

Hanuman

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Hanuman is the devoted ally of *Rama* in the *Ramayana*, traditionally represented in monkey form and associated with *Vayu*, the wind. H.P. Blavatsky's glossary emphasizes his courage, resourcefulness and faithful service in the recovery of *Sita* from *Ravana*. A Theosophical reading can contemplate him as an image of active powers gathered around a spiritual purpose. The interpretation developed here follows that image, while distinguishing the epic narrative from the applications drawn from it.

His monkey-form is important. The monkey suggests agility, instinct, movement, cleverness, imitation, restlessness, and nervous vitality. In ordinary consciousness, these qualities easily become distraction, vanity, appetite, chatter, and scattered desire. But *Hanuman* shows them transmuted. Restlessness becomes readiness. Cleverness becomes sacred resourcefulness. Strength becomes protection. Speech becomes message. Movement becomes mission. The monkey is not rejected; it is redeemed by devotion.

Hanuman's father, *Vayu* or *Pavana*, gives the wind-current of the symbol. Wind is invisible but powerful. It moves, carries sound, animates breath, and crosses distances. As son of the wind, *Hanuman* represents pranic force, life-energy, swiftness, and subtle power. But the wind can scatter as well as serve. In *Hanuman*, wind is yoked to *Rama*. Breath becomes mantra, movement becomes service, and force becomes obedience to the divine purpose.

Rama supplies the centre of *Hanuman's* fidelity. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky reads the *Ramayana* as an esoteric drama involving solar and lunar powers and a conflict over the use of spiritual force. Her interpretation also employs historical racial categories; these are features of that account, not grounds for judging living peoples. The inward application concerns the direction of power: whether intelligence serves a universal purpose or becomes an instrument of a separate ambition.

Sita gives a particular human purpose to *Hanuman's* mission. He searches for someone held captive and carries reassurance through a faithful message. In contemplative interpretation, she may suggest an inward dignity obscured by fear or coercion. That analogy should remain an analogy, rather than a rigid equation between an epic character and a human principle. The practical lesson is to discern the need before deciding how one's strength should be used.

This matters because the field of *Lanka* is not simply ugly. H.P. Blavatsky notes that when *Hanuman* reconnoiters *Lanka*, he finds *Rakshasas*, some hideous and some beautiful. This is an

exact spiritual warning. The lower world is not always obviously dark. Glamour may be refined, power may be attractive, and the lunar mind may shine with borrowed light. The servant of *Rama* must therefore be brave, but also clear. He must discern without hatred and act without confusion.

Blavatsky's account of *Hanuman* entering *Lanka* is especially suggestive for the use of intelligence. He observes before acting and must distinguish appearances from what they conceal. His quickness has a purpose beyond its own display. In daily life, this can become a discipline of speech: to carry information faithfully, offer reassurance truthfully and avoid adding confusion for the pleasure of sounding impressive.

This makes *Hanuman* deeply practical. Before speaking, one may ask: is this speech serving *Rama*, or merely the monkey-mind? Before acting, one may ask: is this strength protecting *Sita*, or asserting the personality? Before using intelligence, one may ask: is this wit illumined by devotion, or cunning for private advantage? *Hanuman* turns myth into self-study.

Motive gives power its moral direction. *Hanuman's* fidelity offers an image of strength held within a purpose larger than self-importance. This does not mean that devotion licenses whatever a powerful person demands. Spiritual service requires discernment and remains answerable to the welfare of beings. The image loses its meaning if obedience becomes an excuse to surrender conscience or to cause harm in the name of a sacred ideal.

Professor Iyer's teaching on *Buddhi Yoga* and *svadharma* helps clarify this. To perform one's own duty in spiritual intelligence is to serve the divine will of *Atman*, the *Logos*, and the Avatar within the historical process. *Hanuman's svadharma* is exact. He is not *Rama*; he serves *Rama*. He is not *Sita*; he finds and reassures *Sita*. He is not the whole army; he becomes its fearless heart. His greatness lies in accepting his function completely.

Professor Iyer's discussion of devotion helps illuminate the image. He describes freedom through pure and sustained devotion, and relates *Buddhi Yoga* to the performance of *svadharma*, one's own duty. These passages are not direct expositions of *Hanuman*. They provide a philosophical context for the interpretation: the active faculties can become freer as they cease to revolve around self-display and learn to participate wholeheartedly in a worthy purpose.

Consider a volunteer asked to carry supplies to a neighbour after a storm. Energy is needed, but so are accurate information, a reliable arrival and attention to what the neighbour can actually use. A dramatic gesture may help less than an ordinary promise kept. *Hanuman's* image encourages the volunteer to become equal to the particular duty, including the uncelebrated details that make assistance dependable. Strength acquires tenderness when it listens.

Hanuman also helps *Manas* turn toward *Buddhi*. The lower mind tied to desire becomes restless, proud, argumentative, and fascinated by *Lanka*. The higher mind illumined by *Buddhi* becomes a messenger of truth. *Hanuman's* mind is quick, practical, and active, but it is not scattered. It has a center. It moves because love moves it.

The governing image is the wind-born messenger crossing the ocean in a faithful cause. Distance and uncertainty remain, but energy has found a direction. Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception places that single mission within the welfare of a community. A particular duty can serve a universal intention without becoming vague. The messenger need not claim to do everything; he must do what has been entrusted to him with intelligence and care.

Human Solidarity grows through such dependable participation. Devotion is focused, yet its fruits can extend beyond the nearest relationship. A person who learns to serve one duty without vanity becomes better prepared to cooperate elsewhere. The shared work does not erase individual capacity. It gives courage, resourcefulness and patience a field in which each can become useful to other lives.

The wind-symbol also invites gratitude. Breath and vitality suggest a life received within a greater circulation of Nature. They can be contemplated as entrusted powers, asking for a considerate use of energy. This is a spiritual analogy rather than a physiological instruction. Its value appears in the manner of living: less waste through restless display, more willingness to reserve strength for the task that genuinely needs it.

There is tenderness in *Hanuman* as well as might. He knows how to be small when smallness serves, and great when greatness is required. He can be scout, messenger, warrior, servant, and devotee. This is egoless appropriateness. A servant of the higher does not cling to one pose; he becomes what the work requires.

There is room for joy in this discipline. Wholehearted service can release the mind from constant measurement of its own importance. The task becomes absorbing, another person's relief becomes intelligible, and an unexpected difficulty can call forth resourcefulness. The playfulness of the monkey-form need not disappear. It can become an alertness that finds a way forward without losing the purpose of the journey.

Hanuman finally leaves a radiant practical hope: nothing in the lower nature need be despised if it can be consecrated. Even restless energy can become service. Even cleverness can become wisdom's messenger. Even the storm-wind can carry compassion. Even the monkey-mind can kneel before *Rama*. *Hanuman* is the reminder that every power in us may learn to bow, serve, and help restore the hidden soul to the light.

Glossary

Aryan — A historical term applied to the Fifth Root Race in Theosophical literature, which also uses it in racial classifications. These classifications provide no warrant for ranking the worth of living peoples.

Asuras — Orders of beings within Hindu and Theosophical cosmology; *daityas* and *danavas* are associated classes. Their meaning depends on context and is not exhausted by the word demons.

Atman — Universal Spirit or Self; the spiritual ground common to beings, distinguished from a person's temporary identity.

Avatar — A divine descent or incarnation; in the definition used here, an exalted being's voluntary embodiment beyond the necessity of ordinary rebirth. *Avatâra* is the Sanskrit form.

Bhakti — Devotion; spiritual fidelity and dedication, associated in the quoted teaching with discernment and duty.

Bodhisattva — An awakened being devoted to the welfare and liberation of beings; a central ideal of compassionate service.

Brahma — The creative deity in Hindu cosmological symbolism; distinguish *Brahma* from *Brahman*, the universal spiritual Reality.

Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas — The spiritual fellowship described by Professor Iyer as working for humanity's regeneration.

Buddhi — Spiritual intuition or wisdom; Buddhist means pertaining to this higher discernment.

Buddhi Yoga — The discipline of uniting action and mind with spiritual discernment; a *Buddhi Yogin* is a practitioner.

Devas — Shining or celestial beings; *devatas* is a related form. Their functions and spiritual levels vary with context.

Discernment — The capacity to distinguish what is true, fitting and spiritually significant; Buddhist discernment transcends personal preference.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Enlarging the field of thought to include wider relationships, consequences and the welfare of others.

Ego — In these spiritual passages, the enduring self-conscious individuality; its meaning differs from ordinary selfishness or vanity.

Elementals — Lives and formative agencies associated with Nature. The term includes specific elemental kingdoms and, in Professor Iyer's broader usage, many levels of formative power.

Esoteric — Inward or hidden in meaning; an esoteric history or cosmology is a claim within the spiritual tradition.

Generalissimo — Commander of an army or combined military forces; used of *Hanuman* in the historical glossary description.

Hanuman — The devoted ally of *Rama* in the *Ramayana*, represented in monkey form and associated with the wind.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for the welfare of others.

Incarnation — The embodiment of an enduring principle or individuality in a particular life.

Kali Yuga — The dark or difficult age within the Hindu fourfold cycle of *yugas*.

Kama — Desire; it can designate a cosmic creative impulse or personal craving, according to context. Kamic means pertaining to desire.

Karma — The continuity of action, cause and consequence; karmic law connects moral responsibility with the wider order of life.

Krishna — The divine teacher of the *Bhagavad Gita*, traditionally regarded as an avatar of *Vishnu*.

Lanka — The island kingdom of *Ravana* in the *Ramayana*; it also receives symbolic applications in Theosophical interpretation.

Latent — Present as a possibility or capacity that has not yet become active or manifest.

Logos — The divine Word or formative spiritual principle; *Logoi* is the plural and Logoic the adjective.

Lunar and solar mind — Symbolic expressions for the lower, desire-associated and higher, spiritually receptive aspects of *Manas*.

Manas — The principle of self-conscious mind and moral choice; Manasic means pertaining to it.

Microcosm and macrocosm — The smaller and larger orders considered through correspondence; especially the human being and the cosmos.

Monad — An indivisible spiritual unit; in the human constitution, the spiritual ground commonly described as *Atma-Buddhi*. Monadic means pertaining to it.

Nirvana — Spiritual liberation beyond the limitations of ordinary conditioned consciousness; distinguished from the temporary Devachanic state.

Pavana — A name of the wind deity associated with *Hanuman's* parentage.

Personality — The temporary identity, habits and instruments associated with a particular life, distinguished from enduring spiritual individuality.

Rakshasas — Beings in Hindu epic and cosmological accounts, often rendered as demons; Blavatsky emphasizes that their symbolic functions cannot be reduced to appearance alone.

Rama — The hero of the *Ramayana*, traditionally regarded as an avatar of *Vishnu* and the centre of *Hanuman's* devotion.

Ramayana — The Sanskrit epic concerning *Rama*, *Sita* and the conflict with *Ravana*; also written *Ramâyana*.

Ravana — The ruler of *Lanka* and antagonist of *Rama* in the *Ramayana*.

Self-Knowledge — Knowledge of the spiritual Self, joined in practice to examination of motive and conduct.

Sita — *Rama's* wife in the *Ramayana*, held captive by *Ravana* and sought by *Hanuman*; she also receives symbolic interpretations.

Svadharmā — One's own duty or law of action, understood in relation to spiritual discernment and responsibility.

Vayu — The wind deity; in the cited cosmic triad, spiritual air.

Vishnu — The divine preserver in Hindu tradition; *Mahavishnu* or *Maha Vishnu* emphasizes the cosmic scope of that principle.

Vishnu Purana — A traditional Hindu text concerning *Vishnu*, cosmology and sacred history.

Votary — A person devoted to a spiritual discipline or ideal.

Yoga — Spiritual discipline directed toward integration and realization; a *yogi* or *yogin* is a practitioner.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 137, “Hanuman”.

“*Hanuman* (Sk.) The monkey god of the *Ramayana*; the generalissimo of *Rama*'s army; the son of *Vayu*, the god of the wind, and of a virtuous she-demon. *Hanuman* was the faithful ally of *Rama* and by his unparalleled audacity and wit, helped the Avatar of *Vishnu* to finally conquer the demon-king of *Lanka*, *Ravana*, who had carried off the beautiful *Sita*, *Rama*'s wife, an outrage which led to the celebrated war described in the Hindu epic poem.”

Meditation thought: Contemplate courage and resourcefulness placed wholly at the service of a faithful purpose.

2. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 254, “Pavana”.

“*Pavana* (Sk) God of the wind; the alleged father of the monkey-god *Hanuman* (See ‘*Râmâyana*’).”

Meditation thought: Let the wind suggest energy that can be gathered and directed toward a useful task.

3. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 163.

“Whereas the *Rakshasas* are generally translated by ‘Evil Spirits’ and ‘the enemies of the gods,’ which identifies them with the *Asuras*. In the *Ramâyana*, when *Hanuman* is reconnoitering the enemy in *Lanka*, he finds there *Rakshasas*, some hideous, ‘while some were beautiful to look upon,’ and, in *Vishnu Purâna*, there is a direct reference to their becoming the Saviours of ‘Humanity,’ or of *Brahmâ*.”

Meditation thought: Look beyond a first impression. Discernment attends to character and action as well as appearance.

4. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 495.

“The whole History of that period is allegorized in the *Ramayana*, which is the mystic narrative in epic form of the struggle between *Rama* — the first king of the divine dynasty of the early Aryans — and *Ravana*, the symbolical personation of the Atlantean (*Lanka*) race. The former were the incarnations of the Solar Gods; the latter, of the lunar *Devas*. This was the great battle between Good and Evil, between white and black magic, for the supremacy of the divine forces, or of the lower terrestrial or cosmic powers.”

Meditation thought: Read the conflict as Blavatsky’s esoteric interpretation of the epic, and reflect on the moral direction of power.

5. R.N. Iyer — “Buddhi Yoga and Svadharma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 111.

“To become a true votary of *Buddhi Yoga* through the performance of *svadharma* is to become ready to serve the divine will of the *Atman*, the workings of the *Logos* and the *Avatar* behind all the turbulent sifting and chaos of the historical process.”

Meditation thought: Give your own duty full attention without trying to occupy another person’s place.

6. R.N. Iyer — “Theory, Practice and Darshanas”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 255.

“For the individual self, there exists either the bondage which results from ignorance and the karma produced through acting ignorantly, or release effected through the adoration, worship and service of Deity. The self is free when its devotion is pure and perpetual.”

Meditation thought: Consider a fidelity that frees energy from self-preoccupation and makes it available for service.

7. W.Q. Judge — “The Synthesis of Occult Science”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 437.

“The human monad or Ego is therefore akin to all below it and heir to all above it, linked by indissoluble bonds to spirit and matter, ‘God’ and ‘Nature’. The attributes that it gathers, and the faculties that it unfolds, are but the latent and dormant potentialities awaking to conscious life.”

Meditation thought: Let a wide conception of human kinship deepen care for beings both within and beyond the human family.

8. R.N. Iyer — “Buddhi Yoga and Svadharma”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 111.

“Through *Buddhi Yoga*, *bhakti* and *svadharma* there can be a self-conscious return to the One, but only on behalf of the many. This is the sacred teaching of Lord *Krishna* in the *Bhagavad Gita*, given to sustain humanity throughout *Kali Yuga*. All may benefit from the teaching, returning to it again and again, using it in individual ways, enjoying and appreciating its beauty. Those who are perceptive and appreciate this great gift will make resolute vows to be steadfast in maintaining unbroken a sacred relationship with the Teaching and its great Giver.”

Meditation thought: Consider duty in relation to a spiritual purpose, allowing conscience to examine both the task and its motive.

9. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 24.

“Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin. Thus saith the Sage. Shalt thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvana one must reach Self-Knowledge, and Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.”

Meditation thought: Plant kindness in an action whose fruit you may never see.

10. R.N. Iyer — “Eros and Kamadeva”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 400.

“Such love can only arise when *kama* is under the influence, even if intermittently, of a *Manas* that tends upwards to *Buddhi*. This love is silent rather than clamorous in its expression, marked by inward depth rather than by outward display. The silences of love lie in wait for us, night and day, at our threshold, and those who have loved deeply in this way come to learn many secrets that are unknown to others, the secrets of sharing and sacrifice and duty well done.”

Meditation thought: Remember that dependable help often speaks most clearly through quiet action.

11. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 127.

“Each human being, every day and night, has microcosmic choices and opportunities which, if calmly understood from the perspective of the macrocosmic, enables an honest seeker to be truly helpful to the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas. In the early stages this would be mostly unconscious to the lower mind, but entirely clear to the immortal soul.”

Meditation thought: Let a humble duty be performed with the care due to a contribution to the common good.

12. R.N. Iyer — “Elementals”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 320.

“One must do this without falling into increasing self-obsession. One must sustain a universal motive. Merely building a fortress around one's own virtue is incompatible with teaching elementals and giving them the sort of beneficial impress that makes them a healing force in society.”

Meditation thought: Keep the work of self-mastery open to the needs of others, so that discipline ripens into service.