

Abstract No 02**Evolution of the 'Hanumān' as reflected in Sanskrit and South East Asian Literature****Subramanian Chidambaran**

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Right from the Vedic period, we have instances of human heroes being deified and later even assimilated in to other deities. Many scholars opine Indra to be one such Vedic deity who rose from a 'human leader' to 'God' position. We also see the assimilation of the Vedic deity Rudra into Śiva in

Post-vedic period. Thus the current deities and Gods we worship in the polytheistic Hindu system have been a result of many such deifications and assimilations. Hanumān is one such contemporary character in Indian culture that changed from a valiant hero of the Rāmāyana to a prominent deity in present days. There are also many arguments on whether Hanumān was truly a monkey or a human as the term 'vānara' could be interpreted as 'vānarah' i.e. 'or a human'! Does Hanumān find any mention (in any form) in literature or archaeological evidences prior to Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa? What is the character of Hanumān in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa? How has this evolved in later Sanskrit literature and where do we see the deification process beginning? What's the character of Hanumān in Southeast Asian literature and how does it compare with those in Sanskrit literature? This paper is an attempt to answer these questions and trace the evolution of the character 'Hanumān' right from the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa to other Sanskrit literature as well as Southeast Asian literature.

Keywords: human heroes, deifications, vānara