

# STORIES OF HANUMAN

## BIRTH OF ANJANEYA



Anjana was a lovely young Vaanara\* maiden. One day as she was strolling in the sylvan gardens of Kishkindha, the wind god Vayu came by hurriedly and swept her garland away. Anjana was startled and about to get angry with the god, but by then the strong and energetic wind god had realized his folly and returned to apologise. As he cast his eyes on her, he was struck by Manmatha, the god of love. He apologized to her delicately and Anjana was taken in very much by this handsome young man. They married.

\*Vaanaras = Monkey people

In time, they had a lovely baby boy. He was called Anjaneya or Anjana's son. He was as intelligent as he was mischievous. Vayu had immense responsibilities and he could not keep them waiting any longer. Having bestowed upon his son his own powers, Vayu bid farewell to a tear-filled Anjana and his lovely young son.

Anjaneya was growing to be an unmanageable child. One day, he saw the sun at the break of dawn. He was tempted by what he thought was a luminous orange fruit and leapt skyward to catch it. Surya, the Sun laughed thinking that the little monkey was going to fall down to the earth and hurt himself, but nothing of that sort happened. Instead, the monkey came closer and closer to the sun and he was not even getting scorched!

Comprehending the situation it a little too late, Surya ran to Indra, the king of gods, for help. Indra mounted Airavata, his elephant, and rushed towards Anjaneya. The little monkey now excitedly turned his attention to this elephant. But sadly, just then, Indra's thunderbolt struck him and he fell down!

Vayu sensed that something was wrong and rushed just in time to hold his son in his arms. He learnt what had happened and was outraged. He broodingly retired into a cave deep in to the earth.

The three worlds began to choke and struggle for want of air. The gods panicked and rushed to the creator Brahma for help. Brahma went to Indra and asked him to apologise to Vayu, for he had struck a mere little child with his tremendous thunderbolt. Indra, realizing his folly, did so. Vayu yielded to Indra's apology. Brahma revived Anjaneya. He was now called Hanuman, one whose chin is broken (by the thunderbolt).

Vayu asked the little monkey to pay his obeisance to Brahma. The mischievous one did so and when the pleased Brahma told him to ask for a boon, he cleverly asked, 'Give me all the wisdom you have!'

Brahma, understanding the magnitude of the little boon, smilingly granted him the

boon. For giving away wisdom only multiplied it and did not make the giver any poorer for it! Further, Brahma granted that he would, because of his wisdom, be a **Chiranjeevi** or an eternal being.

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## MEETING WITH THE BROTHER



While in exile, Bhima once had to go out by himself on a mission. Passing through the dense forest along a narrow path, he came by a small old monkey lazing wayside with its long tail stretched out on the path.

Looking at Bhima, the monkey addressed him thus: Are you not the great Bhima? My salutations to you!

Bhima was, understandingly, surprised to come by a talking monkey and said with pride: Well, I am glad you recognise me. Now move your tail away so I can pass by. It is not wont of me to walk across any creature.

The monkey said: Oh, dear, don't you see how old and sick I am? Will you please oblige and move the tail yourself?

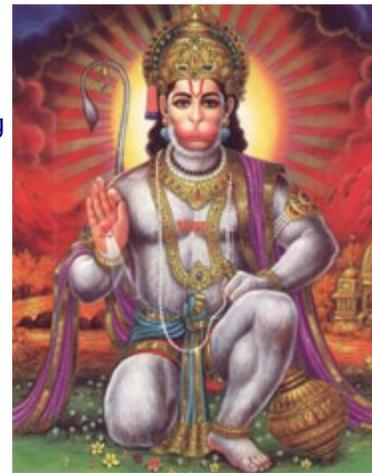
Bhima, thinking it rather unpleasant to touch a monkey and that too its tail, stuck out the little finger of his left hand and pushed it. But the tail did not move. Hiding his surprise, he used his whole left hand and tried pushing it. Yet it did not budge a mustard seed's width. To one endowed with the strength of eight thousand elephants, this was too much! Feeling crushed, yet hiding it, he used both his hands to push the tail but to no avail. Suddenly it dawned upon his not-so-brilliant intelligence that it was no ordinary monkey that he was dealing with.

He fell at the monkey's feet and said: Oh, mighty one! I beg of you to reveal your true identity to me. I am your humble servant!

Shedding his disguise, Chiranjeevi Maruti, son of the Wind god and Bhima's brother, revealed himself.

He blessed Bhima saying: Shed your pride and take refuge in the Lord. You shall be victorious! My power shall always be with the Pandavas. I shall ride upon Arjuna's flag.

Bhima bowed down to his brother in all humility.



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## HANUMAN TO THE RESCUE



Fulfilling the promise given to his father, King Dasaratha, Rama along with Seeta and Lakshmana went in exile. They lived their ascetic lives blissfully in the forest and the fourteen year exile was drawing to a close when Ravana, the king of Lanka, having heard much of Seetha's beauty and desiring to possess her, used cunning means and carried her away.

Rama, when he discovered Seeta's absence, was inconsolable. With Lakshmana's mature advice and help, they began their search for Seeta. Fortunately, she had been noticed being carried away by many and the brothers took this trail until they reached Kishkindha, the abode of the

Vanaras.

Here, they befriended Sugreeva and helped him ascend the throne. Sugreeva, in return, promised all help to find Seeta. Rama was shown a small bundle of jewels that was described by Sugreeva's men as having fallen from the sky. Rama instantly recognized them as Seeta's.

Hanuman was Sugreeva's generalissimo. Earlier he had saved Sugreeva from a mad elephant by holding it by its trunk and flinging it away, earning him the position he held presently. Sugreeva's army was divided in four and each battalion went in each of the four directions. Hanuman, instinctively, opted to go south with his men.

He reached the southern shores of Bharata and there he learnt that Ravana of Lanka had carried Seeta away to the island in a flying chariot. He stood atop a mountain, said his prayers to his father, Vayu, and with a roar that shook the earth, leaped across the ocean. He landed safe in Lanka but not before vanquishing a terrible sea-monster en-route.

In beautiful Lanka, bearing all the insignia of a flourishing kingdom, Hanuman wandered in the guise of a little monkey. He went hither and thither looking carefully at each woman to see if she was Seeta. Finally, having looked in the houses and the market places, in the palaces and in the harems, Hanuman reached a garden called Ashokavana.

Here he found a beautiful woman humming sad sweet notes. Upon moving closer, he understood that she was pining for her Lord to come and take her back. Understanding that she was none other than Seeta, he looked about to find if somebody was watching and seeing none, sprang up before her, startling her. He held his palms together and paid obeisance to her. To assure her that he was there on a mission for Rama, he showed her Rama's ring which he had carried along.

Although Hanuman was powerful enough to carry Seeta and a hundred others like her together back with him, he yielded to Seeta's wish that Rama come and fight Ravana, liberate all those that were unjustly held there and then take her back.

Hanuman was wise by Brahma's boon. He knew that war begets only sorrow even for the victor. He desired a peaceful settlement. With this intent he went to Ravana's court, introduced himself and sought peace. A haughty Ravana and his misled men laughed at the sight of a mere monkey being the ambassador for peace.



Ravana sat on the throne set at an elevated level. Simply to exhibit to Ravana that he was not pitted against somebody that could be crushed, Hanuman coiled up his tail so high that it was higher than Ravana's throne and sat upon it. Ravana was angered and ordered his men to set this audacious monkey's tail on fire.

The men set Hanuman's tail on fire. Exclaiming that the heat of the fire was nothing but the angst of Mother Seeta, Hanuman went all over Lanka and set everything on fire. With Lanka burning, Hanuman went to the ocean and dipped in his tail, thereby extinguishing the fire.

He now returned to Rama with the promising news of Seeta's presence in Lanka.

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## **MOUNTAIN TRANSFERRED !**



Despite many attempts by Sri Rama and his men to come to a peaceful settlement with Ravana, this did not materialize. Filled with egoistic pride and egged on by his un-wise ministers, he declared war. So war it was, quick-killing and enervating, sapping all energy - physical and mental.

Both armies suffered - Ravana's because its king wanted war and Rama's because its leader wanted peace. Stark distinction in intent apart, nothing was different in the fate with which they met. Barren land that was the meeting ground for the two armies was now drenched in blood; men lay everywhere broken, pierced and torn in every limb, every muscle, every bone, every nerve; they lay there alive, half-alive, barely-alive, nearly-dead and dead; writhing and twitching in pain until they could no more writhe and twitch.

With the coming of Indrajit, Ravana's son, who had the ability to make himself invisible and who wielded terrible weapons of boon from the gods, the scenario was turning bad in Rama's camp. Even Lakshmana lay in a swoon. There remained only Rama, Hanuman and Vibheeshana to lead and not many beyond finger-count among the soldiers.

When everything seemed apparently lost, Jambavan asked Hanuman to bring some

herbs from the Sanjeevani Mountain. So, with an urgent mission on hand, Hanuman leapt skyward and flew north like lightning. Having spotted the Sanjeevani, he alighted upon it, only to see that it was densely forested, difficult to distinguish one herb from another. Instantly he decided that instead of trying to discover the herbs needed, he would carry the mountain itself back to Lanka!

Growing to an enormous size with his powers of Mahima, he dug his hand deep beneath the mountain and with a thunderous, "Jai Sri Rama," he uprooted it from its base, held it in his hand and flew south. It was spectacular to see a whole mountain descend upon Lanka's battle-field. Jambavan took the herbs and revived the dying men. Even men from Ravana's camp were treated. These grateful men, who would otherwise have died neglected and in anonymity, now insisted upon fighting for Rama.

With the herbs from Sanjeevani now available, Indrajit was killed by Lakshmana and Ravana by Rama. Lanka was liberated, Vibheeshana was crowned king and the land, now sanctified by Rama's advent and Vibheeshana's coronation, came to be called Sri Lanka. Seeta was reunited with her Lord and, the exile period now over, they returned to Ayodhya.

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## **RAMA or RAMA NAAMA ?**



Hanuman having returned with the news of Seeta's captivity in Lanka, Sugreeva lost no time and began preparing his army to accompany Rama and Lakshmana to Lanka in order to vanquish Ravana, liberate all those imprisoned within the vices of the senses and bring back Seeta Devi.

They reached the sea-shore and here it was proposed to build a bridge. Upon what foundation would the bridge stand? Hanuman simply said, "Chant Rama's divine name and the rocks would not sink!" Although the others were doubtful of this suggestion, they complied and were instantly convinced, for the rocks not only floated but also stayed at the spot they were placed on the sea! Walking upon these rocks, chanting Sri Rama's divine name, they laid more rocks until the bridge was built.

When there was a need for Hanuman to take back a whole mountain to Lanka, he lifted it by the powers he attained by chanting 'Jai Sri Rama'.

Many years later, when the purpose of Rama's avatara on earth was fulfilled, he was about to go into Samadhi. He asked Hanuman to do likewise and attain the abode of perpetual bliss. Hanuman declined saying that bliss to him was to live on the earth where Rama was born, his name ever playing on his lips! To this Rama asked, "Why is it that you value my name more than me?" Hanuman said, "Thou art but a mere mortal incarnation while your name and deeds are eternal. Hence your name on earth is eternal!"

In later times, during the age of the Mahabharata, Arjuna whose flag Hanuman adorned reached the place where the bridge had been built earlier by the Vanaras. Filled with pride, he said, "Why, dear Maruti, did the Vanaras have to take all the trouble to build such a huge bridge? All it needs is a great archer like me to build one! Just watch me!" Then he shot arrow after arrow with such intense speed that they interlocked and formed a strong bridge across the ocean.

Hanuman told him gently that it is not wont of great men to boast of earthly achievements, but Arjuna who was immensely flattered by his own bridge, did not sway. He challenged Hanuman to prove that this bridge was inferior to the one they had built earlier. Hanuman simply breathed, 'Jai Sri Rama' and the bridge collapsed as if it were made of feathers! Arjuna fell at Hanuman's feet and begged to be pardoned.

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