



## ॥ हनुमान कथा ॥ Legend of Hanuman

The guru of the gods, Brihaspati, had an attendant by the name of Punjikasthala who was cursed to be reborn as a female monkey. This curse would be lifted when she would give birth to an avatar of Lord Shiva. Some time later, she was born as Anjana and, together with her husband Kesari, performed intense tapasya and worship of Lord Shiva. The Lord was pleased and granted her a boon. She asked that He be born to her so that she may be freed from the curse.

When Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya, was given the sacred payasa by Agnideva to share among his wives so that they may conceive – a bird snatched a fragment of that prasad and flying over the forest, dropped it over Anjana who was performing worship. Vayudeva, the wind god, delivered that fragment of payasa to the outstretched hands of Anjana who immediately swallowed it. Anjana then gave birth to Hanuman. Thus, Lord Shiva incarnated as Hanuman in the bodily form of a monkey.

The young Hanuman chose Surya, the sun god, as his guru who taught him the Vedas and religious scriptures. As dakshina, Hanuman agreed to Surya's request that he assist his son Sugriva of Kishkindha, by becoming his minister.

Hanuman met Lord Rama during His exile from the kingdom of Ayodhya, who along with his brother Lakshmana, was searching for Sita, his wife, who had been abducted by King Ravana of Lanka. Their search had

taken them to Lake Pampa at the base of the mountain Risyamukha. Sugriva was hiding in this region to escape persecution by his brother Bali. Sugriva being suspicious that Rama and Lakshmana had been sent by Bali to kill him, sent Hanuman to ascertain if they were friends or foes.

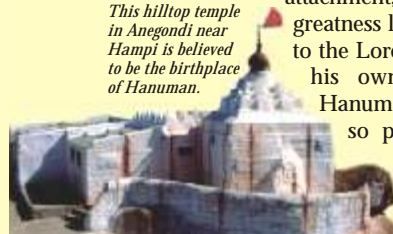
In the guise of a Brahmin, Hanuman presented himself before Rama. His first words to Him were such that Rama told Lakshmana: "None can speak thus without mastering the Vedas and their branches... Indeed, success awaits the monarch whose emissaries are so accomplished."

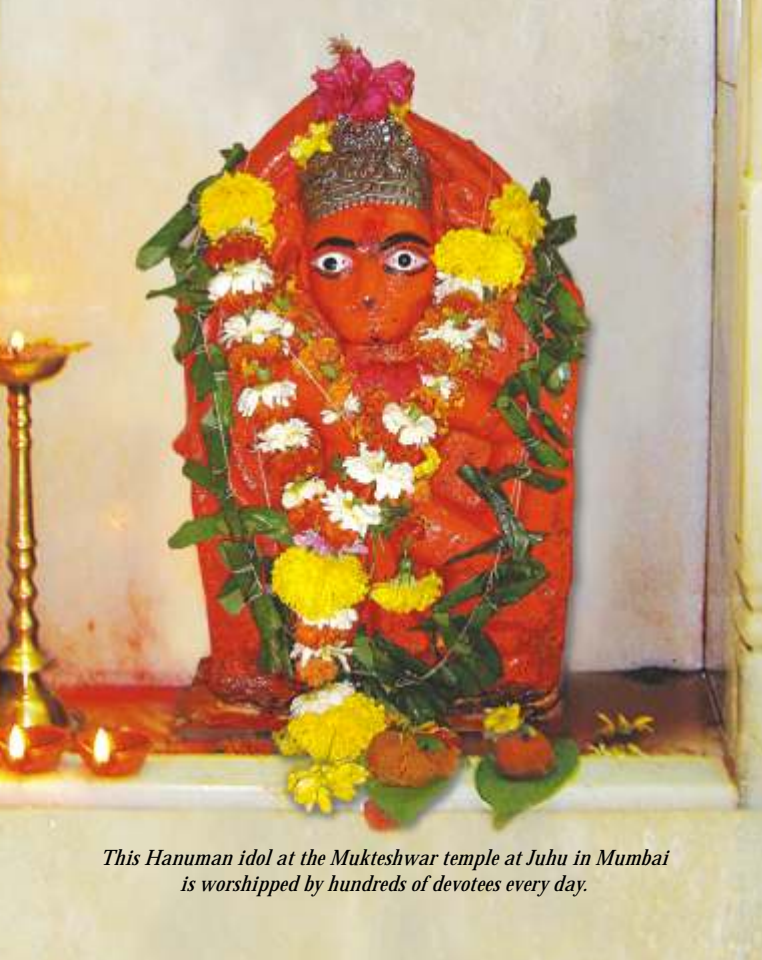
When Lord Rama revealed his identity, Hanuman prostrated before Him and Lord Rama picked him up and clasped him to His bosom. The story of Hanuman is inextricably interwoven with that of Lord Rama and is narrated in the 'Ramayana' of Valmiki, and the 'Ramcharitamanas' of Tulsidas.

Hanuman is regarded as a Chiranjeevi, an immortal being, who is present in the world even today. He is the link between the devotees and Lord Rama (himself an avatar of Lord Vishnu) who instructed him to serve, protect and inspire everyone who worshipped Him.

In the Bhagavad Geeta, Lord Krishna describes the qualities of a bhakta or a devotee: "He who acts for Me, who is engrossed in Me, who is My devotee, who is free from attachment, he reaches Me!" Hanuman's greatness lies in his complete surrender to the Lord, so much so that he merges his own existence in the Lord. Hanuman's bhakti or devotion was so perfect that it culminated in advaitic God-realisation.

*This hilltop temple in Anegondi near Hampi is believed to be the birthplace of Hanuman.*





*This Hanuman idol at the Mukteshwar temple at Juhu in Mumbai is worshipped by hundreds of devotees every day.*



## ॥ हनुमान चरित्र ॥ Noble Character of Hanuman

Among the most popular gods of Hindus, Hanuman was a brave Vanara - a special species of semi-magical, semi-humanoid beings with wondrous powers, who had developed a civilization and culture which were at a higher state of social advancement than most human societies of the time.

Hanuman is a compendium of virtues, with nary a flaw in him. He is referred to as the Buddhimatam Varishtam – first among the astute; more intelligent, more knowledgeable. He is also the exemplar, the veritable pinnacle of strength - both physical and spiritual. A great musician and singer, a formidable scholar of the scriptures, and the ultimate diplomat - entrusted with all missions that require powers of persuasion, charm and panache. His powers of askesis and spiritual discipline are unmatched, and his words are so impactful and melodious that even Lord Rama comments that his speech reveals a perfect being. Hanuman is one of the seven cheeranjeevis or immortals, who it is foretold, will be the Manu or proto-Adam in the next cycle of creation.

### A child prodigy

When he was still a child, Hanuman, one day when he was very hungry, assuming the sun to be a ripe fruit took flight to get hold of it to eat. Indra, the king of the devas, on seeing this hurled his thunderbolt at the child, which struck

his jaw. He fell back to earth and became unconscious. Vayu, the wind-god and his celestial father, went on strike taking the atmosphere with him, and the worlds began to gasp and choke for breath to survive. To pacify Vayu, Indra withdrew the effect of his thunderbolt. The devas revived the young Hanuman and showered him with blessings, amongst which was invulnerability to all curses and weapons. Thus, he is also referred to as Vajra Anga Bali (popularly pronounced as Bajrangbali) – the thunderbolt-body-strongman!

Being a child, Hanuman continued to indulge in his pranks and mischief. Once, he mistakenly tried pranks on the Sapta rishis, or the seven great sages. Realising that the young Hanuman was proving to be a menace, they decreed that he would lose all knowledge of his superhuman strength and powers until they were needed to save the world from a crisis or disaster.

### ✿ Regaining his superhuman qualities

From the moment he meets Lord Rama, Hanuman becomes his most ardent devotee. So great is his devotion that he is also referred to as the junior servant of Hari (Vishnu) - the senior servant being Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu. It is only when Hanuman comes to the aid of Lord Rama and vows to help Him find the abducted Sita, that the vanaras remind Hanuman that he possesses superhuman powers and strength. It is then that Hanuman expands like a colossus and makes the most famous leap in Indian mythology - the spectacular jump across the strait of water that separates the southern tip of India from the golden city of Lanka. With this heroic act, he finally comes into the full stature of his destiny as a superhero.

### ✿ Demonstration of his super powers

Landing in Lanka, Hanuman meets Sita. He proceeds to destroy the royal gardens of Ravana and single-handedly kills thousands of demons before he lets himself be captured. Ravana is both impressed and infuriated with this amazing being. He asks Hanuman if Rama's glory can compare to his, and Hanuman makes his famous reply that Ravana is indeed the full moon as compared to the new moon of Rama. The full moon depletes while the new moon grows in stature, so the compliment was actually an elegant putdown. Ravana, wanting to punish him, commands that his tail be set on fire. Hanuman, being invulnerable to fire, reciprocates by burning the golden city of Lanka. This action has become proverbial for the comeuppance of pride and belief in riches.

Hanuman flies back, and soon returns with Rama and the Vanara army. He performs many deeds of valour and slaughters demon-heroes. When Indrajit, son of Ravana, uses magical weapons to render Lakshmana unconscious, he flies to the Himalayas in search of the Sanjeevani, the universal panacea for all ills and wounds. Unable to identify the specific plant, he uproots the entire mountain and flies back with it – a feat that is much lauded and replicated as a theme of Indian art to this day.

Hanuman becomes Rama's man for all seasons. He has become an ideal now, the wise epitome of strength. In one famous instance he rashly promises assistance to a king who has insulted Rama's guru and finds himself opposing his master in battle. Incredibly, Rama loses as he uses weapons while Hanuman merely repels all attacks with the divine name - "Rama!" His great love for Rama has