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அடியேன்

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TWO SUNDARA KANDAMS
A Comparative Study of the Kandam
In Valmiki and Kamban

by
G. Vanmikanathan

Part I

The First Sargam and the First
Padalam.

TWO SUNDARA KANDAMS

(2)
I A Comparative Study of the Two Kandams I
I in Valmiki and Kamban I
(Sanskrit & Tamil Epics)

by

G. Vanmikanathan.

I - PRELUDE

The tap-root of the Sundara Kandam of the Ramayana goes down to the last two Sargams, the 66th and 67th of the Kishkinda Kanda of Valmiki, and in Kamban to the Mahendra Padalam, the last of the same Kanda. It begins with the address of Jambavan to Hanuman. To Valmiki's 93 slokas Kamban offers 29 four-line verses, something less than two thirds by count of number of lines. The slokas or parts of them which are translated or paraphrased in Kamban are very few. 39 slokas out of forty of the 66th sargam and five slokas-- 33 to 37 of the 67th sargam are the words of Jambavan, and 27 slokas -- 9 to 31 and 38 to 41 out of 53 slokas of the 67th sargam are the words of Hanuman. A total of 71 out of 93. Kamban devotes verses 8 to 19 for Jambavan's speech and verses 21 to 25 for Hanuman's speech, a total of seventeen out of twenty-nine verses of the 17th padalam. These speeches are the main incidents in the two sargams and the 17th padalam. Kamban chose to sing these parts in his own words and to his own ideas.

He discards the story of the love episode of Anjana Devi and the Wind-god which Valmiki's Jambavan uses to make Hanuman realise his own prowess. This story is well known to

students of Walmiki and also to many of Kam^mban, but for the enlightenment of others, we might briefly say that ^{it} is something on the lines of the love episodes of the Greek gods and goddesses - like Ledo and Jupiter for instance. Hanuman is the off-spring of a similar episode between Anjana Devi, ~~and~~ the wife of Vanara-Kesari and the wind god. Kam^mban's Jambavan appraises Hanuman's strength and wisdom by the standards of the Kural, the Gita, the Vaidika puranas and his personal knowledge of Hanuman's past performance.

"Did he not go forward to meet the Aryan (Rama) ?
Had he not (always) well thought out his enterprises,
and carried them through with untiring zeal?
There is none like Maruthi!", said Jambavan,
And the valour of his arms he proceeded to relate.

A person who might be fated to die before his work is finished is not of much use, whatever be his ability. But though Brahman might die Hanuman would live deathless ages.

Hanuman might outlive Brahma, but would he be wise and learned like him? Yes, he has learned all the Vedas and Shastras and could teach them as well.

Mention of the Creator calls to mind the destroyer. However long-lived and learned a man were, if ~~he~~ he was puny and sickly he would only be a corpse afoot. But Hanuman has unsurpassed terrible strength that made even Yama, the god of death pale in his prescence.

Yet with all his might, he might be a coward in battle. No! He raged in battle like Siva (who kicked Yama), the deadly poison swallower.

"Though the glorious Brahman might die, deathless long
days are yours!
The Vedas in love have you searchingly known, and could
impart too!
Death himself is awed by the fierce boundless physical
prowess of yours!
The Poison-Taster you match in raging battle!"

Thus ~~begins~~ Kamban's Jambavan^{begins} his address to ~~Kamban. Hanuman.~~

Kamban feels that these words are inadequate to fully introduce Hanuman to himself, and seeks the aid of the Upanishad of the Upanishads- the Bhagavad-Gita for adequate words. Lord Shri Krishna thus describes the Atman to Arjuna.

"Weapons cleave Him not, nor fire burn Him, nor waters wet Him, nor wind ~~dries~~^{dries} Him away."

Kamban disclosing Hanuman to Hanuman says,

"By hot fire or water or wind you will not be destroyed;
By the famed divine weapons many you will not be cleaved;
If compare one must, peers to you besides you are none;
If but one leap you would take, on the world's far side
you would land."

Kamban then goes on to extol Hanuman's wisdom, his discrimination of right and wrong, his prowess in word and deed, his colossal stature, his statesmanship, his undaunted valour and power of endurance, his spotless purity of character, his learning, his unwavering love and devotion to Rama and his dedication to Rama's cause, his masterly strategy in war, his other manifold virtues and patience, and his ability to match performance to plan. To each of these qualities Kamban devotes one ~~stanza~~ poem, giving us for all ages a pen picture of what stuff an executive of a great project should be made.

Hanuman's lips blossomed into a smile, "like a red lily blossoming in the midst of pink lotus" says Kamban, and with joined palms held like a closed flower over his head, he

he voiced his thoughts to the delight of all his clan.

He laughed at the absurdity of the idea of asking him to undertake this great enterprise. Even before he spoke, his humility bade him laugh. His words suit his action.

"If you yourself bid me thus, 'quicker than thought,
To leap, all these worlds to conquer, and restore the lady, you are fit,
Therefore go forth and do this', even were it only to see flawless incompetence,
Who more blessed than me are there among those born on earth?

This is the spirit of humility with which he undertakes the work. Three more poems only cover the rest of what he has to say.

"Is it your command that I uproot Lanka and fetch it here?
Or destroy root and branch those beasts
And bring hither the lady with the golden ear-rings?
Do not be agitated. Your command I shall fulfil.
Watch me!

Like the Lord who with hundred league strides
Paced the length of the world, the sea I shall leap across
Even if Indra and others oppose, I shall those dwellers
of Lanka --
The wretches -- crush, and my will execute.

Furthermore,
Even if the seas rose in roaring waves to swallow the wide world,
And the worlds came crashing down,
Today, with your blessings and my King's command on either side,
As sweeping wings, faster than Garuda I shall cross!
Watch!

Heartening words! But not boastful words. Any trace of boastfulness is wiped away by the last words: "Today with your blessings and my Lord's command on either side as sweeping wings.....".

It would have been an anti-climax to insert another speech by Jambavan and a reply from Hanuman. Kamban therefore omits this part in slokas 33 to 42 of sargam 67, and makes Hanuman

bid his companions stay behind, and walk up to the top of the Mahendra mountain.

II

SUNDARA KANDAM

The Leap Across the Sea to Lanka

Sargam I of Valmiki and Padalam 1 of Kamaban
(228 slokas and 95 verses respectively.)

(i)

Take-off from the Mahendra Mountain

Slokas 1 to 50 of the first sargam in Valmiki and verses 2 to 16 of the first padalam in Kamaban sing the take-off by Hanuman from the top of the Mahendra Mountain. Valmiki and Kamaban describe, in the concluding verses of the Kishkinda Kandam, Hanuman assuming his colossal stature. In Valmiki, Hanuman assumes his huge stature immediately after Jambavan ceased his entreaty. (last sloka of sargam 66). Hanuman's reply is made from this height. In poetic proportions his voice must have sounded like thunder. It would have been awe-inspiring, but it would have also magnified to huge proportions any vein of boastfulness in those words. Not so Kamaban's Hanuman. In keeping with the humility of his reply, he speaks while still in his usual ~~stature~~^{form}, no greater probably than that of Jambavan or the other comrades. He assumes his stature only at the end of his reply to Jambavan and after he has climbed to the top of the Mahendra mountain. But when he does so, he seems to grow to greater heights than Valmiki's Hanuman. For he sees then at hand the world of the heaven dwellers, while Valmiki's

"..... resolves to trace
The captive to her hiding place
Through airy pathways overhead,
.....
With straining neck and eager brows."

Kamban underlines the huge stature in the 3rd verse thus,

He saw Lanka the great city, its groves and battle-
ments,
And encircling wall, the massive gateway,
The roads lined with mansions built of silver,
gold and precious stones.

There is an artistry in this poem which lays down the foundation for the tempo of Hanuman's leap across the sea, sung in the 16th verse. In a way we are reminded of the words, 'veni, vidi, vici', - 'I came, I saw, I conquered'- of Caesar. Of Kamban's Hanuman we could say, 'he grew, he saw, he leaped'. Verse 16 of Kamban concluding this section is a masterpiece of dramatic tempo, compressing into one verse of four lines the scene of Hanuman crouching for his leap and the leap itself which took him to the vaults of the sky.

" He swirled and tossed aloft his tail, flexed his
strong legs, ^{swelled} tightened his chest,
His huge shoulders bulged large, he drew in his
neck,
Stretched his wind-sweeping arms, and before the
eye could glimpse the sight,
He shot up to the heaven's ceiling as if he would
suck up the Brahma's world!

Valmiki says all this, but in several scattered verses, interrupted by a second speech by Hanuman, just after he had held his breath for the take-off.

In this section, Kamaban follows Walmiki more or less closely in incidents and expressions, the correspondence being seen in verse 2 to sloka 1, scanning the sky, verses 5 and 6 to slokas 3 and 4, -the animals were frightened and fled,

verse 9 to sloka 17,- the hill crushed by
Hanuman's weight gushed with torrents of
water,
verse 4 to sloka 21,- the trapped beasts roared
in agony and their cries filled the sky,
verse 3 to sloka 22,- the plight of snakes in
the caves of the hills,
verse 7 to slokas 29 to 31, and verses 11 and 12
to slokas 32 and 33,- the Vidhyadharas leaped
off the hill in terrified haste with their wives
and looked down on the hill in
bemusement and amazement,
verses 13 and 15 to slokas 35 to 37,- the rishis
saw Hanuman (and blessed him),
verse 16 to slokas 39 to 44, and sloka 50,-
Hanuman crouched for the leap and jumped up.

The Vidhyadharas of Valmiki abandon their swords and shields
in their terrified flight to the ^{ies}sky~~s~~, but ⁱⁿKamban^{They} leap
with their swords, and their sudden leap resembled the
that of a sword-fighter leaping up to avoid the sweep of
his enemy's sword aimed to sever the feet at the ankles.
A minor change, but nevertheless a deliberate one.

Kamban who matches only 60 lines to Valmiki's 100,
is intent on maintaining a high tempo, and therefore hasten
with brief glances here and there on the setting, to the
climax of the leap itself which he condenses into four
packed lines as against 14 of Valmiki.

(ii)

Hanuman's Leap Across the Sea.

Slokas 51 to 95 and verses 17 to 38 describe Hanuman's
leap ~~far~~ from the Mahendra mountain and the flight over the
sea upto the point where the sea-god requests the Mainaka
hill to do the honours to Hanuman. In this section, only
five verses of Kamban correspond ^{to}Valmiki's slokas.

These are;

sloka 51-verse 17, the trees rose with Hanuman ϕ into
the air,
sloka 56-v.18 & 19, they fell back into the sea,
sloka 83-verse 22, the sea monsters were exposed,
sloka 84-verse 21, the snakes in the sea took Hanuman to
be Garuda,.

Valmiki's ~~simile~~ simile comparing the trees, which were drawn up after Hanuman, to friends accompanying ^a departing guest part of the way, and the trees falling back to the hosts falling back, and letting the guest proceed on, gouches our heart by its homeliness and simplicity. One would have sworn that the simile was inimitable and could in any case never be improved upon. To think so would be to reckon without Kamban, who has done the well nigh impossible ~~in~~ in the 17th verse.

"As he rose in the air, the extraordinarily huge trees,
The bamboo covered high hills, the valiant elephants
and others,
Deeming this is the Lord's work, to the cool sea-girt
Lanka
As if they too would leap, filled the sky as they rose
aloft!

Still maintaining the tempo which he ~~at~~ set in motion in the 16th verse, Kamban two verses later sings,

"No sooner than the Vedas-like devout servant drew in his first breath, the shores of Sethu were seen!"

In the 16th verse, Hanuman had held his breath, (tightened his chest), and now he took another breath. It would not be correct to think that the words, "sruti yanna sevakan " refer to Sri Rama, and interpret them to mean "Before Sri Rama could get annoyed". Apart from the damage to the finer sense of the dramatic which such an interpretation would do,

It seems too strained an attempt to link these words so early with the incident of Sri Rama getting annoyed with god of the sea on the shores of Sethu, several weeks later. Moreover, the former rendering fits admirably with the still continuing rapidity of the tempo expressed in the 22nd verse where,

"The hero's speed of flight unable to bear, the sea swelled, and the waves it threw up ran far ahead of him on to the shores of Lanka."

Not being Hanuman, Kamban appears to have become easily tired after his supreme effort to keep the tempo of his poems abreast with the tempo of Hanuman's flight, and the rest of his poems in this section are artificial, halting and involved. Describing the appearance of Hanuman in flight, Kamban compares him to the three severed crests of the Meru mountain range, to a flying chariot, to the Kailasa mountain without Siva, to Maru^e itself going in search of his lost son (one of the crests), the devastating typhoon on Doomsday, to a sun ~~xxx~~ setting a strange course from North to South, to the royal discus of Sugriva, to the full moon on Doomsday, and to Garuda in flight to prove his prowess to his Lord. Each comparison is more dull than the other, and the whole artificial picture is relieved by only one verse describing the tail of Hanuman.

Valmiki's description is very captivating, and appeals with a special sense of realism to us who live in the days of supersonic flight, flying saucers and space-men. Griffiths who has omitted these slokas from his

translation would hasten to repair the omission, had he lived to see these swift-moving days of wonder upon wonder.

~~Even~~ Even in the baldest prose, the grandeur of Valmiki's

~~poetic imagination cannot be dimmed.~~
poetic imagination cannot be dimmed.

"While he shot up, the trees on the hill rose from all sides, with their limbs bunched together. (sl.51)

"The trees which rose into the air (drawn) by the speed of his thighs, followed him awhile like friends seeing off a relative leaving on a long journey. (sl.53)

"First, the huge trees fell back into the sea....(sl.56)

"The trees which fell back, freed from the drag of his speed, seemed like friends returning after showering flowers on the relatives they were seeing off. (sl.58)

"The stream of wind set up in the wake of Hanuman dragged along lightning clouds. (sl.64)

"His two hands stretched forward in the airy highway, seemed like two five headed snakes emerging from the top of a mountain. (sl.65)

"The lightning-like eyes of Hanuman on the wind's highway seemed like volcanic fires on the top of a mountain. (sl.67)

"The wind rushing through the arm-pits of Hanuman flying over the sea roared like a thundercloud.(sl.73)

"He seemed like a flaming meteor with a luminous tail falling from the Northern sky. (sl.74)

~~The tidal waves~~

"The tidal waves raised by his speed mingled with the clouds and looked like more rain clouds. (sl.72)
huge

"The fishes, crocodiles, small fishes and tortoises thrown up thereby looked like human beings whose clothes had been suddenly whisked away. (sl. 83)

"All along the route through which he sped along, the sea below was scooped into a huge cauldron by the force of his flight. (sl.88)

All this fantasy does not seem fantastic. If we believe that

that Hanuman leaped across the sea, all this becomes exceedingly realistic, and do not strain our belief. If such a gigantic form flew over the sea at such a terrific speed, we cannot expect anything less than what Valmiki has described.

Valmiki's short hemistiches of eight letters each lend themselves admirably to self-contained pithy expressions and invest the words with a sense of speed, ^{whereas} ~~which~~ Kamban's long lines of the 'virutham' metre, in which an idea is carried from line to line and does not complete till the end of the fourth line, act as a drag on the subject. Moreover Valmiki either used short, simple and natural similes or none at all, while Kamban shackled himself with the heavy long-winded references to puranic lore. Therefore, even though Kamban describes closely the extraordinary effect of Hanuman's flight ^{on} ~~over~~ the sea, its denizens, ~~on~~ the sky and the ~~skudsy~~ clouds, yet we strike a dull patch in the treatment of this section by Kamban.

Verses 17 to 20, and 22 move with verve, and are quite pleasing and impressive.

"As he rose up, the rare huge trees too,
The bamboo covered high hill, the valiant elephants
and ~~other~~s as well,
Deeming this is the Lord's work, to the cool sea-girt
Lanka,
As if they too would spring, filled the skies as they
rose aloft. (v.17)

"The hill and the verdant trees, and the beasts and
hordes of ~~other~~ creatures,
Which rose up by the speed of the famous hero,
Went in (the same) direction; but the sea-girt Lanka
to reach,
Not having the power they fell back and fell down. (v.18)

"The beasts, the trees, the rocks, the creepers and all
all others,
which by the speed of the hero went along, strewed
down,
And set the sea a-boiling, and from the depths to the
surface filled it up;
And before the Vedas-like devout servant heaved
another breath, lo! the Sethu was
sighted! (v.19)

"The waters of the sea was clove in two, and the
snakes which lay beneath,
Their beloved world exposed everywhere, shone with
their gems;
The Manly-One looked on this and thought
'The life of the King of Snakes to see too, have I
been blessed. (v.20)

"The snake-people who relate (with wonder)
The might of him who cleaved the sea with his huge
wings and snatched away the
Ambrosia,
Feared that the (same) ~~Garuda~~ mighty Garuda had, to ~~the~~
their evil fate, come again,
And wondering how they would survive, they fled in
terror. (v. 21)

Makar

"The leaping ~~Makar~~ fish ceased their frolic, and the
sharks struggled,
The bright large fish died in the spray caused by
the doomsday typhoon
Roused by the Vanar, and unable to bear his speed,
the sea swelled,
And the waves it threw foreran him and, behold! crept
on the shores of Lanka.
(v. 22)

Already, in the 21st verse, we see the heavy burden which
the involved and long reference to Garuda imposes on the
verse. We shall see a few other verses to illustrate this.

"What to say of the objects within the universe!
the elephants that held up the eight
points of the world
Trembled, thus sped the messenger of the Lord!
He resembled the three-crested mountain, which on
the day promised to Adi-Sesh,
Its three heads severed by the onset of the doomsday
wind,
Rushed and fell into the sea. (v. 23)

XMKKE

"He resembled in his speed, the aerial chariot of Indra
with the sharp pointed mace,
Harnessed to steeds with thundering hoofs, and fast
traversing the world,
Spanning by its size the sea, the land and the sky,
On its way to Lanka.

"Hanuman speeding along, while the Devas praised, the Rishi
Rishis were amazed and blessed,
And Kings prayed, he seemed like the Kailash hill,
Leaving behind the One with eye in forehead, rushing
forward,
Impelled by hate, to further crush the mighty Rakshasa!

"Bearing the form of a bachelor, more wise than Brahma
on the lotus,
Like axle-pin to the world, who will establish
righteousness in all the world,
He seemed like the golden mountain (Meru) hurrying to
meet
His son Trikuta parted from him very long ages ago! "

Even where Kamban takes an idea from Valmiki, he seems to have unhappily made something very dull out of it. Before we go to see two such instances, let us examine a simile of Valmiki. He compares the trees which were dragged along ~~gkm~~ by the speed of Hanuman ~~g/g/g~~ to friends seeing off a departing guest. He is able to continue the simile when the trees fall into the sea, comparing them with a pleasant naturalness to friends falling back after showering flowers on the departing guest. But Kamban invests them with a vainglorious ambition to associate themselves with Hanuman in Rama's errand, this turns the whole thing into bathos when inevitably they fell into the sea.

In verse 28 Kamban compares Hanuman in flight to a sun

set on an unnatural course from north to south as a bad omen foreboding ~~Rama~~ Ravana's evil end. This simile pales before Valmiki's which says,

"Hanuman seemed like a flaming ^{comet} meteor with a luminous tail which plunges from the northern sky."

This conforms to astronomical facts, and as ^a bad omen is not a trifling one!

Always keen on dramatic effect, Kamban concludes this section with a description of the outstretched hands of Hanuman in flight, which symbolically represents his eagerness to lay his hands on the vile Rakshasa. Valmiki ~~compares~~ has also described the outstretched hands of Hanuman which he compares picturesquely to two five headed serpents emerging out of the top of a hill. The ten heads, (being the ten ~~finger~~ fingers) make one picture them going forward eagerly, each to grasp each of the ten heads of Ravana. Kamban alters the simile, and compares the hands to Sri Rama and his brother going ahead of him. Altogether a poor change. Hanuman could ~~not~~ not be much of an efficient deputy if Sri Rama and Lakshmana had to go before him.. Several commentators believe that there has been heavy interpolations in the padalam and we ^would like to agree with them.

Thus practically all the verses to end of the 38th. Kamban relieves the mediocrity of these verses by one delightful one on the tail of Hanuman.

"The tail of Hanuman leaping across the sea with great
Though it had for its support Dharma (clamour,
(Righteousness) called Hanuman blessed by the
True One whom the Veda's sing,
Fearing that the Rakshasas engaged exultingly in
unrighteousness might espy it,

The tail looked like a noose of Time (death) lurking behind Hanuman. (v. 33)

(iii)

Hanuman Encounters the Mainaka Hill
(Slokas 96 to 154 of sargam 1 and verses 39 to 64 of padalam 1)

Slokas 96 to 115 and verses 39 to 50 describe the emergence of the Mainaka hill from the sea. In slokas 96 to 109,

the sea lord feels it his duty to do honour to Hanuman, the messenger of Sri Rama, since it is to Sri Rama's ~~XXXXX~~ ancestor the sea owes its existence, (sl.96-99)

he entreats the Mainaka mountain, lying at the bottom of the sea, to rise to the surface and offer Hanuman a respite on its peak, as he (the hill) alone has the power to move in every direction on account of its wings.
(sl.100-109)

Mainaka rises to the surface. It is described. (sl.110-115) 5)

Apart from the deep sense of gratitude, discrimination of right and wrong, ⁱⁿ and the very persuasive speech by the sea god to Mainaka, there is very little needing special mention in slokas 96 to 109.

^a Kamabn omits this portion altogether. Verse 39 presents ^{us} with the sight of Mainaka rising out of the sea. The scene of the outstretched hands in verse 38, seeming as if they were exploring the skies for any ~~XXXXX~~ let or hindrance, closely followed by the scene of the surging up of the Mainaka hill is a ^c piece of poetic artistry for which probably Kamaban sacrificed the conversation between the sea lord and the hill. These two verses enhance the dramatic effect of each other. But by this omission ^{though relieved} and a later ^{by a} casual mention of the sea lord's request by the hill to Hanuman, the strength of the reason for Mainaka's interposition is weakened. Mainaka stresses as his special

reason his indebtedness to Vayu, the wind god, the father of Hanuman, for saving his life when Indra came to sever his wings. Hanuman honoured as Hanuman, the son of Vayu appears to be a less meritorious reason than the reason given by the sea god, that he is the messenger of Rama,

"~~कनकवस्तुस्यैव~~ Vanars"..... the best of Of Vanars, moved for Rama's sake, A wondrous deed to undertake!"

It is only in the 56th verse, ~~अथैवमिदं~~ which is the third verse in the conversation between Hanuman and Mainaka, that the latter refers to the request of the sea god, almost like an after-thought, thus:

".....the sea as well bade me, On the sky-blue hued Lord's errand, Vayu's son goes, In search of Sita, and for the deliverance of ~~कनकवस्तुस्यैव~~ Do thou go up in the high sky; no greater ~~इति कनकवस्तुस्यैव~~ fortune than this could accrue', the devas, The sea as well thus me bespoke, oh, thou on Dharma set." ~~कनकवस्तुस्यैव~~

Valmiki devotes only five slokas to the description of Mainaka against Kamban's 12 verses, 48 lines against 10 lines.

Griffiths translates Valmiki thus:

"He heard, and from his watery shroud,
As bursts the sun from autumn cloud,
Rose swiftly, crowned with plant and tree,
And stood above the foamy sea.
There with his lofty peaks upraised,
Bright as a hundred sons he blazed.
And crest and crag of burnished gold
Flashed on the flood that round him rolled."

Natural in its description and impressive in its simplicity.

To turn to Kamban.

"While the hill-like One was speeding like the roaring wind,
Like the sight of one of the elephants guarding the
Looking like a hill with a trunk, rose long ago out of the sea on that memorable day,
So, a hill called Mainaka rose into the sky. (v.39)

"A thousand golden crests shone, mantle
And unceasing streamers of streams like ~~xxxxx~~ cloth;
Like Vishnu rising from the sea teeming with fish,
Whenever there is a surfeit of the unrighteous,-
for the eradication of
unrighteousness. (v.40)

In the blue waters, the coral vines encircling (the hill)
Trailed in ochre colours; On the shelves of the rocks,
Reflecting the golden hue of the crests, the sharks
Resting with their mates came to life and stirred about.
(v.46)

The bulging mother shells clattered, the luxuriant moss
Looked like the clouds in the sky, on the marble white
shining slabs;
The shells which had delivered their pearls on the
expected day,
Shone like the ~~xxx~~ pale moon surrounded by the stars.
(v.47)

Thousands and thousands of varied gems shone everywhere;
With spurs jutting out like stretched arms from the
rocky crests,
They seemed as if they had dived into the ancient sea,
And had come up with all the shining varieties of gems
in their hands. (v.48)

Like strings of streamers and pennaants which flutter
on the top of a mansion,
Rows of bright streams trailed down.
On being borne aloft quicker than thought, realising
(their plight),
The large fish with the ^{wh}ales following, sought the
yet existing deep pools and
sported. (v.49)

If Kamban had contented himself with these poems, he would
have not only equalled Valmiki, but as we ^{see} from the above poems,
he would have excelled him too. But Kamban ever bent on ~~xxxxx~~
declaring the divinity of Rama and his identity with Vishnu,
and burdened with the heavy puranic lore with which the
poetic warehouses of his day were filled to bursting, he
must display his stock in trade in ^{six} ~~six xxxxx~~ of the twelve
poems describing the appearance of Mainaka. We quote some
of them.

"Like those who embark on the control of the senses five,
without proper instruction in the
texts (and fail),
The helpless one (the earth), her body unable to ~~endure~~
endure (the weight), failed,
And the Mandar hill sank in the sea, its foot going
right to the depths;
In this pass Vishnu turning into a tortoise lifted it up,
and the Mandar hill rose--even thus seemed (Mainaka
rising from the sea). (v.41)

"The unsevered wings on either side luxuriantly rose,
Faultless rare colours spread everywhere without bounds,
And like the king of the eagles ~~cleaving~~ cleaving the rich
seas and emerging with the elixir in its grasp,
Even so this seemed. (v.42)

"Like the golden egg which gave birth in the expanse
of the waters,
By the grace of the One without beginning or end or form,
To Him (Brahma) who gave birth again
To the ancient worlds three and all the creatures thereon.
(V.43)

Three other verses more obscure, more involved, more in ~~need~~
need of an encyclopaedia of Hindu mythology, and unintelligible
withal. But Kamabn could, when he wishes, paint nature with
masterly strokes. The streams running down the sides of the
hill, the coral vines in contrasting colour trailing down to
the blue sea, the golden crests, the fish still resting on
the shelves of the rocks, the mother-o-pearl rattling down,
the trailing dripping sea moss and green sea weeds resembling
raining dark clouds, all are described with a vividness of
artistry in picture projecting words.

In slokas 116-118 Valmiki describes the encounter of
Hanuman with the mountain,
in slokas 119-139, Mainaka in human form addresses
Hanuman, mentioning the bidding of the sea god, refers
to the duty enjoined on all seekers after Dharma to receive
and entertain guests, and relates the obligation on his
own account to honour Hanuman, to whose father, Vayu, he is
under a debt of gratitude.

In slokas 140-145, Hanuman accepts the wish for the deed, and passes along.

In slokas 146-154, Indra is pleased at Mainaka's deed and pardons and blesses him.

Both the Hanumans, at sight of the hill, thought "here is^g an obstruction(Valmiki), lo! what on earth is this!^{(Kamban),} and brushing it aside passed on. The hill reeled, and righting himself, assumed human form and addressed Hanuman.

There is ^{an} enchanting simile in Kamban to reckon the minute division of time it took for the hill to shoot up to the surface. "In the time it takes a ~~tantik~~ grain of lentil to roll down the surface of a looking glass", says Kamban.

In 20 slokas and in 5 verses (54-58) ~~the~~ respectively the two hills entreat Hanuman to tarry on the crest and rest for a while before proceeding further on. Both are very gracious speeches. Valmiki's Mainaka mentions the sea god's plea first and his own reasons later on, while Kamban's Mainaka reverses the reasons for the request.

"Pleased am I, and hospitality is done;
And may your discomfiture pass", said
The Vanar, and continued. Time given me
Is fast fleeing, the day too is fast fading;
This matter brooks no tarrying, there is
Besides a vow I have made." Thus saying,
The Vanar hero in passing gently embraced
The hill and with a smile soared into the sky.

Thus Valmiki's Hanuman replies to the hill.

Kamban's Hanuman says all this and more; one verse covers all the above thoughts, and two ~~of~~ others are his own, condensing into eight lines the nuclear concept of the Tamil people ^{from} the very dim ages.

"Fatigued shall I not be by the grace of the Divine One,
my Support;
Eat, I shall not till my object is fulfilled;
Oh! honey-dripping range!, the moment your love
enslaved me,
I have well rested and feasted; is there aught else
here to give me yet?"

"This (act of yours) is the culture indeed of the best
Of (men) of the First or Second or Third state,
all rich in love; Can we say
That any stronger support than the bones there is to
the body? -
Can there be a greater service to anyone than that of
Love?"

"Speeding from here, reaching Lanka's shores,
The Lord's service performed, if with my prowess
I return, I shall taste your hospitality", thus praying
(for leave),
The True One sped forward, far out of sight.

We would interpret the three states referred to in the second/
of the three poems given above, to refer to the three main
states of Man, - the householder, the vanaprastha, i.e. the
householder retired from the active householder's life, and
and the ascetic. To all, in whatever state they be, love is ^{The}
guiding principle of life. This interpretation only will
fit in with what follows in the third poem, ^{where,} in Hanuman's
gentle refusal, Kamaban weaves the thought and words of the
Kural,-

" All for themselves the loveless spend;
The loving e'en their bones for others give."

There is a graciousness in the ~~reply~~ words, "if with my
prowess I return, I shall taste your hospitality". To this
day, this graciousness of the Tamil people survives in the
in the current conventional form of refusal. The Tamils never

curtly refuse, their 'no' is cancelled out by a promise.

Kamban omits the incident of Indra forgiving and blessing the Mainaka hill. (sl.146 to 154.)

(iv)

Testing of Hanuman's Will and Strength.

(Slokas 155 to 187 and verses 65 to 73.)

The incident of Surasa, the mother of snakes, obstructing the path of Hanuman is related in this section. Except for trifling condensations and omissions, Kamban follows Valmiki closely both in story and narration. There are two chief omissions in Kamban. One is the story background which Valmiki's Hanuman gives to explain his errand, and the other is the set of six slokas (which Griffiths also omits in his translation) ^{describing} competitive increase in size of Surasa's mouth and Hanuman's form.

We reproduce Griffiths rendering below for the continuity of the story.

"Gods, saints, and heavenly bards.....
Thento the Nagas mother came
And thus addressed the sun-bright dame;
'See, Hanuman with venturous leap
would spring across the mighty deep,-
A Vanar prince, the wind-God's seed:
Come, Surasa, his course impede,
.....
.....
That we his power and strength may try.
He will with guile thy hold elude,
Or own thy might, by thee subdued.'
Pleased with the grateful honours paid,
The god-like dame their words obeyed.
Clad in the shape of terror she
Sprang from the middle of the sea, &
And, with fierce accents that appaled
All creatures, to the Vanar called: &

"Thereon the Rakshasi opened her huge mouth
So cavernously wide that even if all the worlds
were to enter it, it would hardly be filled;
And she stood ready to swallow him without choking or
retching."

We and the Rishis and Devas as well are denied the sight
of the "battle of the buldge", and therefore a true appreciation
of the might of Hanuman, the test of which was the objective
of the request of the Rishis to Surasa.

Neither in Valmiki nor in Kamban does Hanuman seem to be
annoyed at Surasa when she obstructed him. Valmiki's Hanuman
addresses Surasa with smiling face and folded hands, and
Kamban's, like a true chivalrous knight, says with compassion:

A woman thou, by evil hunger assailed art sore spent!
My body to eat, willingly would I offer thee,
If, the Lord of the ~~xxx~~ Deva's bidding performed, I return!
Said in love, the wise One: she laughed! "

When she persisted ~~in~~ ~~her~~ in her challenge, Kamban's Hanuman

".....derided her, and said, "I shall not pass you by!
Into your mis-shapen huge mouth, I shall enter
And proceed on my way; eat me, if you can ! !".

When she opened her mouth as we saw earlier, Hanuman suddenly
shrank into a Tom-thumb and plunged into her cavernous mouth
and in the same instant emerged, even before she could
realise that here was her food or take a breath.

When Valmiki's Hanuman tells her that he is going on
Rama's mission, he adds,

"And you who live in Rama's domain should help me!"

Kamban omits this. Was it ~~through~~ deliberate?

.....

(v)

Simhika, the Shadow Grabber
(Slokas 188-217 and verses 74-87)

This section relates the incident of Hanuman's encounter with Simhika, the colossal giantess who pulled creatures down by their shadows and ate them up.

As an overture to this eerie opera, Valmiki sings in seven slokas, the wide expanse of the sky peopled with various devas, traversed by heavenly chariots drawn by elephants, tigers, birds and huge serpents, and illumined by the fires of clashing thunderbolts. Agni, the sacrificial fire, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the Rishis, gandarvas, nagas, yakshas, Indra's elephants, all ~~are~~ ^{were} moving about in the ^{vast} canopy of the earth. In this spacious space, Hanuman was speeding on, dragging clouds along with him like a moon through monsoon clouds. He looked like a winged mountain poised in the heavens. Our mind is unable to encompass with its power of imagination this endless expanse of space, high above and deep below, and all around. After this Valmiki needs no more than to say in three slokas that, here a creature opened its mouth wide to the zenith and nadir of this space. We reel before this sight which is beyond the grasp of our thoughts.

Hanuman himself saw nothing else ~~xxx~~ to the right of him, to the left of him, before him, above him and beneath him. He saw only her open mouth, her inner

"Like twin crescent moons shone her tusks,
And clad, like the blue throated God,
With the hide of the carcass of a huge elephant,
Her cavernous mouth looked like a pillow slip
for the globe, the creation of Brahma.

"She stood with her head thrown back, with the sea
Lapping her feet, and her crown brushing the ceiling
of the sky;
The Wise One realised that here was one,
Who had devoured Dharma along with Charity.

"Other than her mouth, in the entire world
And the wide sky, he saw no way.
.....

Valmiki's Hanuman forewarned by Sugriva, recognises her for what she is. He recognises her as unmitigated evil, and without a single word reduces his body, and drops into her mouth like a plummet and shoots out in the same instant, bearing her entrails in his hands.

Kamban's Hanuman, though he saw in her pure evil, yet speaks to her a few chiding words.

"Other than the expanse of her open mouth, in the wide world
And towering sky, he saw no passage.
Baffled, he closed in on her, her deep cavernous
stomach to pierce he planned,
and spoke these words.

"You seem to be the shadow-snatcher; snatching at mine,
My unhampered mighty speed you perceived, and yet
do not realise (my urgency),
Spanning the sky with your mouth, you bar the way;
who are You? And what your purpose here?" he asked.

As if in answer to a question why Kamban makes his Hanuman waste his words on one, whom he realises to be wholly evil, the ogre answers thus;

"Abandon the thought that here is a woman...."

Kamban and Valmiki each takes ~~skk~~ his own line in the

treatment of this incident; and none of Kamban's verses corresponds to any sloka of Valmiki.

Kamban's Hanuman on resuming his form and his flight, mused that his trials would end only when he lands on the other side of the limitless expanse of the sea, and meanwhile he firmly concluded that the best Talisman against the obstacles rising in quick succession, and against the evils of the Rakshasas was ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ to repeat Rama's Divine Name.

"These obstacles which rise fast one upon another,
The evil which the Rakshasas, unmindful of Dharma,
do in their unenlightenment,
what means are there to overcome these?', he mused
And swore, 'Say "Ram" and all will vanish, other than
this there is no way.'

This verse concludes the episode of flying over the sea to Lanka, which was begun, as we would remember, with Hanuman's reply to Jambavan (in Kamban) thus,

"Today, with your blessings and my Lord's command,
On either side, as sweeping wings, faster than
Garuda I shall cross (the sea)."

Having crossed the sea, he dedicates to the Lord his achievement in these never to be forgotten words, in the same spirit of humility with which he began his enterprise. Of his own prowess as apart from the grace of the Lord, Kamban's Hanuman is never conscious.

(vi)
Landing on Lanka.
(slokas 218-229 and verses 88-94.)

Valmiki and Kamban conclude their respective first section of the Sundara Kanda with Hanuman landing on a hillock overlooking the city of Lanka. Valmiki's Hanuman, on sighting

Lanka, looked at his own huge form and on the vast vista of space in the sky which his form filled like a huge cloud, and on the scenery below, and reduced his form to its usual size, and again still further reduced it, fearing lest the Rakshasas see him and become curious about him. Valmiki compares this assumption of the real form to a man freed from the unreal on his attaining knowledge of his real self,- a simile with food for deep thought.

Valmiki's Hanuman landed on the top of Lamba hill. He is said to have caused terror to the beasts and birds on the hill. This is not the same kind of terror which he caused on the top of the Mahendra hill, while he was getting ready to leap across the sea. There it was a case of his colossal stature and terrifying might, here it could have been only the sudden appearance from nowhere of a stranger, a species of animal perhaps not so far seen in those parts.

Ramban does not say that Hanuman reduced his size before landing on a coral hill adjacent to Lanka. He landed just as he was,-- a gigantic figure of great stature and extraordinary might; for the hill, unable to withstand the shock of his landing, tossed about like a ship struck by a hurricane. Valmiki's account is more natural and is what one would expect Hanuman, a wise man of prudence, to do in the circumstances.

Valmiki gives us a fleeting glimpse of the scene which unfolded itself to Hanuman's eyes, as he flew down to land on the hill. The sea, its shores, the fringe of trees, the silver lines of rivers and streams coursing to the sea, all these,

which to many of us today are familiar sights from the window of a plane approaching land from the sea-skies, are described with an extraordinary realism. This is a testimony to the wealth of imagination of Valmiki in contrast to Kamban's inexplicable omission of such details. Valmiki does not forget to give ~~taxgiva~~ a small list of the varieties of the plants and the trees on the hill on which Hanuman landed.

Kamban devotes the last four poems of the first padalam to a sight of Lanka from the top of the coral hill. The hill was a very high one, and overlooked Lanka, which seemed like the celestial city (Amaravathi) mirrored on earth. Hanuman is lost in amazement, and his hand assumes the traditional mudra, - fingers half clenched and their backs placed under the chin - a feminine gesture aptly suited to the feeling which, elsewhere, Valmiki calls '~~his~~ vismita', - amazement. He concludes that this city is greater than the celestial one, and indeed is heaven itself. So do many of our countrymen think on seeing the Golden City, - San Francisco, or New York, and conclude like Hanuman that the human eye cannot really complete seeing all the sights of such a city. "All this is heaven indeed", is also the conclusion of some of our modern visitors to New York etc., even as it was the conclusion of Kamban's Hanuman. ^{regarding Lanka.} Kamban makes him muse thus, 'since all that can be desired can be instantly had, and ceaseless exquisite joys are to be found there,' it is heaven indeed. Kamban cannot be serious here. He is surely having a sly dig at the philosophy of epicurianism,

