Ethnobiological Analysis from Myth to Science: I. Panchamukhee Hanumaan, An Empirical Representation of Ancient Animal Classification

S.N. Padhy, S.K. Dash, K.K. Panigrahy and Ratnaprava Padhy

P.G. Department of Botany, Khallikote Autonomous College, Berhampur 760 001, Orissa, India
1. College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, (Mohada), Berhampur 760 002, Orissa, India
2. P.G. Department of Zoology, Khallikote Autonomous College, Berhampur 760 001, Orissa India
3. Ethnobiologists’ Forum, Anandamaya, Bhaba Nagar, Berhampur 760 004, Orissa, India

KEY WORDS Animal Worship, Panchamukhee Hanumaan, Animal Classification.

ABSTRACT Attempts were made to analyse the ethnobiological aspects of the structure of Panchamukhee Hanumaan, an unique integrated form of deity in Indian mythology, which represents the ancient animal classification depicted in Manusmruti.

INTRODUCTION

Study of ancient literature and mythology is a new dimension in ethnobiological research (Jain, 1987), which conveys the ancient scientific thoughts concealed within hymns of legendary epics and Puranaas. In this context studies on Indian mythological pictures have received little attention (Bahamasam, 1977) and a pioneer attempt on it is of interest (Padhy et al., 1996). The present communication is an attempt to analyse the ethnobiological aspects of the structure of Panchamukhee Hanumaan, an unique integrated form of deity in Indian mythology.

ANIMAL WORSHIP IN INDIA

The motto for worshipping a particular deity in Hindu mythology, is to drag its power in order to fulfil the physical, psychological and philosophical needs of the concerned. In the vedic age worshipping of the nature as manifestation of God, was of prime importance and in course of time different plants, animals and various deities were introduced to mythology. It seems that the ancient people had realised that gain of animal power too was essential to be successful in life.

In Indian scenario, some of the animals like monkey, cow, bull, elephant, rat, birds, tortoise, snake and fish are worshipped directly and some deities like Ganesh, Nursingha, Varaaha and Hayagreeba having animal heads with a human body. Almost all the deities (super humans) are also found associated with one or the other animal (a sub-human) as their mount (Vaahana). The Vaahana is specific for each deity, representing the God in animal form. The characteristics of the animal usually symbolize the nature and personality of the deity (Vitasaxis, 1977). The binary nature of the Vaahanas and their significance also explained from social point of view (Bera, 1996). However analysis of the mount animals is a metaphysically oriented ecological aspects which is beyond the scope of this paper and has reservations for our future communication.

Animal worship, even though is symbolic, it plays a vital role in conservation of animals. In many instances particular animals associated with the deities are ordinarily not killed (rather conserved) by the sect of worshippers. The cow as the mother, is famous in our country and commonly we are hospitable to an ox. Similarly people are reluctant to kill a snake, a rat or a cat. It is observed that feeding the crow in the morning before onsetting the hotel business, is an out come of the influence of mythology. Even in the day to day ritual of the Hindus like Vaishvaveda Pujaa, a special share of food is dedicated for dogs, crows and insects, which shows the highest philosophical thought for conservation of animals (Dash and Padhy, 1998b). Moreover the Black buck (Krushnasaraa mruga - Antelope
cervicapra) known since the vedic age as an ecological indicator, is protected in different areas of our country naturally by local people from aesthetic point of view (Padhy et al., 1997a) and conservation of fishes, rats and monkeys in various religious places is not uncommon.

**PANCHAMUKHEE HANUMAAN**

Hanumaan worship is popular in India as evident from the extensive literature published by prestigious Geeta Press (Kalyaan Hanumaan Anka, 1975). In this compilation out of the record of 160 famous ancient Hanumaan temples in the country, only three places Panchamukhee Hanumaan is worshipped and probably the idol of Ujjainyae is the oldest among them. Of course the establishment of many new temples with this deity are coming up day by day.

**Description of the Deity**

The Panchamukhee (five faced) form of Hanumaan is a combination of five God heads in animal form attached to the Vaanara (Monkey) ssareera (body). According to the sanskrit script Shree Vidyarnava Tantra (Hanumat prakarana) Hanumaan is faced to the east (front) and the Singh (lion), Garuda (Eagle) and Varaaha (wild pig) faces are directed to south, west and north respectively, the Haya (horse) face amidst the latter four directed upwards, with Aayudhas (weapons) like Khadga, Trissula, Khatwaanga, Passa, Ankussa, Parvata, Stambha, Mushhi, Gada and Vrukshya handled in ten arms. The picture available in the market (Fig. 1), has the specific faces but their directions are not according to the Hanumat Prakarana because of the two dimentional plan of the picture and the weapons are also not as per the mythology. Moreover the Garuda face is like human form with a long nose as the beak of carnivorous birds.

**Ethnobiological Aspects**

The most ancient biological classification depicted in the legendary epic Manusmruti has divided the animals into three groups (Das and Padhy, 1997):

1. Yaraayuja (born from womb - animals)
2. Andaja (born from egg - Fishes, Reptiles and Aves)

3. Swedaja (born out of filthy hot moist atmosphere and eutrophication - Flies, Bugs Mosquitoes and all other nonchordates).

Among the Yaraayuja the mammals are further divided into three groups such as:

1. Herbivore (a) Domesticated (b) Free living
2. Carnivore
3. Human forms (a) Rakshaasa (b) Pisaacha (c) Manushya (man)

In the Panchamukhee Hanumaan form all the prominent representative members of Yaraayuja and Andaja divisions are reflected such as:

1. **The Horse** (Haya-Equus caballus-herbivore domesticated-represented as deity Hayagreeba, one form of Lord Vishnu - unit of power measurement as per science - worshipped to overcome demonic forces).
2. **The Wild Pig** (Varaaha - Hylochoerus meinierzhagenie - herbivore, powerful, free living - represented as deity Varaaaha avataara, 3rd incarnation of Lord Vishnu - Herbs are the source of medicine - worshipped as remedy for all feverish diseases).
3. **The Lion** (Singha Panthera leo - Carnivore - represented as deity Nrushingga avataara, 4th incarnation of Lord Vishnu - King of the forest at the top trophic level - worshipped to overcome fear psychosis).
4. **The Eagle** (Garuda - Aquila sp/Halaeetus sp? - representative of all Andaja - mount of Lord Vishnu - use snakes as prey in food chain - worshipped against poisonous effects).
5. **The Monkey** (Vaanara - Macaca sp/ Presbytes sp?, the anthropoides - Vaanara, alternative man, represented in lieu of man - Great devotee of Bhagawaan Sri Ramachandara, 7th incarnation of Lord Vishnu - vegetarian, most powerful warrior - worshipped to demolish all sorts of enemies).

The integration of four animal heads with the Vaanara body certainly signified the

* The description as follows: English name - Sanskrit name - Zoological name - position as per Manusmruti classification - Mythological specialty - Any other Ethnobiological specialty - worshipped for, as per Shree Vidyaranava Tantra.
Fig. 1. Pictural representation of Panchamukhee Hanumaan (Marketed by J.B. Khanna & Co.)
empirical depiction of the animal classification as described above; but the human form as per classification is replaced by Vaanara (alternative man). In this context to have more insight into the fact, it is essential to analyse the concept of the vedic people regarding the position of Vaanaras in the animal kingdom.

VAANARA FROM VEDA TO ANTHROPOLOGY

In vedic literature Vaanara were not equalised with the other free living herbivore animals and considered nearer to man. In a different classification all the animals are divided into two groups. 1. Mukhaadaana: taking hold by mouth. (2) Hastaaadaana: taking hold by hand. (Hasta - Hand - power of capturing - Padhy et al., 1997b). In the second group Vaanara is equalised with human beings as user of hands for holding (Taattiriyaa Samhitaa vi, 4,5,7 Maitraayani Samhitaa iv, 5,7).

There are references where Vaanaras are used as alternate to man such as Maayu (Ape) or Kimpurusha (Vaajasanyey Samhitaa, Taattiriyaa Samhitaa iv. 2, 10; Sattapatha Braahaman, vii. 5,2,22); Purusha Mrga (the man wild beast - Taattiriyaa Samhitaa v. 5, 15; Maitraayani Samhitaa III, 14, 16); Purusha Hastin (The man with a hand: Vaajasanyey Samhitaa xxiv. 29; Maitraayani Samhitaa, iii. 14,8) (Macdonell and Keith, 1912).

The Vedas were thought to be compiled in Kreta yuga which was followed by Tretaay yuga famous for Raamaayana. In this epic Vaanaras are represented as selfless, humble and devoted, being most powerful associated with Bhaagawana Sri Raamachandra to rescue mother Seeta. There are more evidence in Raamaayana to consider Vaanaras as human beings than animals such as;

1. Professionals: There were learned persons (Hanuman, Angada); Kings (Vaali, Sugreeva, Kessari); Doctors (Sussen); Engineers (Nala, Neela) and priests, soldiers as well, were associated with Sri Raam's army.

2. Clothing: The tails of the so called Vaanaras was not a part and parcel of their body. It is interpreted as a part of their national robe and a sign of prestige. This is quite evident from the instance that had the tail be a part of the body, Hanumaan would have felt pain occurred there of, when it was burnt by order of Raavaana during his first visit to Lanka. The Vaanara people were changing their dresses according to their need of the situation. Prior to the commencement of the battle, Sri Raama had given the instructions to all the Vaanara Sena to be in the monkey (form) robes as army uniform and he himself alongwith Laxmana, Bhheeeshana and his four followers were in human dress. This was essential to distinguish with army one from another. Most probably Vaanaras were described as monkey in poetic sense to distinguish them as a separate group (Das, 1991).

3. Education: It is described that Hanumaan was a sanskrit scholar. When he first met Raama and Laxmana near the Rishyamuka Hills, he was dressed like a Brahmaan and conversed in sanskrit with the two brothers to know their identity.

4. Character: Hanumaan is known as a brahmaachaari for all the ages. But it is never possible in case of an animal to practice celibacy.

5. The Race: In the present society there are surnames like Singha (Lion), Naaga (Cobra), Bhalla (Bhaalu-Bear), Baagha (Tiger), Ssandha (Ox, Bull) and Haatee (Elephant). Similarly Vaanara or Markata may be, was a surname for a sect of people in Tretaay yuga.

In Dwaapara Yuga Hanumaan is given highest regard in Mahaabhaaraata being at the top of Bhavawaana Sree Krishna's Kapiiwalaja Ratha (Chariot). Moreover, he is described as the brother of Bheemasena by virtue of the parental origin of Vaayu devataa.

In modern science Anthropology traces the origin of human beings, Homo sapien to the ancestors of the Vaanaras such as Java ape man, Neanderthal man and Cro-magnon man etc. The resemblance of man with Gorilla, Chimpanzee and Orang-utan like tail less monkey of anthropoid category supports more to the vedic or puraanic views on Vaanaras as a evolutionary group nearer to man than considering as mere monkey.
CONCLUSION

The Tantra philosophy is a reinterpretation of Veda, for modern man which is formulated in the present age, Kaliyuga (Bernard, 1989). Since the description of Panchamukhee Hanumaan is traced in Sree Vidyaarmabatantra, the evolution of this synthetic deity is of Kaliyuga origin. But the representation of human form by a Vaanaara, in this empirical representation of animal classification, raises a question.

One possible explanation is that, according to Manusmruti, Manushya (man) is physically and physiologically a vegetarian and Smruti has devoted much to make man conscious of his food habit (Dash and Padhy, 1988a). But it is also identified that there is inherent tendency of man to eat flesh and go for carnal sex (Sl. 56/ V. Manusmruti), which is responsible for diversification of human forms as Raakshaasa, Pisaacha and Manushya (A cultural classification). In order to avoid such confusion, during the formulation of Panchamukhee Hanumaan deity, the human form is represented by Vaanaara (Vaan= Alternative man) which is a pure vegetarian and considered to be ancestors of man from vedic age to modern Anthropology. This again reinforces the idea of creating vegetarian food consciousness in man through mythology. However, the possibility of a factual presentations of the deity, to explain the trend of evolution reaching to the climax through the Vaanaaras, cannot be ruled out.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks are due to Dr. Panigrahi, P.G. De-
partment of Zoology, Berhampur University for healthy interaction.