The Legend of Hanuman



Hanuman is a half monkey, half human devotee of Rama

Hanuman is one of the most recognized, revered and respected deities in the Hindu pantheon. Half human, half monkey, he is worshiped for his great strength, undying devotion, loyalty and selfless dedication to Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. As Rama's faithful servant, Hanuman features prominently in the Hindu epic "Ramayana." He rescues Rama's wife from the clutches of Ravana, the evil king of Lanka, and helps defeat him. Not only is he known for his fearlessness and fierceness in battle, Hanuman is also respected for his profound knowledge of all the ancient Vedas and scriptures. Like all deities, there are many legends about Hanuman and how he became such a powerful figure.



Hanuman has become a symbol of loyalty and devotion

Hanuman's mother was an *apsara*, a celestial dancer, cursed to live on Earth. For twelve long years she performed intense prayers to the Lord Shiva, who was pleased with her devotion and granted her a son, Hanuman. Full of energy as a child, Hanuman once saw the rising sun and mistook it for a ripe mango. He leapt joyously up into the sky and took the sun in his mouth. This enraged Indra, king of the gods, who struck Hanuman down with a *vajra*, or thunderbolt. The attack greatly upset Vayu, the god of wind and Hanuman's spiritual father. He sucked all the air from Earth, which had all the gods scrambling to try and stop him. They appeased him by reviving Hanuman and granting him many boons. Brahma, the creator god, blessed him immunity from death by weapons of war, the strength to instill fear in enemies and the ability to change form at will. Shiva granted him longevity and scriptural wisdom. Indra gave him a body stronger than the indestructible vajra. Agni, god of fire, bestowed upon him immunity from the fiery element. Finally Vayu blessed him with speed greater than the wind.

Although Hanuman possessed such incredible powers, he was ever a humble and respectful being, serving first Sugriva, lord of the monkey kingdom and then Rama. When he confronts Ravana in his quest to rescue Rama's wife, Sita, he says, "I am a humble messenger of Sri Rama. I have come here to serve Rama, to do his work. I am fearless by the grace of Lord Rama. I am not afraid of death. I welcome it, if it comes while I am serving Lord Rama." When Sita is rescued and Ravana defeated, Rama says to Hanuman, " I am greatly indebted to you, O mighty hero. You did marvelous, superhuman deeds. Sugriva has his kingdom

restored to him. Angada has been made the crown prince. Vibhishana has become king of Lanka. But you have not asked for anything at any time." He therefore goes on to grant the selfless Hanuman everlasting life and the promise that his icon will always be placed at the door to Rama's temple so that devotees will worship him as much as they do Rama. Thus Hanuman became the symbol of fierce devotion and friendship – a reminder that all relationships grow and endure with a foundation of loyalty.