead man. He was called to Delhi to perform his miracles before the emperor. Tulsi claimed he knew no magic, only the name of his Lord. The enraged emperor had him imprisoned. Hanumān then sent hosts of monkeys, who attacked the palace. The emperor begged forgiveness and Tulsi prayed to Hanumān to call off his monkeys. Hanumān here has played the role of a guardian and protector--a role he qualified for by virtue of his being especially dear to Rāma. Once again, he is acting out the role of Rāma's agent in protecting Tulsi--Rāma protects those who seek refuge in him, and, in this case, he does this through Hanumān.

Tulsi acknowledges Hanuman's role in his life. At one point, Tulsi is supposed to have helped an astrologer with a divination for which the astrologer received a large sum of money. Tulsi was unwilling to accept any payment for his help, but finally accepted ten thousand rupees with which he built ten temples in honor of Hanumān.

In this extension of his role, Hanumān seems to be slowly, but surely, acquiring the status of a demi-god. In the stories mentioned above, we have seen him as a guardian-protector, the active agent of a higher divinity; as an intercessor between the individual and his Lord, responsible for allowing the devotee access to the deity, and, finally, as worthy of worship himself. Strangely enough, Hanumān appears to be acquiring the status and functions of his father, Vāyu. In the earlier discussion, we have seen Vāyu as a guardian and the agent of Indra (a god placed above him in the hierarchy of divinity and power). Vāyu himself commands a certain amount of worship. As an intercessor between man and his god, Vāyu finds a place in the philosophy of Madhva, where he is the medium for the descent of divine grace. Hanumān assumes this function by being instrumental in visions of Rāma which are themselves signs of grace.

The above-mentioned functions of Hanumān are clearly expressed in the Hanumān Cālīsa, which is a liturgical work addressed to him. In this, he definitely has the

status of a demi-god, in that he is appealed to for protection and is regarded as granting access to Rama.

The Calisa is a work attributed to Tulsi, but Hill<sup>2</sup> does not mention it in his list of Tulsi's poems. Through looking at the following translation, we can analyze Hanumān's new role in the life of the individual.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**PART THREE**  
**THE HANUMĀN CĀLĪSA**

## CHAPTER I

### THE HANUMĀN CĀLĪSA: TEXT AND TRANSLATION

1. Sri guru caran saroj raj nij manu mukur sudhār  
Varanau Raghuvar vimal yaś to dāyak phal cāri  
Sitting at the lotus feet of my teacher in prayer,  
I cleanse my mind  
Describing the excellences and the pure spirit and  
glory of Raghuvar (Rāma), who bestows the four  
fruits.
2. Buddhihīn tanu jānīke, sumiron Pavan kumār  
Bal buddhi vidyā dehu mohi harhu kleś vikār  
Knowing myself to be full of pride and without  
wisdom, I think on the son of Pavana (the wind)  
That he grant me strength, intellect, and wisdom  
and transform my spiritual ignorance and my  
distractions.
3. Jai Hanumān, gyān gun sāgar  
Jai kapiś, tinhu Lok Ujāgar  
Hail Hanumān! The ocean of knowledge and virtue  
Hail Lord of the Monkeys, celebrated in the three  
worlds.

4. Rāmdut atulit bal dhāmā  
Anjani putr Pavan sut nāmā  
Messenger of Rāma, storehouse of immeasurable  
strength,  
Famed as the son of Anjani and the son of Pavan.
5. Mahābir vikram bajrangi  
Kumati nivār sumati ke sangi  
Great Hero, O Champion, Warrior, he of the diamond-  
hard body  
He who prevents folly and evil, the companion of  
benevolence.
6. Kāncan varan virāj suvesa  
Kānan kundal kuncit kesa  
He of the golden appearance, he who is handsomely  
dressed  
With earrings in his hair and curly locks.
7. Hāth vajr au dhvaja birājay  
Kāndhe munj janeu sājay  
He who holds a mace in his hands and decorates  
the banner  
He, whose shoulder is decorated with the holy thread.
8. Sankar suvan kesari nandan  
Tej pratap mahā jag bandan  
O thou, Worthy of the family of Sankar, son of  
Kesarin,  
whose glory, strength, splendour, and courage fix  
(establish) the universe.

9. Vidyavān guni ati chatur  
Rām kāj karībe ko ātur  
Learned scholar, endowed with good qualities and  
extremely wise  
Eager to perform tasks for Rama.
10. Prabhu charitr sunibe ko rasiyā  
Rām Lashan Sītā man basiyā  
He who enjoys listening to the adventures and  
the nature of his lord  
He who has Rāma Lakshmana and Sītā ever enshrined  
in his heart.
11. Sūkshṁ rūp dhari siyahi dikhāvā  
Bikat rūp dhari Lank jarāvā  
He who assumed a tiny form and demonstrated his  
shrewdness  
He who assumed a large and frightening form and  
set fire to Lanka.
12. Bhīma rūp dhari asur sanhāre  
Rāmchandr ke kāj sanvāre  
He who took on a terrible form to destroy the Asuras  
He who made splendid Rama's tasks.
13. Lāye Sajivan lashan jiyāje  
Sri Raghubir harsī ur lāye  
He who brought the Sanjeevan herb to revive  
Lakshmana  
which brought great joy to Rama.

14. Raghupati kinho bahut barāī  
Tum mam priy Bharat mam bhāī  
Raghupati praised you highly  
"You are as dear to me as my brother, Bharata."
15. Sahas badan tumhāro yaś gāvay  
As kahi Sripati kanth lagāvay  
"All shall sing your praises"  
So saying, Rama embraced you.
16. Sankādok Brahmādi munīsā  
Nārad Sārad sahit sahīsā  
Accompanied by great sages  
like Sankādik, Nārad, and others
17. Yam Kuber digpāl jahān te  
Kavi kovid kahī sake kahān te  
Yama, Kubera, and the guardians of the four quarters  
all pay homage to you  
How, then, can a mere poet express your virtue?
18. Tum upkār Sugrīvahin kīnhā  
Rām milāye rājpad dīnhā  
You did Sugrīva a favor  
by bringing him to Rama,  
whereby he regained his kingdom.
19. Tumhāro mantr Bibhisan jānā  
Lankesvar bhāye sab jag jānā  
Vibhisana knew of your power  
And the world knows how you terrorized Lanka.

20. Jug sahasra yojan par bhānu  
Lilyo tāhī madhur phal jānu  
  
(Seeing) the sun a great distance away  
You leapt towards it, mistaking it for a sweet  
fruit
21. Prabhu mudrika melī mukh mānhi  
Jaladhi Lānghi gaye achrat nāhin  
  
Carrying Rama's signet ring in your mouth  
Your leap to Lanka surprises no one.
22. Durgam kāj jagat ke jete  
Sugam anugrah tumhāre tete  
  
All the difficult tasks in the world  
Are made easy by your grace and favour.
23. Rām duāre tum rakhvāre  
Hot n āgyā binu paysāre  
  
You are the guardian of Rāma's portals  
None may enter without your permission.
24. Sah sukh lāhay tumhari sarana  
Tum rakshak kahe ko darna  
  
In your protection, all happiness abounds  
When you are the protector, there is no need to fear.
25. Apan tej samhāro āpay  
Tīno lok hānk te kānpe  
  
Exert self control over your immense energy,  
The three worlds quake at your roaring.

26. Bhūt piśac nikat nahin āvay  
Mahābir jab nam sunāvay  
Ghosts and goblins do not come near  
When they hear your name, Great Hero.
27. Nas rog haray sab pīrā  
Japat nirantar Hanumat bīrā  
All disease and misery perish, all pain and suffering  
is dissipated  
When your name, Hanumān, O Hero, is changed continuously.
28. Sankat te Hanumān chudāvay  
Man kram bachan dhyān jo lāgay  
Hanumān rids (us) of all discomfort  
When all thought, action, and speech is concentrated  
on him.
29. Sab par Rām tapasvi rājā  
Tin ke kāj sakal tum sājā  
The Ruler of all is Rāma, the Doer of Penance  
Whose every work you have helped with and made easy.
30. Aur manorath jo koi lāvay  
Soi amit jivan phal pāvay  
He who brings his heart and mind to you.  
It is he who gains the fruit of everlasting life.
31. Caron jug partap tumhāra  
Hay prasidh jagat ujiyāra  
In all the four yugas, your splendour is well-known,  
O you, Illuminator of the worlds.

32. Sadhu sant ke tum rakhvāre  
Asur nikandan rām dūlāre  
You are the guardian of holy men and saints  
Extirpator of Asuras, beloved of Rāma.
33. Ast siddhi nau niddhi ke dātā  
As var dīn Jānaki mātā  
You are the bestower of the eight accomplishments  
and the nine treasures  
You who received the eight blessings from mother  
Jānāki (Sīta).
34. Rām rasāyan tumhāre pāsā  
Sada raho raghupati ke dāsā  
You hold the essence of Rāma's nature  
May you always be Raghupati's (Rāma's) servitor.
35. Tumhāre bhajan rām ko pāvay  
Janam janam ke dukh bisrāvay  
Through worshipping you one can attain Rama  
And forget the pain of countless births and deaths.
36. Ant kal Raghubir pur jāī  
Jahan janam Hari bhakt kahāī  
You find your completion in Rāma  
Wherever you are born you will be known as  
Rāma'a devotee.

37. Aur devta cit n dharāī  
Hanumat sei sab sukh karāī  
There is no need to think on other deities  
Hanumān is sufficient for the attainment of all  
happiness.
38. Sankat katay mitay sab pīrā  
Jo sumiray Hanumat balbīrā  
Sorrows are lessened, pain disappears  
when (one) thinks on Hanumān (the) Mighty Hero.
39. Jai Jai Jai Hanumān gosāī  
Kṛpa karhu gurudeu ke nāī  
Hail Hail Hail Hanumān, O Holy One  
Show compassion and favour, O Deputy of the  
Great Teacher (Rāma).
40. Jo sāt bār pāth kar koi  
Chuthin bandi mana sukn hoī  
For him who repeats this reading seven times  
Fetters are loosed and great happiness abounds.
41. Jo ye padhe Hanumān Cālīsā  
Hoye siddhi sakhi gaurīsā  
He who reads this Hanumān Cālīsā  
Will be a man of wisdom and the companion of all  
that is pleasant.
42. Tulsidās sada Hari cera  
Kijay nāth hrday manh dera  
Tulsidās will ever be Hari's slave  
For the lord captured his heart and mind.

43. Pavan tanay sankat haran, mangal murti rūp  
Rām Lakhan Sītā sahit hrday basahu sur bhūp .

The son of Pavan dissipates pain (with) his auspicious  
appearance

Along with Rāma, Lakshmana, and Sītā he abides in the  
heart as a celestial.

The Cālīsā opens with an invocation to Rāma, and then, in the second verse, calls for meditation on Hanumān himself, who can relieve the supplicant of distraction and grant him wisdom. Hanumān is still closely associated with Rāma, and it seems as though it is in the context of Rāma that he can help the individual who appeals to him.

In the third couplet, Hanumān is called 'Kapiś,' a composite of 'Kapi' (ape) and 'ś' (Lord). He is thus addressed as Lord of the Monkeys.

In the fifth couplet, Hanumān is referred to as 'Bajrangbali.' This word could be a composite either from 'bajr' (vajr), which refers to either a thunderbolt or a diamond, and is also used as an adjective denoting hard; or from the word "bajrā," which is a kind of boat. The second component of 'bajrangbali' is 'anga'--the word for body. This nomenclature could thus have two meanings, both equally applicable and relevant. As bajrang of the first interpretation, i.e. as 'he of the diamond-hard body,' the name could be an indicator of strength. In the Bāla Kānda of the Rāmāyana,<sup>1</sup> where Hanumān is mentioned as the offspring of Vāyu, he is described as having a body as hard as a diamond. It could also mean 'he of the thunderbolt,' which could refer to Hanumān's early childhood, when he broke his jaw and thus received

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<sup>1</sup>Shastri, 1:45.

his name (Hanumān: he of the broken jaw) after being struck struck down by Indra's thunderbolt. Bajr also means mace-- Hanumān's weapon in battle is a mace and he is depicted iconographically with a mace in his hands. If the name derives from 'bajra,' boat, it could well be a reference to Hanuman having the capacity and the virtue to carry other devotees across the ocean of Māyā. The ocean of Māyā and the devotees' need to cross it are common bhakti motifs. Having done this himself, Hanumān is qualified to help other supplicants do the same.

In the seventh couplet, Hanumān is described as carrying a mace and a banner. In the Mahābhārata, Hanumān himself decorates the banner of the Pāndavas.<sup>2</sup> When Bhīma meets Hanumān in the forest and Hanumān reveals to him the nature of the four Yugas and Dharma, he promises Bhīma out of filial affection: ". . . you shall raise your lions cry, mighty hero, I shall reinforce your cry with mine. Perching on the flag-staff of Vijaya (Arjuna), I shall utter fearful roars that will rob your enemies of their lives."<sup>3</sup>

In the eight couplet, Hanumān is referred to as being of the line of Śiva. There are two accounts of this, both outside the stories of Rāma. The first is

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<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, Epic Mythology.

<sup>3</sup> van Buitenen, The Mahabharata 2:500.

quoted by O'Flaherty<sup>4</sup> with reference to Śiva's androgyny. She quotes a myth where Viṣṇu changes himself into the enchantress, Mohini. Śiva, full of lust, sheds his seed ". . . which is said to give birth to Skanda, Ayyappan-Aiyannar (also called Harāhariputra, son of Viṣṇu-Shiva) or Hanumān. . . ." <sup>5</sup> The second account is in an early collection of Hindu myths by Edward Moor<sup>6</sup> first published in 1864. He attributes this strange account of Hanumān's birth to "narrators of that extraordinary poem."<sup>7</sup> In this story, the childless Anjani has been worshipping the linga, so that Śiva might answer her prayers for a child. Finally, Śiva tells her to look towards the sun and eat anything that fell into her outstretched hands. Meanwhile, a kite had carried off a portion of Kaikeyi's cake from the sacrifice Dasratha was performing, that he might have sons. This cake fell into Anjani's hands, she ate it, and bore Hanumān. Vāyu's only connection with this account of Hanumān's birth is that, as one of the Māruts, he was deputed by Śiva to see that the cake fell into Anjani's waiting hands.

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<sup>4</sup> Wendy O'Flaherty, Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>6</sup> Moor, Hindu Pantheon (Varnasi: Indological Book House, 1968).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

In the twelfth couplet, Hanumān is described as taking on a terrible form. The word in the text is 'bhīma, which happens to be the name of his half-brother and counterpart in the Mahābhārata. The structural similarities between Bhīma and Hanumān have been discussed in the first section, in the chapter on Vāyu. They are both great warriors, renowned for their immense strength and both use the mace as their weapon.

In the fourteenth couplet, there is a reference to the mutual and reciprocal love of the deity and the devotee, when Rāma tells Hanumān that he is as dear to him as his own brother, Bharata.

The sixteenth and seventeenth couplets indicate Hanumān's exalted status by saying that the great sages, and even demi-gods, are anxious to pay homage to him.

The above appear to be the only references to things that occur outside the Ramayana and the Rāmcaritmānas. Most of Hanumān's feats and accomplishments are enumerated, all of which are performed for Rāma's glory. In the eleventh couplet, there is a reference to his burning of Lanka; in the twelfth, to his routing of the demons; in the thirteenth, to his bringing of the Sanjeevani herb to revive Lakshmana; in the eighteenth, to the treaty he negotiates between Sugrīva and Rāma; in the nineteenth, to the advice he gives Vibhiṣaṇa in the Rāmcaritmānas incident; in the twentieth, to his leap towards the sun while still a child;

in the twenty-first, to his leap to Lanka; in the thirty-third, to the blessings he received from Sītā.

Apart from this, the dominant note in the Cālīsā is the perception of Hanumān as a guardian figure. In two couplets he is referred to as "rakhavāra," i.e., a keeper or guardian. The first reference is in the twenty-third couplet, where the same word is used with regard to him being the protector of holy men. Besides these two specific references, Hanumān is appealed to for protection from all manner of evil and misfortune.

Hanumān is responsible for keeping away: folly and evil (couplet 5); fear (couplet 24); ghosts and goblins (couplet 26); disease, misery, anguish, pain, and discomfort (couplets 27, 28, and 35). He also makes the most difficult tasks easy (couplet 22). His protection and refuge bring untold bliss, happiness, and ease (couplets 24 and 37). He grants blessings, favors, and wisdom (couplets 2, 33, 35). He can even grant eternal life (couplet 30).

We find that Hanumān has attained the status of a demi-god. He has the capacity to grant boons and help the individual in his search for liberation. In the closing quatrain, Hanumān is called a "sur," i.e., an angel or a celestial being. This is the highest point that he could possibly reach, and is the final and ultimate reward for his devotion to Rāma--he now lives

constantly with his lord. This is represented iconographically as well. In nearly all folk art that depicts Rāma, Hanumān is bound to have a place at his feet. Through his guardian aspect, Hanumān has become a deity of the masses. Keith<sup>8</sup> notes that he is popular among the "semi-Hinduised Dravidian races of the Vindhya range. . . ." and that he is found ". . . in most Hindu villages of the respectable class."<sup>9</sup> While he is no doubt still regarded as a bhakta, he is worshipped not so much in this capacity, but in his capacity as a protector and keeper. This could be seen as a further extension of his function mentioned at the end of the section on the Rāyāmana--that of guarding and marking off the boundaries of the sacred space. Though Hanumān has temples dedicated to him, he is also found at the entrance to other temples, and here his role in delineating the sacred area cannot be doubted. Perhaps, the most interesting of the spaces that he guards is Rāma's gateway. The Cālīsā states that none may pass through these portals without Hanumān's permission. First of all, this is similar to his guarding of the path that mortals may not tread, in his Mahābhārata encounter with Bhīma.

Despite the categorical statement that Hanumān provides access to Rāma, there is a sense, almost, of the notion that Rāma cannot be worshipped without first

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<sup>8</sup>Keith, Mythology of All Races

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

worshipping Hanumān. This is symbolized by the idea that Rāma can be reached only after passing Hanumān. Hanumān has thus become central to the worship of Rāma.

Perhaps, the best example of this is in the Dharma-Mangala texts of the Dharma cult in Bengal. S. Dasgupta<sup>10</sup> has made a study of the Dharma Thākura, the Lord of Dharma, in this cult. According to him, "The identification of Dharma-Thakura with Rama in the Dharma Mangalas has been brought about mainly through the mediacy of Hanumān."<sup>11</sup> In the liturgies, Hanumān is depicted as one of the four gate keepers of Dharma, but in the Mangalas, he has the function of being Dharma's mount, his counselor, and even his "conscience keeper."<sup>12</sup>

The gods and goddesses of this cult appear to be physically weak and, therefore, are constantly calling upon Hanuman to perform physical feats that they themselves are incapable of. As a result, Hanumān makes appearances both in, and outside of, the Bengali Rāmāyanas, by being of service to various other deities. He is called upon not only because of his strength, but also because of his obedience. The Dharma Thākura himself has Hanumān at his constant disposal, so that the monkey can act for him:

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<sup>10</sup> S. N. Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults (Calcutta: Firma L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

But being thus constantly accompanied and obeyed by Hanuman, Dharma Thakura could no longer retain his Dharma-nature, and gradually became transformed into Rama Candra himself.<sup>13</sup>

Whenever Hanumān is asked to accomplish an enormous task, he refers to the wonderful feats he performed in the Rāmāyana and says that having done them once, he can do them again for Dharma-Thākura. The lord himself often praises Hanumān for his past performances. In one of the Dharma Mangala legends, Hanumān is supposed to have taken all the water out of the river Ajay by taking it up into his aural cavities!

To return to the Cālīsā, we find that the short text mentions all of Hanumān's functions--that of a warrior-hero, a learned scholar, and the loyal servitor. And, of course, they are all subordinated to his primary function as bhakta. Tulsi is considered the incarnation of Vālmīki in the Kali Yuga, and so it is fitting that he retell Vālmīki's story in this Yuga. The Yugas are in a descending order of auspiciousness, and Kali, being the very last of them, is the period in which there is a total breakdown of Dharma.<sup>14</sup> The only mode of salvation in this Yuga is bhakti, and the Name has great power--by the constant repetition and concentration on the aus-

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 297

<sup>14</sup>C. Dimmit and J. A. B. van Buitenen, Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas (Temple University Press: Philadelphia, 1978).

picious Name, the individual can overcome obstacles. Tulsi mentions this in the opening passages of the Rāmcaritmānas: ". . . in the four ages and the four Vedas, his Name is mighty, but mightiest of all in this Kali Yuga; there is no other refuge." <sup>15</sup>

In this context, then, Tulsi has performed Vālmīki's function in the Kali Age--he has retold Rama's story according to the needs of his time, i.e., he has developed the story in bhakti terms, using Hanumān as the vehicle of bhakti.

Hanumān set up the bhakti universe in the first of Rāma's story--a universe that comes to its fulfillment only in the Kali Age, where it becomes the universe of salvation. Still, in the Kali Yuga, Hanumān changes from an exemplar-participant in it to its guardian and its access. It is practically a circular movement--he starts out by demarcating it in the Rāmāyana, and in the Cālīsā is back at its limits, but this time as an insider, keeping it and his deity.

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<sup>15</sup> Hill, p. 16.

## CONCLUSION

We have traced the development of Hanumān through the Rāmāyana and the Rāmcaritmānas to the zenith of his career and position in the Hanumān Cālīsā. For a being who started off as merely an extraordinarily gifted monkey, and who ends up as the access to the very deity of his devotion, it has been a remarkable career. In the context of the capacities of animals, Hanumān demonstrates the height that a sub-human species can attain. If animals and their attributes are seen to be symbolic of the capacities and aspirations of the human individual, then, Hanuman stands, within the bhakti context, not only as a role model, but also as the inspiration for the individual bhakta.

We have seen, however, that his function is more momentous than being merely a paradigmatic and inspirational figure. With reference to the quotation from Dumézil cited at the start of this thesis, the myth of Hanuman corresponds closely to Dumézil's notion of the function of myth. The character of Hanumān, and all his momentous achievements display the structures and tensions within the Hindu religion--the castes and their functions, the

relationship and the position of the individual in terms of the object of his devotion and the place of the deity in the life of the individual. Through bringing all this together in his personality, Hanumān stands for, and justifies the ideals and values, the practice and the ritual of Hinduism. And, finally, what the individual can hope to aspire to.

The development of Hanumān's role and status, and the changes that have taken place in this development, are an indication of the fact that this monkey is very definitely a part of the vital living tradition. While a number of other mythological characters, and even gods, have faded into obscurity and have practically no role in contemporary Hinduism, Hanumān has remained alive and integral.

In that respect, perhaps more than any other, the myth of Hanumān reflects, even in the contemporary context, the ideals, the structure, and the forces working within Hindu society. Myths that fall into ahistoric time, or myths that refer to occurrences in the distant past have, perhaps, slightly less relevance to existing social norms, for they represent only the ideal. Hanumān's story starts in the distant past, but his role has changed over the centuries. While he embodies the ahistoric ideal, because of the develop-

ment in his role, he reflects, too, the dynamism and the potential for change in a living tradition.

In the context of Hinduism, then, Hanumān is an important figure. An analysis of his character proves that he functions on the level of the individual as an inspiration, a paradigm, and a protector, but reflects, at the same time, as Dumézil indicates, the tensions and values of the religion and the society of which he is so much a part.

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