

Vanaras or Vana-Naras

A tail's travel from Treta Yuga to Dwapara Yuga

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Abstract

Myth is considered to be stories that were passed on to generation to generation. Myth usually plays an important role in preserving cultural heritage of a nation. Many writers in India use myth and history together to bring out fantasies and some covered up truths and also it represents a primitive mans instinct. We have many different gods and their stories in Hindu mythology and each story shares a significant idea of victory of good over evil and also other than the heroes we have a list of some subordinate characters too in which Vanaras are one among them. Hindu mythology holds a prominent place for the half ape-half man creature. They played a significant role in the two major epics of Indian Literature Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ramayana was originally written by Sage Valmiki in Dwaparayuga and the latter was written by Sage VedVyasa in Tretayuga. Throughout Ramayana these creatures are pictured as same as humans or even more powerful than humans. We have many different legends and theories about the origin and existence of Vana-Naras. And it is also said that Aryans did not want to consider the southern people equal to them so they portrayed them as monkeys. This paper attempts to retell or reinterpret the characters of the two epics in different perspective.

Key Words

Reinterpretation, Myth, History, Existence, Vanaras

Valmiki, the creator of Ramayana, he was the one who to put history or myth into words. He was the one who introduced the heroes of our paper Vanaras in the Indian mythology. When we talk about the origin of the word vanaras it is derived from two Sanskrit words Vana (forest) and Nara (man) which means vanaras were people of forest or forest dwellers. They were the tribes of forest who help Rama in rescuing Sita and also in the war with Ravana.

“The Tale Of The Vanquished: yes again!: The story of the Kishkindha has never been told. Vanara is the epic tale of the vanquished vananara people, a story that has been cherished by the oppressed castes of India for 3000 years. Until now, no Vanara has dared to tell the tale. But perhaps the time has come for the dead and the defeated to speak.” (Vanara, ShahilPradhan)

We will start with the introduction of Hanuman, who recognizes him and takes him to Sugreeva and introduces Rama to him. And during the conversation Rama gets to know about the love story of Tara, Baali and Sugreeva, which we can probably assume to be the world’s first triangle love story. Tara was loved by both Baali and Sugreeva but Tara reciprocated love only towards Sugreeva. The whole love and ally wouldn’t be possible if they were apes.

Next we find that few Vanaras find a lady being kidnapped in a flying chariot ‘PushpakaVimana’. They find the woman crying and throwing her ornaments to them. They even had collected those ornaments and saved it. They recollect the whole incident and narrate it to Rama, with which Rama finds out that Sita was been taken in that direction. If those vanaras were mere monkeys it was not possible for them to understand all those.

“Righteous king Sugriva said to the foremost among the Vanaras, Satavali what would help his cause as well as the cause of Rama:

“Take like you a hundred thousand forest dwellers, your ministers and the sons of Vaivasvata. And begin your expedition.” (Kishkindha Kanda Section 43)

Here we see Sugreeva commanding the people of his tribe to help Rama in finding his wife and the word used here to refer the people here is वनौकसाम which means forest dwellers. Throughout Ramayana, they are pictured same as or equal to humans. Their intelligence was equal to a normal man or much more than them. And coming to the Lanka expenditure by

Hanuman who goes to see where Sita is. And when he meets Sita, he recites the Rama Purana(story of Rama) so that Sita does not get frightened. Nowhere have we heard nor in our Puranas have we heard or read about monkeys going as messengers. And to the astonishment if Hanuman was a vanara he could never have spoken human language and Sita would never understand what he said.

As many of us might have the doubt about the mention of tails in the epic, how can a human creature have tail?

“G. Ramdas, based on Ravana's reference to the Vanaras' tail as an ornament, infers that the "tail" was actually an appendage in the dress worn by the men of the Savara tribe. (The female Vanaras are not described as having a tail.) According to this theory, the non-human characteristics of the Vanaras may be considered artistic imagination.” (Speaking Tree)

According to the above mentioned lines tails can also be interpreted as the protruding part of the dress they were wearing. The word used for tail in the epic is *laagulam* (लाङ्गुलम्) a Sanskrit word which means both tail and penis. As the female vanaras were not said to have tail that clarifies the doubt that it was not tail but penis which only male vanaras had. Rama Setu was said to be built by the monkeys who accompanied Rama in search of Sita. It was Nal, one of the vanaras who engineered the idea of Rama Setu along with his clan friends which was impossible for a monkey to do.

And when it comes to the travel of Vana- Nara from Dwaparayuga to Tretayuga, there have been many researches explaining the historicity of Mahabharata which says it was not a mere epic but a history. And we find our heroes here too where we have a reference of Hanuman blocking the way of Bheema in Gandhamadana Mountains in Himalayas.

SabhaParva of Mahabarata describes the Yagya conducted by Yudhistira, Sahadev went to Kishkindha during Rajasuya conquest and defeated Mainda and Dwivida who were the kings of Vanars, the kingdom that Sahadev conquers is Kishkindha-The Kingdom of Bali.

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