

THE ROLE OF *HANUMAN* IN THE *KAMBARAMAYANAM*.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the literary works created on the Indian soil the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have distinguished characteristics of their own. Based on *Valmiki's Ramayana*, *Kamban* created an epic in Tamil known popularly as the *Kambaramayanam*. It is generally accepted that *Valmiki* composed his *adi-kavya* between the 4th century B.C and 2nd century A.D.¹ Most Tamil literary historians place the *Kambaramayanam* in the 9th century A.D.²

Scholars regard *Kamban* as a poet without a parallel. Hence he is praised as *Kavic-cakravarti* (ie an Emperor among poets). His *Kambaramayanam* stands out with unique features in its various aspects like style of language, literary excellence, characters and philosophy of life. All the characters in this epic, from the main to the secondary ones, have been created to seem real people breathing with life. It is not possible to set them aside as imaginary people. They are representatives of the human race that inhabit the world today. Through these characters, the *Kambaramayanam* teaches us various moral and religious duties and virtues.

SCOPE

Of the many characters found in the *Kambaramayanam*, *Hanuman* stands out as a character with many distinguishing qualities. He seems to be equal to the main characters like *Rama*, *Sita* and *Lakshmana* and sometimes even a step higher because of his eminent characteristics. The scope of this paper is to examine his special qualities and his role in this epic. It may be said that his role, service and his special qualities are found in abundance in this work of *Kamban*. Of these only *Hanuman's* birth, his special qualities, his surpassing might and ability and his divinity are examined here.

HANUMAN'S BIRTH

When *Tirumal* came down to earth in his incarnation as *Rama*, *Brahma* asked the *devas* to incarnate themselves so as to assist *Tirumal*. So Lord *Siva* and the wind god *Vayu* pledged to be born as *Hanuman* and help *Tirumal* who was born as *Rama*.³ Accordingly *Hanuman* is born as the son of *Vayu* and *Ancanai*. Since he is the son of *Vayu*, he naturally inherits the ability to fly. In his childhood he jumped to catch the rising sun and was hit by *Indra's Vajrayuta*. This causes his cheeks to swell. *Anu* means cheek and *man* means one who is pre-eminent.⁴ Hence *Hanuman* means one who has lovely cheeks. Moreover, he is the beloved son of *Ancanai*, and the one who with devotion, searched for the place where *Sita* was held captive. For these reasons he earned the name, *Ancaneyan*.⁵ He is also known as *Maruti*, *Cuntaran*, *Kecari-putran* and *Vayu-putran*.⁶

THE BOONS HE RECEIVED

The associations of Lord *Siva* and *Vayu* with the birth of *Hanuman*, naturally gives it a divine quality. In addition, the gods grant him various boons and make him a character who is fully associated with them. *Brahma* gives him two boons. By these no one may bind him with *Brahmastra* (the weapon of *Brahma*) and he is blessed with a long life span.⁷ Similarly, others like *Indra* the King of the *devas*, *Varuna*, *Surya*, *Yama*, *Visvakarma*, and *Kupera* also grant him many types of boons.⁸

Blessed with the various boons from the gods, *Hanuman* stands out as one who has within him different kinds of powers and abilities. It is possible that the following question is raised. It is said that *Hanuman* has many types of boons and powers granted by the gods themselves. *Kambaramayanam* mentions that he has special qualities. What can be so special when he has the benefits of divine gifts? A person with god-like aspects will surely shine with godly characteristics. Then what is the point in examining his qualities? While examining *Hanuman's* life, one piece of information should be kept in mind. In spite of all boons, he was also restrained by a curse. According to it, he will not be able to realize his abilities unless they are made known to him by others.

Having received most of the boons even in his childhood, the boy *Hanuman* enters the huts of sages and angers them with his mischief. So the sages curse him saying, "Unless someone reminds him, he will not realize his abilities."⁹ Because of this, he lives an ordinary life like any other person. Even in that state, without these powers to assist him, he has led a life of virtue and penance, with complete control over his senses and his mind. Surely this

is extra-ordinary! This is the portrayal of *Hanuman* in the *Kambaramayanam*.

HANUMAN'S VIRTUOUS QUALITIES

Among the various distinguished aspects of *Hanuman*, his virtuous qualities are foremost. Helping others, gratitude for help rendered, celibacy (*brahmacarya*) and modesty are important aspects of his character.

HELPING OTHERS

After *Sita* was taken captive by *Ravana*, *Rama* is in a confused state of mind. The *Vanaras* who had promised to help in the efforts to look for *Sita* begin to do so. *Angatan* and *Hanuman* go southwards, along with the monkey-army. After wandering for long and facing many difficulties, they could not find the place where *Sita* was held. Finally, they come to know from *Jadayu* that she is being held in Lanka. On the request of *Campavan*, *Hanuman* goes to Lanka overcoming many obstacles on his way.

There, the *asuras* bind him and drag him to *Ravana's* court. There he is treated with disrespect. They set fire to his tail and is taken around the city with a blazing tail. But though he had faced numerous difficulties to reach Lanka and his tail is on fire, he does not mind that. His eyes search the buildings on either side of the street he is taken along. He thinks that if he observed them, he would be able to pass the information to *Rama* and thereby help in the release of *Sita*.¹⁰

It is difficult to estimate the greatness of *Hanuman* who thought only of *Rama*, even though a part of him was on fire. This great quality of *Hanuman* may be seen in another instance in the *Kambaramayanam*. Having seen *Sita* and returned to their camp, he goes to see *Rama*. The first words he utters to *Rama* are "I saw *Sita* in Lanka which is surrounded by the sea." He knew fully well how distressed *Rama* would have been after she was taken away by *Ravana*. He has never felt that his efforts to help *Rama* gave him any hardships. So instead of giving details about his efforts to locate *Sita* he utters the words that would ease *Rama's* mind. He is capable of saying the right words at the proper time and situation. This is the reason *Hanuman* is praised as *Collin Celvan* or Master of Words.

This quality of *Hanuman* is also clear when he speaks in support of *Vibhishana*. *Vibhishana* leaving *Ravana* who has deviated from the path of virtue comes to join *Rama* who is virtuous. Many look at him with suspicion. But *Hanuman* alone defends him and speaks in his favour.¹¹ His reasons to show that *Vibhishana* may be accepted, and the

manner in which they were presented are praiseworthy.

He clarifies that a person's face can show the deceit of cunning in his heart, but *Vibhishana's* face does not indicate any deceit. Besides *Vibhishana* does not take refuge with *Rama* because he admired the latter's bravery. He has realized the divine qualities of *Rama* who happily gave away his right to rule *Kosala* to his beloved brother *Bharata*. Since those who are blessed with a helpful nature will always try to help others, he puts forth ample evidence to show the others that *Vibhishana's* heart is pure. He reminds them that when *Ravana* ordered the death of *Hanuman* who had gone as a messenger it was *Vibhishana* who advised *Ravana* against it. The mansion that *Vibhishana* lived in was not like the mansions of others. It was like the residence of an *antanar* (i.e. one who is compassionate and merciful) shining with qualities like charity (*danam*) virtue (*dharma*) and justice and morality (*niti*). Finally he speaks with great compassion for the man from the enemy camp. "There is no good deed better than granting refuge to someone who comes out of fear of his own enemies (i.e. *Ravana* who is angry with *Vibhishana*)." Thus *Hanuman* is one who helps others without expecting anything in return.

SENSE OF GRATITUDE

Besides this, he is also one who keeps the promises he makes and ever grateful for the favours or help he has received.

"*Sugriva* promises to come with the monkey army to search for *Sita*. But he does not come at the time he had agreed on. *Lakshmana* who became angry due to this goes to see *Sugriva*. Seeing *Hanuman* with him, *Lakshmana* asks, "Have you also forgotten the incidents that took place and promises made?" The answer that *Hanuman* gives shows his sense of gratitude. He says, "Even one who kills his mother who gave birth to him, father, spiritual teacher (*guru*) *antanar* (also means a *Brahmin*), cows, children and women may be saved from sin, but not one who forgets gratitude. We have not forgotten the favour done to us. Many have gone to collect the army."¹² With these words he has stressed the idea put forth by *Thiruvalluvar*.

Those who forsake any virtue have redemption;
But not those who forsake gratitude.¹³

Hanuman – the Embodiment of Modesty (Humility)

In *Hanuman* who belonged to the monkey race, the monkey-pranks were under

control. Except for the mischievous pranks during his childhood no other instance of *Hanuman's* misbehaviour can be found in the *Kambaramayanam*. He is always found to be humble / modest in any situation.

“Knowing that *Sita* is held captive in Lanka, the *Vanara* warriors are worried. They wondered how they could cross the sea. *Angatan* in order to ascertain who is capable of doing so asks each one how far he could leap. Since no one seems capable, he decides to do it himself. At that moment *Campavan* prevents him saying, “A prince should not do this.” *Hanuman* watches all this quietly from a distance. He does not offer any opinion. Then, *Campavan* turns to him and says, “Only you can do this. You do not know your strength. Unlike others who are haughty of their powers you have not wasted your capabilities. You have remained humble. You alone can fulfil this task of crossing the sea.”¹⁴

Hanuman hearing all this does not become egoistic. He does not make any sound of joy. On the other hand, he thinks calmly and prepares himself for the work of leaping over the sea. Another incident that illustrates the calm and modesty of *Hanuman* may also be examined. “In spite of many kinds of dangers, *Hanuman* succeeds in seeing *Sita* and returns. *Rama* asks the monkeys (*Vanara*) ‘O *Vanaras!* Where is *Sita*? How is she? How did you see her? Tell me in detail. I am not able to be patient.”¹⁵ Even in this situation *Hanuman* does not push himself forward to proclaim his achievement of having seen *Sita*. He is modest and calm.

He accomplished this undertaking by doing everything alone with courage and enthusiasm but in the presence of his King *Angatan* and of *Rama* he is humble. This is really noteworthy. He is not arrogant about his accomplishment of work. He waits with humility till his King *Angatan* and the older, more experienced *Campavan* and other monkey warriors tell him, “You yourself must relate what you saw and the happenings in Lanka.”¹⁶ This greatness of *Hanuman* cannot be measured.

HIS CELIBACY

Of his praiseworthy qualities, celibacy stands out as the highest and the loftiest. He is pure and does not even think of women, so that he is called a “*nittiya brahmacari*” (eternal bachelor).¹⁷

“*Hanuman*, searching for *Sita* entered the inner apartments (*antah-pura*) of *Ravana*. There many women slept in a state of love-intoxication. Entering the rooms of

women sleeping in that state, he searched for *Sita*.”¹⁸ Even when he sees them sleeping in different poses and positions, he is not disturbed because he has a steady mind and he observes celibacy. His celibacy is without comparison. In his childhood, *Indra* the god of the *devas*, grants him a boon. According to it *Indrastra* (the weapon of *Indra*) will not affect him, whoever may aim it at him. Later *Indra* desires *Akalya*, the wife of the sage *Gautama* and by deceit he enjoys physical union with her.¹⁹ Because of this uncontrollable desire for another’s wife, he lost his dignity. But *Hanuman* possessed the dignity of not thinking of even the virgin maidens. In this way, he seems superior in virtue to the *devas*. Considering that even main characters *Rama* and *Lakshmana* are married, *Hanuman* seems superior to them too in this matter. When he sees *Sita* in the *Asoka* forest he says, “Mother, if you would sit on this servant’s shoulders, I shall take you quickly to *Rama*.” But *Sita* refuses saying, “Doing thus would be a dishonour to *Rama*’s bow and my chastity.” When he asks permission to carry *Sita*, she was not a woman in his thoughts. She was the embodiment of chastity.²⁰

Hanuman who maintains inner purity by steadying his mind is also distinguished with external purity. His white body²¹ is said to denote the purity of his body. A pure body is always strong and healthy, and *Hanuman*’s strength cannot be matched by others. There is mention that even *Bhima*, the hero with the greatest physical strength in the *Mahabharata* met *Hanuman* and received his blessings.²² Even today those involved in the physical arts like exercise, use of weapons and self-defence consider him as their patron deity. His body became the residence of these various great powers and abilities because he maintained celibacy, which is not easy to maintain. All these powers and the feats of *Hanuman* are attainable only by those have attained *attamacittis*²³ (the eight superhuman powers) usually associated with the *cittars*.

HANUMAN IS A CITTAR

It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the *Kambaramayanam*, *Hanuman* is shown to have the quality of a *cittar*.²⁴ He is born as an *avatara* of Lord *Siva* and *Vayu* the wind god. When *Siva* takes a form, it would be with the association of the five elements of nature. In which case it is clear that *Hanuman* who is considered as *avatara* also has the power to control the elements. It may be noted that *Kambar* in his verse praises and associates him with the five elements.²⁵ There is also the tradition of referring to *Siva* as a *Cittar*. The sages who worship and meditate on *Siva*, beyond the restrictive forms of religion are called *cittars*.²⁶ *Pattinattar*, a *cittar* himself sings of the burning of *Tiripura*, the triple flying cities of the *asuras* together with the burning of Lanka in the south.²⁷ The one who burnt

Lanka is *Hanuman*. Thus here, *Hanuman* is considered to be a *cittar* by *Pattinattar*. It may be shown through some of *Hanuman*'s acts that he is really a *cittar*.

When the monkey warriors do not have power to leap over the sea to Lanka, *Hanuman* performs that wonder. First he makes his form large, like *Vishnu* in his *Tirivikrama* form. The power to make small objects large is one of the eight superhuman powers. It is called *Mahima citti*. Then he crosses the sea by flying in the sky. His power to go anywhere one wishes helped him to achieve this. This power is known as *prapti citti*.

Cittars have the great power of controlling the five elements. They cannot be harmed by these elements. When *Hanuman*'s tail is set on fire, the city of Lanka is burnt but *Hanuman* is not burnt. The *Kambaramayanam* also mentions that this is due to *Sita*'s request to the fire god *Agni* not to harm *Hanuman*.²⁸ But on the other hand, the fact that fire cannot harm *Hanuman* who can control all the five elements should also be considered.

With the *lahima citti*, another one of the eight superhuman powers, heavy objects can be made light. This enables one to carry even large mountains easily. "During the fierce battle between *Rama* and *Ravana*, *Rama* and *Hanuman* and *Lakshmana* were struck by the *Brahmastra* (the weapon of *Brahma*) and they fall, losing consciousness. Many monkey warriors are hurt. During the war, twice *Hanuman* brings the *Canjiva* Mount to help them recover."²⁹ To do this he enlarges himself with the *Mahima citti* flies with the *prapti citti* and carries the mount with the *lahima citti*.

When the *vanara* warriors cross over to Lanka using the bridge that was built, *Hanuman* and *Angatan* carry *Rama* and *Lakshmana* respectively on their shoulders.³⁰ Even during the war, *Hanuman* carries *Rama* in the same manner to help him fight with *Ravana*.³¹ Thus he not only carries *Rama* on his shoulders but also his sufferings and greatly helps *Rama* to accomplish his goal. It will not be an exaggeration to say that *Hanuman* was the support for *Rama* the embodiment of *dharma* to destroy *Ravana* the embodiment of *adharma* and thereby establish *dharma* on earth.

CONCLUSION

In the *Kambaramayanam*, *Hanuman* who is created as a *vanara*, with his high moral qualities and incomparable celibacy, rises gradually to a lofty state where he is praised by all as a great soul. Even today those who observe celibacy and practise yoga worship him as their guru. Today there is a large number of devotees who build temples especially

for *Hanuman* and install statues to worship him. They offer him garlands of *vatai* (a circular savory made of black gram) to be worn round his neck and smear fresh butter on his body. There are also devotees who worship him as a *cittar*. Members of the *Agastya Canmarga Sangam* in South India and Malaysia worship *cittars*. In the song in praise of the *cittars* is found the line, "Praise to the holy feet of Hanuman."³² This includes him as one of the *cittars*.

ENDNOTES

1. M.Winternitz,p.501-517 ; A.Gurugay,p.36-51
 2. Jesudasan,p.128-131 ; Vaiyapuri,p.23
 3. *Kambaramayanam*, 1,5:27-28
 4. *Valviyar kalanciyam*, p.139
 5. *Kalaikkalanciyam*,p.281
 6. *Mangai Anmika Malar*,p.2
 7. *Mangai Anmika Malar*. (February/March 1998) p.2
Blessings granted to Hanuman by the gods.
 - i) *Devendra* - Whoever may use the *Indrastra* on *Hanuman* , but is shall become powerless.
 - ii) *Varuna* -No one shall restrict *Hanuman* with the *Varunastra*.
 - iii) *Surya* -*Hanuman* shall receive a part of the Sun's brightness. He shall have *Surya* himself as his guru to teach him all the arts and the sciences (or religious texts).
 - iv) *Yama* - *Hanuman* shall not become old or die but live long with courage and strength of his arms (i.e. physical strength).
 - v) *Vishvakarma*- He gave the earrings (*Kuntala*) that he wore to *Hanuman* and blessed him.
 - vi) *Kubera* - He gave *Hanuman* the *Vijaya Sakti* boon by which *Hanuman* would never defeated in any battle.
 8. *Abithana cinthamani*, p.56
 9. *Kambaramayanam*, iii,8:158; v,12:126-130,135,138-140;v,13:1,41
 10. *Ibid*. v,13:62
 11. *Ibid*. vi,4:56-139
 12. *Ibid*. iv,10:1-137
 13. *Tirukkural*, 110
 14. *Kambaramayanam*,iv,15:1-63;iv,16:1-19
 15. *Ibid*. v,13:59-63
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16. *Ibid.*,v,13:65
17. *Valviyar Kalanciyam*,p.139
18. *Kambaramayanam*,v,2:42
19. *Ibid.* I,9:70-86
20. *Ibid.*,v,3:62-68
21. *Ibid.*,5,14:221
22. *Valviyar Kalanciyam*,p.139
23. *Valviyar Kalanciyam*, p.172-173

Pure souls, by virtue of their penance (*tapas*) obtain, by the grace of god, numerous superhuman powers. Of these, eight stand out as being important. They are called *atta-ma-cittikal* or eight superhuman powers (which may be practiced on oneself or on others).

- i) *Anima* : The power of reducing oneself to the size of an atom.
 - ii) *Mahima* : The power of increasing one's size at will.
 - iii) *Lahima* : The power of becoming, extremely highest; even a mountain like the *meru* may be made light.
 - iv) *Karima* : The power to make even an atom heavy so it becomes impossible to carry.
 - v) *Prapti* : The power to move about at will.
 - vi) *Prakamiyam*: Transmigration is transferring to the body of another, knowing the past, present and future and other such powers.
 - vii) *Isatvam* : Being like god in the power, to create protect and destroy.
 - viii) *Vacittvam*: The power to control everyone, including the *devas* and the souls in the whole universe and to make them obey commands.
24. *Cittars* are those who see divinity in all living beings. They believe that the heart is a great temple and the body of flesh is the residence of god. They have reached an undying state; their bodies do not decay because they know the means to protect it from destruction. They transcend all boundaries like country, religion and language. They have reached a high state by protecting the purity of mind and body as they would protect their life.
25. When *Kambar* began the composition of the *Kambaramayanam* he sang verses of praise to god, *Nammalvar*, *Vinayaka*, *Hanuman* and *Sarasvati* and regarded them as the protectors of his epic. "*Hanuman*, fathered by one of the five elements (i.e. *Vayu* of Wind) through one of the five elements (i.e. sky) crossed one of the five elements (i.e. sea/water), searched for *Rama*'s sake and found the Lady (*Sita*) born of one of the five elements (i.e. land) and set one of the five elements (in fire) to the enemy's city. *Hanuman* of such greatness will protect me".
26. *Mangai Anmika Malar* (March/April 1998), p.16
27. *Pattinattatikal*, to cremate the body of his late mother, stacked fresh banana stalks on it. At that moment he sings movingly as follows:-

The fire set before was at *Tiripuram*

The fire set later was in Southern Lanka

The fire (of sorrow) my mother set (by dying) is in the base of my stomach
The fire I have set, may it kindle and burn.

(*Cittar Patalkal*, p.132)

28. *Kambaramayanam*,v,12:135-140;v,13
29. *Ibid*.vi,23:63-66,100-103,115-116
30. *Ibid*.vi,8:4-5
31. *Ibid*.vi,14:215-218
32. The song in Praise of the *Cittars* used by the members of the *Agastya Canmarga Sangam* in their worship name a total of 108 *cittars*.

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