

रेल्को
स्टूडियो

ISSUE 88

Adventures of the Pandavas

BHIMA AND HANUMAN

One day, as Draupadi was gazing on the beautiful scenery, a strong wind arose and blew a thousand-petaled lotus flower into her lap. The flower had a celestial effulgence, a captivating aroma, and its beauty was unearthly. She took the flower to Bhima and requested,

Behold, O Bhima, this most celestial flower. O repressor of the foes, it has gladdened my heart. I shall present this one to Yudhishtira. Will you also obtain others for my satisfaction so that I may carry them to our hermitage in Kamyaka?



Bhima was delighted to please Draupadi in some way, and he proceeded to follow the path the scented flower had left. He traced the perfumed air for some time, and suddenly he realized he had covered a long distance. When he blew his conch shell, rousing the lions in the area, he then heard a loud pounding that caused the earth to tremble. As Bhima approached that pounding sound, which was like a challenge to him, he suddenly saw a huge monkey lying on a stone slab. The monkey was waving his tail in the air and dashing it against the ground, causing the tremendous noise that spread in all directions. Bhima was completely amazed, for he had never seen a monkey like this before. The monkey was sitting there with half-opened eyes, calmly blocking the way. As Bhima approached, the monkey advised him,

“Young man, why do you make so much noise? Most of the animals in this region were sleeping peacefully, and now you have awakened them. Please be more considerate, and do not be so cruel to the inhabitants of this region. Beyond this point, the forest is impassable. It is a path leading to heaven and cannot be taken by ordinary mortals. Rest awhile here and eat some fruits. After your fatigue is relieved, you may return to your residence.”

Bhima was surprised that the monkey could talk like a human being, and questioned him,

"May I know who you are? What monkey speaks like a human being? You must be some demigod in disguise. As for myself, I am the son of Vaayu, and my mother is the chaste Kunti. My name is Bhima, and I am one of the Pandavas."



Bhima then told him the history of how they were exiled to the forest. He also informed the monkey that at the present moment they were waiting for the return of their brother Arjuna from the heavenly planets. The monkey smiled when Bhima told him all this, and said, "I know that I am obstructing your path, but I have become ill and cannot move. If you want my advice, you should return via the path by which you came."

Bhima's eyes reddened in anger, and he became very impatient. "I do not want your advice," he said. "Move out of my way, or I will have to move you myself."

The monkey replied, "I have grown too old to move and most of the time I simply lie here."

Bhima was becoming frustrated with the whole matter. He said to the monkey, "You are an elderly personality, and you are lying on my path. It is not proper for me to jump over your body, for the Supreme Soul exists in everyone. It is also disrespectful to elders. If I had not known that Supreme Lord exists in everyone's heart, then I would have leapt over your body and this mountain as the great Hanuman did when he crossed the sea to Lanka."

If you insist on going further, then you can do so by leaping over my body." The monkey inquired, "Who is this Hanuman who bounded over the ocean? You speak of him with respect. His name comes with affection from your mouth. Have you met him before? Can you relate something about him?"

The monkey looked at Bhima with a smirk on his face, and Bhima became furious. He exclaimed, "You are a monkey, and you do not know who Hanuman is? Hanuman is the greatest of all monkeys. He is also the son of the wind god Vaayu and is, therefore, my esteemed brother. He is famed for his devotion to Lord Ramachandra. He is the illustrious chief of the monkeys, who is renowned in the Ramayana. When Lord Ramachandra lost his wife Sita, that brother of mine leaped across the sea to Ravana's abode and discovered her whereabouts. He then set the city of Lanka on fire.

Later, he killed many *rakshasas* generals in the battle of Lanka. He even carried a huge mountain from the Himalayas just to save the life of Lord Ramachandran's brother, Lakshman. I am insignificant in comparison to his strength, but I am able to fight with you if I have to. I must proceed further into this forest, and you must clear the way."

The monkey smiled calmly when he saw Bhima's impatience. He said, "Please do not be angry with me. I tell you the truth when I say that I am too old to move from this spot. If my tail obstructs your path, then just move it aside and go on your way." Bhima, thinking that the monkey was failing in energy, thought "I will take hold of his tail and throw this monkey, destitute of strength, to Yamaraja's abode." Assured of his prowess, and smiling, Bhima approached the tail, and with his left hand he tried to move the tail as if it were a twig on the ground, but the tail would not move. He tried with both hands, but still he could not lift the tail. He tried again and again, but still he could not budge the tail so much as an inch. The monkey was smiling in amusement, which only increased Bhima's anger. Bhima tried repeatedly to lift the monkey's tail till his face was completely red, his eyebrows tightened, his eyes rolled, his face was contracted in wrinkles, and his body was covered with sweat. Finally, Bhima had to admit his defeat. He went before the monkey and prostrated himself, saying, "Please forgive my harsh words. Out of ignorance I have transgressed the conduct of good behavior to elders. Your power is greater than mine, and therefore, you must be some demigod descended from the higher regions.

Please tell me who you are."

The monkey smiled at him and said, "I will gladly tell you who I am. I am the son of the wind god, Hanuman."

With these words, they tightly embraced each other, and tears of joy came from their eyes. They talked for a long time, and Bhima was thrilled beyond words that he had finally met his brother, whom he had only heard about previously.

Before their departure, Hanuman bestowed a boon on Bhima,

Vijayasya dhvajasthaś ca nāḍān mokṣyāmi dāruṇān

Śatrūṇāṁ ye prāṇa-harāḥ sukhaṁ yena haniṣyatha

“Staying on the victory flag [of Arjuna], I will shout out
fiercely in such a way that it will make the enemies almost
lifeless, and thus it will be easy for you to kill them.”

After Hanuman gave this boon to the Pandavas, the brothers
embraced and departed.

PALLAVI



Hidimbi, in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, is a Rakshasi. She met Bhima while he was travelling in the forest with his Pandava brothers and mother Kunti. After fleeing a burning palace at Varanavat, which was set up by their cousin Duryodhana to burn them alive; the Pandavas were wandering in the deep woods at night. Hidimbi's brother, Hidimba, an alleged cannibal, had sent her to bring him manflesh, but when she saw the handsome prince Bhima sitting in the glade she fell in love with him and could not bring herself to kill him. She transformed into a tall, dark-skinned and immensely beautiful woman dressed in ornaments and garlands and approached him. When Hidimbi was late, Hidimba came to kill Bhima himself. He tried to attack Hidimbi but she was protected by Bhima, who killed Hidimba after a good fight.

Hidimbi then asked Bhima to marry her, at which he was reluctant initially but finally ensued after being repeatedly insisted. He agreed to spend the time from dawn to dusk with her on the condition that during the dark hours he would remain with his brothers, and this would continue till they had a son. She eventually bore Bhima a son, Ghatotkacha. When the Pandavas left the forest, Bhima had to leave her as they were on a war campaign. It isn't clear whether they ever met again.

GHATOTKACHA



Ghatotkach, the son of Hidimba and the great Pandava Bheema, was the most powerful warrior to ever take part in the Great War between the Kauravas and the Pandavas at the Kurukshetra.

He was half-rakshasa, which gave him magical powers that allowed him to fly and change his size at his will. He got his name from his head, which was hairless, thus utkaca, and shaped like a water jug, known as ghatam. Thus the name Ghatotkach.

The story of his parents is quite interesting. The Pandavas escaped from Lakshagraha and stopped at a dense forest to take rest. Over there, everyone fell asleep while Bheema kept watch. In the same forest lived Hidimb, a rakshas, with his sister Hidimba. He was a very powerful demon. He sensed the Pandavas from a far off distance and asked his sister to take the form of a beautiful maiden to lure Bheema and lure him out, so that he could eat him.

Hidimba took the form of a beautiful girl and went to confront Bheema, and instantly fell in love with him. She approached Bheema and told him about her feelings and the intentions of her brother. Bheema was surprised to know that a bloodthirsty demon had taken the form of a beautiful girl and wanted to marry him, so he refused her proposal. After that, a great fight took place between Bheema and Hidimb, one that caused a lot of chaos and destruction, and finally Bheema prevailed in the battle. Bheema wanted to kill Hidimba too, as he thought that she would take revenge for the death of her brother at the hands of Bheema. But, Yudhisthira stopped him from committing such a heinous crime.

Hidimba begged Kunti to allow Bheema to marry her, and seeing her plight, Kunti asked Bheema to get married to her, which he had to obey, as it was the order of his mother. But, Bheema made a condition that, he would leave her once she bore a child with him.

Hidimba agreed, and they got married. In a year's time, Hidimba gave birth to a son. The young infant's head resembled a water jug, so they gave him the name Ghatotkach. Ghatotkach grew up to become immensely powerful and was a master of magic and illusion. It is said, that his power grew tremendously in the night. He was even given a boon by Lord Krishna, that no one would be able to match him at magic and sorcery, except for Lord Krishna himself.

Ghatotkach grew up with his mother in the forest Himbauana, and he was kind and compassionate right from his childhood. He was especially close to his brother Abhimanyu. He once gifted a pearl to him. Abhimanyu and Ghatotkach bore many similarities. Both were born when their fathers were in exile, both grew up with their mothers as their fathers were away, and both were considered to be even more powerful than their fathers.

He was dedicated to his father Bheema, and all Bheema had to do was just think of him, and he would appear. Like his father, he wielded the mace, and was even better than Bheema at warfare and using the mace.

He got married to Ahilawati, a naga kanya, and had a son with her, Barbarika. Barbarika is considered to be the strongest Kshatriya to ever live, according to Lord Krishna. He was even stronger than Ghatotkach and the five Pandavas.

He was summoned by his father to take part in the battle for the Pandavas, and using his magical powers, he wreaked havoc in the enemy Kaurava camp. After the death of Jayadratha, the battle continued on past sunset, and as nightfall came, his powers grew immensely, and he caused even more destruction. The power of asuras increase with darkness, and so was the case with Ghatotkach. His powers increased tremendously and it looked as if the war would be over in one day. No one could manage to stop him, not even great warriors like Karna or Duryodhana.

ARJUNA AND THE MONKEY



Arjuna, one of the five Pandavas was on a pilgrimage. He reached Rameswaram. After the darshan of Sri Ramanatheswara, he was curious to see the Rama Setu, the bridge that was built with rocks and trees by the vanaras. Looking at the bridge, he exclaimed loudly, "all the monkeys wasted their time and energy creating a bridge with rocks and trees. If I were there, I would have created a bridge of arrows within minutes".

A small old monkey sitting over there heard him, and said that a bridge made of arrows would never have been able to withstand the strength of Sugreeva, Angada, and the whole army of mighty monkeys. Why all of them, it wouldn't even withstand its own weight said the monkey. Arjuna took it as a challenge and said that he would create a bridge with arrows and the monkey can safely move and jump about on the bridge and it would not collapse. If the bridge collapsed, Arjuna vowed to burn himself alive. The monkey accepted the challenge.

Arjuna created a sturdy bridge with his arrows. No sooner the monkey touched it with its tail, it collapsed. Arjuna was stunned, but made another attempt and created a more stronger bridge with arrows. Again it collapsed under the weight of the monkey. Defeated, Arjuna decided to enter into fire. Just then a young brahmana came along and seeing Arjuna making arrangements to enter into fire asked for the reason. They told him what had happened. The brahmana said that when anyone takes on a vow, there should be a witness. Now he will be the witness and the challenge should be taken up again in his presence. Arjuna agreed and made a very strong bridge with his arrows. The monkey jumped on to the bridge. This time the bridge did not collapse!

Arjuna was surprised! The monkey too was surprised, and tried with all its might and strength again and again, but the bridge did not collapse. Finally the monkey assumed its own huge, full form: he was none other than Hanuman. Arjuna was surprised and felt guilty for having entered into a challenge with Sri Hanuman. The bridge did not break down even under the strength of Hanuman. Hanuman was surprised and when he looked under the bridge he found the brahmana who was none other than Lord Vishnu supporting the bridge on His shoulders. Both Arjuna and Hanuman prostrated to the Lord.

The Lord then told them that He alone was Rama and Krishna. Both Hanuman and Arjuna are dear to Him and this challenge was uncalled for. The Lord had come to stop Arjuna from entering into fire. Hanuman was very sad and upset that the Lord had shouldered the entire burden of the bridge along with his own weight. How could he make the Lord, who was his Master shoulder his weight. The Lord then consoled Hanuman saying that in Rama Avatar, he had carried Him (Rama) and Lakshmana on his shoulders and He was ever indebted to him. Carrying the weight of His devotee was the only way He could reciprocate His love for His devotee! Hanuman then promised Arjuna that during the kurukshetra war, when the Lord Himself will be driving his chariot, he would adorn his chariot flag-post and protect him from all danger and lead him to victory.



ARJUNA AND VISHNU

Santhana Gopala form of Vishnu is associated with a famous story involving Sri Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna was filled with pride after the Kurukshetra war. He thought there was no one to defeat him on earth and he could solve all problems with his bow and arrow. Sri Krishna decided to kill the pride of Arjuna.

A Brahmin couple in Hastinapura had the bad luck of losing eight children during childbirth. All children died when they were just born. The Brahmin approached Arjuna who promised that nothing will happen to the ninth child and that he will stop Yama from reaching the child.

Arjuna stood guarding the house when the wife of Brahmin was delivering the ninth child. But the ninth child too died. An angry and sad Brahmin scolded Arjuna for his inability to protect the child. Arjuna then promised that he will save the 10th child and if he is unable to save the child then he will self immolate.

When the Brahmin wife was getting ready to deliver the 10th child, Arjuna created a wall with divine arrows around the house of the Brahmin. But after delivery the child disappeared.

Arjuna then went searching for the child in all directions. He finally reached the abode of Yama. But Yama told that he had nothing to do with the incident as the death time of the child had not yet arrived.

Arjuna returned back to the Brahmin and accepted his inability to find the child. Arjuna decided to end his life by jumping into fire.

Suddenly Sri Krishna appeared there and took Arjuna with him to the seven storied Vaikunta guarded by Jaya Vijaya. Here he saw the nine children of the Brahmin couple playing with Mahavishnu and Lakshmi Devi. The tenth child was sitting on the lap of Mahavishnu.

Arjuna lost his pride and realized that there were many things beyond his capacity. He asked for forgiveness and returned to earth with the 10 children of the Brahmin couple.

The form of Vishnu sitting with 10th child is the Santhana Gopala form of Vishnu and this form is worshipped in temples in South India, especially in Kerala.

It is believed that worshipping this form of Vishnu will help in solving all kinds of pregnancy and childbirth related problems.