

# The Ethics of Return: The Nostos of Hanuman and Odysseus

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**Abstract**—‘Nostos’ is a theme in ancient Greek literature that tells of heroes’ successful ‘Homecoming’. The journey describes a voyage through the sea with a purpose, attaining the purpose, facing various obstacles, victory, and the hero’s triumphant return to his home through the sea. *Nostos* is explained by those who experience adventures at sea. It is interesting to note that Homer’s Odysseus and Valmiki’s Hanuman have illustrated their experience and successful Homecoming. After ten years of adventure, Odysseus meets Sirens and Calypso on returning to his kingdom, Ithaca. On the other hand, Hanuman encounters retaliation from Surasa and Simhika before reaching the destination. He makes his journey purposeful. The paper also focuses on the inward journey of a soul, the journey encountered by every human being to attain the ultimate divine. This journey of Hanuman represents a divine journey of every soul before it attains salvation, a distinctive feature of Indian Philosophical thought and practice. The study exemplifies Nostos as an external journey in Odysseus that marks his victory as a wanderer and a warrior King. The Ramayana illustrates an internal triumph of a soul towards the inclination of a sacred journey. Finally, the spiritually exalted inner conscience promises the individual’s victory towards Hanuman’s purpose of faith and righteousness, Dharma, for knowing the self and achieving the purpose of bringing Sita metaphorically to life.

**Index Terms**—Nostos, homecoming, Ramayana, Ethics, Odyssey

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Nostos* is a word often visible in Greek mythology that reflects the glorious homecoming of warriors. It is frequently associated with warriors like Odysseus, Achilles, Hector, Agamemnon, and Telemachus. In the context of Indian epic writings, the phenomenon of *Nostos* is a less-visited theme. Hanuman, Sugreeva, Rama, and Lakshmana have successful stories of *Nostos* from The Ramayana. A comparative reading on Suggestive themes of *Nostos* in Indian and Greek epics is well worth scrutinizing. The themes in the Greek and Indian epics are not vastly dissimilar; there are remarkable similarities and dissimilarities. Frame (1978) argues in *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic* that the Greek word *nóos* (“mind”) is etymologically rooted in the same verbal base as *néomai* (“to return home”) and that this deep linguistic link connects the idea of the mind with the act of returning home or *nostos*. According to Frame (1978), this isn’t a coincidence in Homer; instead, it reveals that from the earliest Greek epic tradition, “mind” carried the connotation of “homecoming”.

The Indian schools of philosophical thought claim that the mind, that is, thought itself, is the manifestation of exile, and home is achieved through the mind, yoga *Cittah vrtti nirodhah* (Vivekananda, 2015, p. 9). In yogic consciousness, the mind travels toward the chosen object. It is the mind that travels, but not the body. Thus, the religiousness and spiritual *nostos* are unique in the Indian context, juxtaposed with the physical tiredness of Greek *Nostos*. In an attempt to make a comparative study of the *Nostos* theme in an Indian and Western epic, adventures, wit, craft, revenge, uninhabited lands, and the quest for self are found to be dominant ideas in the Western epic. In Book Five of Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, known as the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, Hanuman embarks on his mission to Lanka, driven by a clear purpose rooted in devotion, followed by intellect. His solemn vow is grounded in faith. Along the way, divine forces test his resolve and dedication, and he confronts deep emotional turmoil. These fundamental themes, faith-based promise, trials of commitment, and inner conflict form the spiritual and psychological backbone of the Ramayana narrative.

*Nostos* cannot be achieved without effort. *Nostos* is a journey that examines the hero’s internal and external struggles. Odysseus leaves his *oikos*, which in Homeric times meant not only the physical home but the entire household: wife, elderly parents, children, servants, slaves, livestock, and fields, every aspect of the hero’s domain. As the King of Ithaca, Odysseus was responsible for returning home and protecting all that was part of his family and land. “He faced many opportunities to gain new experiences and insights along his journey, yet his primary duty was to preserve and restore his *oikos*. His desire to see his old parents contributes to his happiness in the Homeric era” (Tuszynska, 2020).

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According to Alexopoulou (2009), *Nostos* is the “preservation of one’s identity, the difficulty or impossibility of return” (p. 1). Odysseus’s journey is more adventurous and self-discovering, revealing his true nature, unlike Hanuman, whose divine service to his beloved Rama as a messenger from the Kingdom of Sugreeva to Lanka is officially about peacemaking and reconciliation. Hanuman’s journey is also exploratory and introspective, uncovering his true nature through a yogic quest.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Smith (2024) discusses in “Ancient lessons from the Odyssey to address Timeless Human needs for recovery—See the tears and hear the tales” the recovery process from traumatic experiences. Using combat trauma theory as a framework, scholars have analyzed ancient Greek epics to argue that the experience of human suffering is universally resonant. The concept of *nostos*—the hero’s journey home—highlights how essential *xenia* [hospitality] is as a setting where survivors can recount their stories through *diegesis* [narrative]. Everyone faces challenges on life’s journey. Therefore, it is vital to create constant opportunities for people to be seen and heard, where they can share their stories with someone who genuinely listens. In her article “The Odyssey”, Rundbaken (2024) explores Greek values through Odysseus’ journey as he strives to return home after the Trojan War. “These values—Agathos, Oikos, Xenia, and Nostos—are essential elements of Greek culture, shaping the narrative and defining the ideals of leadership and community” (Rundbaken, 2024). This emphasizes the significance of virtue in Greek society. Norman Austin (2024) studies Homer’s Odyssey and The Mystery of Time. Marcinkowska-Rosol and Sellmer (2024) discusses “How the mind is affected in Homer and the Sanskrit Epics: Negative mental changes”. Newton (2020) in “The Odyssey: An Overview”, explores a tale of a hero of exceptional endurance and *metis* [cunning intelligence] who wins *kleos* [fame] by achieving a successful *nostos* [return home]. The poem presents the *oikos* [home] as the heart of heroic action, showing that Zeus consecrates hospitality *xenia* [hospitality]. At the same time, it elevates the moral and intellectual stature of those who protect the household, contrasting them with the brute-force *bia* [perpetrators] who threaten to demolish the hero’s family and plunge his realm into chaos as discussed in The Cambridge Guide to Homer published in 2020. Allen (2019) portrays Arjuna- Odysseus- Shared heritage in Indian and Greek Epic. In “The Mind as Container: A Study of a Metaphor in Homer and Hesiod with a Parallel Analysis of the Sanskrit Epics”, Marcinkowska-Rosol examines “the metaphor of mind, the functions, and implications for the conception of mind in both ancient traditions” (Marcinkowska-Rosol & Sellmer, 2021, p. 1). Therefore, the research thrust compares the journey of Hanuman from the Sanskrit epic “The Valmiki Ramayana” and Homer’s Odyssey from “The Iliad”. The comparison is based on the *Nostos* of both heroes and the triumph in their homecoming.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed archival methods, including digital archives and book collections, to extract relevant episodes and dialogues contributing to the epics’ *Nostos* element. This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on archival analysis and comparative literary-philosophical examination, structured as follows. 1) Archival Analysis (Primary Text Sources): Homer’s The Odyssey, translated by Samuel Butler, is obtained from Project Gutenberg ([www.gutenberg.org/](http://www.gutenberg.org/)). Project Gutenberg is an online library of free eBooks founded by Michael Hart in 1971. 2) Comparative literary-philosophical examination: This includes verses from the Valmiki Ramayana retrieved from the IIT Kanpur Valmiki Ramayana Project (available at [valmiki.iitk.ac.in](http://valmiki.iitk.ac.in)), with an English translation by the National Sanskrit University, 2010. Book V of the Valmiki Ramayana, the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, serves as the focus of analysis. This section, titled “The Beautiful Book,” describes Hanuman’s outward journey to Lanka and his inward spiritual pilgrimage. The project aims to render the Srimad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa into English and provide transliterations into key Indian languages—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam and make this multilingual version available online. Explanatory translations in English are provided for each *Sarga* or *Canto* of the six commentaries on the Sanskrit Ramayana. A comparative close reading of the texts supports thematic and stylistic comparisons, linking Homeric heroism and Greek ethical questions with Hanuman’s yogic path and Indian philosophical insights. The analysis of the Homeric epic and Greek philosophy highlights concepts of heroism, identity, speech, and ethical agency (e.g., *arete*, *logos*). Patanjali’s *Yogasūtras* and the Indian epic interpret Hanuman’s internal mental states (*citta-vṛtti*, *nirodha*) as essential narrative components.

The analysis starts with a review of the literature and a close reading of the narratives. The interpretation of the text is based on Homeric epic traits, with consideration of the Indian epic and its operation through the *nostos* theme. While the Greek epic emphasizes the heroic qualities of the Odyssey throughout the journey, the Indian epic depicts the yogic journey of Hanuman. The article also explores the comparative relationship between Greek and Indian philosophy. The study examines key classical Greek ideas, especially from Homeric epic and ancient Greek philosophy. These ideas represent different but connected aspects of heroism, identity, speech, and ethical reasoning, forming part of a philosophical and narrative framework. The Indian epic is analyzed through Patanjali’s ‘*Yogasūtras*’ to understand Hanuman’s inner mental processes. The theoretical contribution broadens comparative epic studies by combining Greek *nostos* with Indian *yoga* as narrative modes of return and transformation. This cultural-philosophical dialogue

encourages cross-cultural understanding by placing Western philosophical inquiry alongside Indian yogic introspection. The paper highlights shared human concerns such as identity, homecoming, and ethical growth.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

##### A. *The Travel of Odysseus*

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? (Marlowe, 1915, p. 15)

This celebrated quote by Christopher Marlowe from *Dr. Faustus* marks the beginning and siege of Troy by the Greeks depicted in the western epic “*The Iliad*” by Homer. It talks at length about the struggle of Greek Heroes like Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Achilles against the Trojans to bring back Helen. Odysseus was driven far off the coast and wandered the seas for ten years before rejoining his wife Penelope in his native Ithaca. The structure of the *Odyssey* forms a perfect circle: the hero departs from his *oikos* [home], undergoes a series of trials that make him wiser and more capable, and eventually returns from his journey complete and his fate fulfilled.

Sing to me of the men, Muse, the man  
Of lusts and turns, driven time ...  
Many cities of men he saw and learned about their minds,  
Many pains he suffered, heartsick on the open sea,  
Fighting to save his life and bring his comrades home”. (Homer, 1996, pp. 1-2)

Odysseus and his men reach the land of the Cyclops, giants with a single central eye on their foreheads. They enter the Cyclops' cave, and Odysseus devises a clever plan; he deceives the giant by claiming his name is “Nobody.” This false identity allows Odysseus to blind Polyphemus and escape. When the enraged Cyclops (Polyphemus) cries out for help, saying, “Nobody is hurting me!” no one comes to his aid. Odysseus then attacks Polyphemus, and the Cyclops cries, “Nobody attacked me.” While sailing away from the island, Odysseus taunts the Cyclops in his triumph and reveals his real name. In a moment of pride, Odysseus reveals his actual name, and Polyphemus calls upon his father, Poseidon, begging that Odysseus never see his homeland again or, if destiny says otherwise, that he arrives bereft of his comrades in utter misery. After this ominous plea, Odysseus and his men land on Aeolia, the floating island ruled by Aeolus, the keeper of the winds. They are welcomed warmly and entertained for an entire month. When it's time to leave, Aeolus gives Odysseus a sealed leather bag containing all the winds except the west wind to help them sail home. When Ithaca appears on the horizon and Odysseus is asleep, his men, driven by curiosity, open the bag, and the wind rushes out, dragging them back to the start. Aeolus then turns Odysseus and his crew away, saying it is wrong to help a man hated by the gods.

In the palace of the Phoenicians, Odysseus recounts his wanderings (Books IX–XII) within a narrative frame that vividly emphasizes his famous cunning. His initial deception, claiming his name is “Nobody,” might seem absurd. However, it is a clever and humorous tactic to prevent the other Cyclops from helping Polyphemus. Still, after blinding Polyphemus, Odysseus's decision to reveal his true identity with full epithets like “raider of cities,” “son of Laertes,” and “from Ithaca” is a mistake. This boastful reveal demonstrates a lack of foresight and sharply contrasts with the prudence he displayed earlier in planning his escape. By naming himself and referencing his ancestry and homeland in a formal Homeric style, Odysseus affirms his *kleos* and pursuit of glory through heroic deeds. This moment of hubris causes Polyphemus to pray to Poseidon, explicitly naming Odysseus and calling for divine vengeance, thus setting the epic's most severe punishment in motion. This manner of introduction in Homeric Greece is specific and structured. Odysseus says (in Book IX),

Cyclops, if anyone asks you who put your eye out and spoiled your beauty, say it was the valiant warrior  
Odysseus, son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca. (Homer, 1999, p. 45)

Many criticize Odysseus's cunning nature. For example, Dante Alighieri condemns him to the Eighth Circle of Hell, where 'fraudulent counsellors' reside, for creating the Trojan Horse that led to Troy's downfall (Alighieri, 2003). The common human weakness of giving in to temptation appears clearly in Book X of the *Odyssey*. Just as Odysseus shows off to Polyphemus in Book IX, demonstrating his boastful pride, his crew also falls prey to greed. When they reached Ithaca, they opened Aeolus's bag of winds, wrongly thinking it held treasure, which sabotaged their journey home. This scene is often seen as a symbol of collective weakness, where Odysseus's inability to trust his men results in disaster. Finally, Odysseus allows a whole year to pass on Circe's island, enjoying luxury and distraction instead of continuing his voyage home. This is another sign of his vulnerability to temptation and losing sight of his goal. As a sign of weak-mindedness, Odysseus wastes a year on the island of Circe. Many obstacles on his journey are not unavoidable threats but temptations. For example, while he carefully resists the Sirens, his crew ultimately succumbs to the lure of the Sun God's cattle despite clear warnings that it would undermine their return. The Land of Thrace, where the Sun's cattle are kept, drives Odysseus' men to slaughter the Sun's flock. Even Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens is a lesson of temptation, which he manages through foresight. Homer's image of Odysseus strapped to the mast, begging to be released, symbolizes many of his and his crew's experiences at sea. Material distractions hinder his goal of *nostos*. A more profound longing and a more intellectual approach to action are essential for the mission, and this mental clarity keeps him on course.

### B. *The Journey of Hanuman to Lanka*

The story of The Sundarakanda begins with a beautiful commentary of Tilaka-  
*Sundare Sundari Lanka, Sundare Sundari katha,*  
*Sundare sundari sita, sundare kim na sundaram?*

The translation of the commentary is as follows:

Beautiful among the most beautiful is Lanka

Beautiful among the most beautiful is the Story

Beautiful among the most beautiful is Sita

What is not beautiful in Sunadarakanda? (Iyengar, 1983, p. 19)

Aurobindo (1994) describes *Itihāsa* as an old tradition rooted in history or legend that has been reshaped creatively into a meaningful myth or story. Such narratives aren't just tales; they embody spiritual, religious, ethical, or ideal values, and in doing so, they shape and influence the collective mindset of a people. The Rāmāyaṇa is undeniably one of the world's greatest classics, among the oldest epics ever written. It is unique in its enduring influence on the cultural, social, ethical, religious, and spiritual consciousness of the people of India. Sundarakanda is the fifth section of the Ramayana, narrating Hanuman's journey to Lanka. It comprises 2885 verses and sixty-eight chapters. At Jambavan's suggestion and encouragement, Hanuman crosses the ocean searching for Sita. He encounters a duel with Mainaka and Surasa, the two female demons. After overcoming them, he reaches Lanka and meets Lankini, the city's guardian deity. Following a victorious duel with her, he thoroughly explores the town to understand its residents' prospects and habitats. While searching for Sita, he finds her in the Asoka Grove, beneath the Simsupa tree. Hanuman approaches Sita with his sharp wit and promises that Rama, her husband, and his team will soon come to Lanka, rescue her, and restore her hope. He also devises a plan to meet Ravana and advises him. Finally, he warns Ravana to release Sita, or a deluge will threaten his kingdom. Hanuman then crosses the sea again, sharing his successful encounter with Sita among his companions.

## V. ANALYSIS

### A. *The Nostos Factor*

The word *mos-cos* means "return" or "homecoming," highlighting the deep connection between memories and consciousness, and it is the central theme of Odysseus's journey. The Odyssey frequently weaves together the concepts of *nōstos* (homecoming) and *nōs* (mind/spirit), and its core mythic theme centers on the journey of emerging safely from peril and darkness back into light and life (Frame, 1978). While Odysseus' *nostos* is a physical journey through the body, Hanuman's *nostos* is a mental journey that brings Sita back to life. Odysseus's desire to physically return to Ithaca arises from his awareness of home (noos). Descartes' philosophy ("I think, therefore I am") (La Frenz, 2021) places the mind (*res cogitans*) as the foundation of reality. Therefore, any physical journey (*res extensa*, like Odysseus's) is supported by the consciousness of home (noos). The Greek epic is marked by heroic victory. It is a story celebrated by the human race, emphasizing physical triumphs. Writer and poet Stephen Mitchell, who translated the Odyssey in 2013, rendered *polutropos* as "infinitely cunning" (p. 27). *Polutropos* indicates craftiness, shrewdness, and deceitfulness. "He portrays Odysseus as a master storyteller and legendary trickster. He is famous for devising strategies and ways to deceive gods and men. He tells grand lies and tall tales. Odysseus (Ulysses) cunningly tricks the Cyclops" (Book IX).

He said this to draw me out, but I was too cunning to be caught in that way, so I answered with a lie; "Poseidon," said I, "sent my ship on to the rocks at the far end of your country, and wrecked it". (Homer, 1999, p. 110)

### B. *The Encounters of Odysseus: Metis and Kenos*

In Homer's Odyssey, the character Odysseus is closely associated with *mētis*—a Greek word that translates to "cleverness" (La Frenz, 2021). It describes the qualities of "intelligence, cunning, and versatility" (La Frenz, 2021). Odysseus' *mētis* has long been recognized in his propensity for disguise, his ability to craft elaborate stories, and his powers of manual craftsmanship (such as his construction of a raft to sail away from Calypso's island). Aristotelian *kenodoxia*, a Greek term for empty or vain conceit, aptly describes a hero like Odysseus, whose character is deeply intertwined with pride. *Kenos* means 'empty'. When applied to a life, *kenos* suggests vanity, illusion, boastfulness, or vainglory, and indicates the great moral wrong that is the exact opposite of *eusebeia*, or godliness (Brown, 1975). An example of this trait in Odysseus appears in the lines, "Firstly, I will tell you my name so that you too may know it, and one day, if I outlive this time of sorrow, I may become my guest, though I live so far away from all of you. I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, renowned among mankind for all subtlety, so my fame ascends to heaven. I live in Ithaca" (Book IX) (Homer, 1999, p. 45). Odysseus's *nostos* is a physical journey of sailing home, facing monsters and gods, and striving to restore his space. Throughout the Odyssey, his journey requires a resilient mind that balances desires (such as *kleos* and pleasure) with a focus on returning home. His physical progress depends on his mental awareness and focus; his mind guides his physical travel.

### C. *Phronesis, Emotions, and Tranquility: Odysseus Between Prudence and Apatheia*

The faculty of strength, prudence, and wit to succeed becomes clear in Odysseus's encounter with Aeolus. In Greek culture, *phronesis* a specifically contextual, ethical, and practical rationality emerges as another critical dimension of wisdom often depicted in warrior narratives. Originating with Aristotle, *phronesis*, commonly translated as practical wisdom or prudence, is an intellectual virtue tied to moral deliberation. In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *phronimos*, a prudent or "wise" person, is central to his political philosophy; such an individual naturally chooses the morally right action in any given situation, acting with the right motives (Aristotle, 2011). Indeed, for Aristotle in Book VI, moral virtue ensures the correct goal, while prudence (*phronesis*) helps identify the means to reach it (Aristotle, 2011). The prudence and practical wisdom carry Odysseus successfully from the land of Helios. *Apatheia* and *Ataraxia* are terms related to an unperturbed mind. *Apatheia* is the archetypal life, a state of mind in which one is not disturbed by passions. Odysseus claims his visceral instincts and falls prey to Circe. He fails to master his elemental emotions. Odysseus is never found in *Ataraxia*, a state of tranquility of mind, even after he reaches Ithaca.

#### D. Narrative Ethics and Odysseus's Fragile Eudaimonia

Ethical understanding arises from abstract principles and experience, supported by narrative ethics. This perspective suggests that lives are shaped and given meaning through the stories we tell and enact. In this context, the moral life is closely connected to the uncertainties of existence, as illustrated by "The Fragility of Goodness" (1986), a philosophical book by Martha Nussbaum on human flourishing. *Eudaimonia* is inherently vulnerable to misfortune and suffering beyond our control. Building on this, a fulfilling life requires the opportunity to develop and express a full spectrum of human capacities—emotions, reason, love, imagination, and reflective thought. Importantly, this view of ethical life recognizes that emotions are a form of moral intelligence; far from being irrational, they reveal what we care about and guide us toward meaningful ethical decisions, as seen in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus's *nostos* is driven by longing for home but complicated by loss, delay, and moral ambiguity. He returns to Ithaca to reclaim his kingdom and recover his identity through memory and endurance. Odysseus exemplifies emotional resilience as he grieves, loves, longs, and suffers.

TABLE 1  
TOOLS OF THE NOSTOS FRAMEWORK

Element	Odysseus (Odyssey)	Hanuman (Ramayana)
Goal	Personal homecoming	Mission of devotion
Self	Assertion of identity	Egoless service
Philosophical Frame	Heroic individualism, fate	Dharma, selfless devotion
Mode of Action	Cunning ( <i>metis</i> ), endurance	Strength, purity, devotion

TABLE 2  
PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK OF NOSTOS

Dimensions	Odysseus (Greek philosophy)	Hanuman (Indian philosophy)
Ethics ideal	Arete (excellence), Kleos (Glory)	Dharma, Bhakti, Kirti (fame through selfless action)
Teleology	Homecoming, restoration	Spiritual service, liberation
Divine Relation	Competitive, transactional	Devotional, participatory
Emotions	Controlled, rationalized	Expressive, spiritually aligned

#### E. The Yogic Encounters of Hanuman

Hanumān's yogic journey is exemplified in Book V, *Sundarakanda*, through *citta-vritti nirodha* (I.2) (Vivekananda, 2015, p. 9), as he harnesses his inner mastery of mind and awareness. Guided by yogic power and focused consciousness, he resolutely begins his quest to locate Sītā. Ian Whicher (2023) insightfully observes that yoga and spiritual liberation are not about renouncing the world but engaging with it entirely. Yoga aims for an integrated life marked by clear awareness and a unity of being and action. Hanuman also crosses the Sea of a hundred yojanas at an unimaginable speed. He consolidates his efforts toward giving life to Sita, hoping for Rama's protection. Mind travels much faster than the body, according to the yogic sutras. The following quote describes the qualities of Hanuman,

5.1.198 O lord of Vanaras, in whom these four qualities, fortitude, vision, intelligence, and dexterity exist as in you, will achieve the mission and not get lost. (Valmiki, 2010, p. 66)

The mind perceives the nature of the Self when it is calm. This is explained as *tada drastuh svaripe vasthanam* (I.3) (Vivekananda, 2015, p. 13). Therefore, Hanuman understands his course of action to serve his beloved Rama through the encouragement of Jambavan, the Bear. Hanuman journeys through *vritti sarupyam itaratra*, [the functioning of the mind], exemplifying the yogic principle. If one does not follow the correct path, fluctuating between the mind-emotion connections, the purpose of consciousness is lost. Hanuman's journey in *Ramayana* is driven by *bhakti* [devotion], unwavering focus, and inner mental discipline. His mind is anchored in service to Rama, free of distractions, and

demonstrates perfect harmony of mind, body, and soul. Hanuman surpasses ego, accessing different states of awareness from a *dasa* to union with the divine through unwavering faith, leading to *Samadhi* [meditative absorption]. He first controls and observes his thoughts; his physical feats follow his mental clarity (La Frenz, 2021).

#### F. *Dunamis and Devotion: Hanuman's Yogic Wisdom Beyond Emotion*

In the New Testament, *Dunamis* refers to divine power or miraculous works “power”; “ability”; “miracles”; “strength” depending on context. In this sense, Odysseus’s strength lies in mind and versatility—a unique power, though not explicitly labeled *dunamis* in the classical texts—it is his actualized potential, backed by intellect and adaptability. On the other hand, Hanuman embodies *bhakti* (loving, emotional devotion)—a rare combination of superhuman might and deep spiritual loyalty. Unlike Odysseus, Hanuman does not succumb to temptations when he encounters Ravana’s luxurious harem filled with women, sensuality, and luxury of all kinds. The Son of Windgod acts on his faith rather than solely on his intellect because some deeds are beyond perception and understanding. Hanuman’s yogic wisdom is seen through his abilities of *Anima* [shrinking to the size of an atom], *Mahima* [enlarging the body], *Garima* [becoming infinitely heavy], *Laghima* [becoming weightless], *Prapti* [access to any place], *Prakamiya* [knowledge of all], *Isitva* [the power to separate the soul from the body], and *Vasitva* [controlling anything]. By focusing single-mindedly on *prāna*, sensory perceptions, and inner light, combined with detachment, Hanuman exemplifies the yogic state (Iyengar, 2011). Mastering these meditative states and sharpening his awareness, he fulfills his divine mission of finding and meeting *Sītā*, free from temptations. When the restless mind stabilizes, it reaches supreme clarity, becoming like crystal—pure, transparent, and capable of channeling higher experiences. This enhances Hanuman’s *Kirti*, which refers to fame, especially regarding righteous deeds and moral character. It reflects how others see a person’s virtue and honorable actions, often linked to one’s *dharma* [duty]. Conversely, *Kleos* means glory or fame gained through heroic deeds, especially in battle or significant achievements in Greek tradition. It is a public recognition of greatness, often focused on achieving immortal fame. Moral purity and virtue form the core of *kirti*, emphasizing actions like compassion, honesty, generosity, and selflessness over the magnitude of deeds. A person earns *kirti* by embodying the highest moral virtues, regardless of the scale of their deeds. *Kleos* relies on external recognition—reputation depends on others’ perceptions of heroic acts, not on the inner morality of those actions, as seen in Odysseus. *Kirti* originates from Indian philosophical traditions, especially from the concept of *dharma*, which is closely linked to the Hindu ideal of fulfilling one’s duty and living ethically. It is also crucial in Buddhist and Jain traditions, representing a life of moral excellence. *Kleos* is central to Greek heroism, notably in Homeric epics (such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), showcasing the warrior ethos in which fame through heroic deeds in war ensures immortality through oral tradition (epic poetry, songs).

#### G. *Āsmitā and Awakening: From Ego's Illusion to Dharana and Divine Insight*

*Āsmitā* [ego] is the deluded sense of “I,” “me,” and “mine.” Rooted in *avidyā* [ignorance], it arises when one mistakenly identifies the pure Self with the instruments of perception and action—mind, body, emotions, rather than recognizing them as separate. Once this ego emerges, it distorts reality, driven by the ego-maker’s desire to shape the world to its preferences. Whether one asserts “I am the best” or “I am the worst,” such declarations are dangerous; they stem from the ego’s contamination and sustain suffering. The human faculty of the ego governs Odysseus’s journey, revealing his ego and his repentance. However, concentration is key to Patanjali’s *desabandhascittaya dharana* (3.1), [that which binds the mind to one focus]. Binding the mind to one place equals *dharana*, which means, holding the reins firmly while guiding the body and mind: not letting the body act independently but keeping both under proper control,” (Vivekananda, 2015, p. 98). Nonetheless, Hanuman is intense, disciplined, and introspective during his pain from failing to find *Sita*. Hanuman’s soliloquy in despair reflects his thought process, showing his commitment to Rama, his accountability to Rama, and his constant goal,

5.13.20 I wonder what the right course of action is when things have taken such a turn. What is proper for me to do?” Hanuman once again deliberated. “If I return to Kishkinda without seeing *Sita*, what use is my effort? What have I accomplished? What will happen? (Valmiki, 2010, p. 238)

## VI. CONCLUSION

Odysseus’s *Nostos* (The *Odyssey*) was a tangible, earthly return to Ithaca, reclaiming his kingship, household, and social standing. The role of Odysseus is firmly rooted in society as king, husband, and father. His journey is marked by suffering, cunning, endurance, and tests challenging rationality and narrative coherence. The outcome was reintegration into *oikos* [household] and *polis* [city], restoring order; the return is about self-assertion and reclamation. Hanuman’s return was not for personal gain but to serve Rama and fulfill his cosmic mission. Shaped through *dharma* [duty] and *bhakti* [devotion], not through asserting identity. That was a devotional, intuitive path of surrender, loyalty, and service, not self-centered. The outcome was restoring cosmic harmony, reaffirming righteousness rather than claiming a home or status. Odysseus’s type of *nostos* is a physical return to his homeland. But for Hanuman, it is a spiritual return to *dharma* or divine mission.

In the *Odyssey*, the journey home is a grand and unique expression. Cunning is not outside the realm of reason but is a part of it. Reason is the ability to assess what is happening to us, around us, and against us. For example, Odysseus

uses reason to persuade his men not to anger the gods and to stay united, so they stand a better chance of reaching home. He charms gods and nymphs to escape trouble. Kant firmly established that human reason has limits and cannot go beyond its boundaries. However, this limit is the basis of Indian philosophy, which daringly pushes past reason and successfully uncovers a higher truth. The value of exploring such knowledge lies in transcending the boundaries of the rational world (Vivekananda, 2015). Odysseus's cleverness operates on two levels in a dialectical way: he is imaginative, ingenious, and adaptable, and his capacity for reason, conceived as a generative and inventive force that enables this cunning. Odysseus embodies the idea that understanding reality allows one to reshape it more effectively for benefit or pleasure. He survives through the grace of what he can imagine and create, based on what he knows or is willing to discover. Odysseus aims to return home to Ithaca. The idea of homecoming is deeply connected to the concept of identity for the Greeks. This has been called "the fruitfulness of trouble" in Odysseus. The suffering he endures and the hardships he faces serve as different artistic materials he uses to forge his identity and gain recognition, thereby affirming the value of his existence.

In contrast to the Greek cultural story, the Indian narrative is deeply rooted in a spiritual journey, with waves of faith, fervent devotion, selflessness, determination, celibacy, and service at its core. A profound stress of thought on life, a substantial and vital view of religion and society, a specific strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems, and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation. The heroic encounter of Hanuman is *Lila*, a divine play, unlike Odysseus' actual game of war and adventure. Unlike the love of honor, or Philotimia, for the Greek hero, Bhakthi [devotion] plays a central role in the Ramayana. In the journey to find Sita, Sugreeva's trustworthy and knowledgeable minister, Hanuman, truly gains his conscience by understanding and recognizing the purpose of his mission. Therefore, the wanderings of the warrior Odysseus, as Homer rightly calls him *polutropos*, differ from the heroic encounters of Hanuman, who is more a *duta* [devoted follower] of Rama. Sage Patanjali's teachings suggest that knowledge of the self is the only escape from the endless cycle of life. We learn the processes of the inner journey and begin to understand the various inner stages on the path of Yoga. Hanuman is blessed with *Viveka* [discerning intellect] (Iyengar, 2011), who recognizes that worldly experiences are ultimately nothing but suffering. Hanuman's intellect sees beyond the surface to understand that Ravana's abode is not luxury but a punishment in disguise. Therefore, Hanuman's journey is yogic, establishing a text like the Ramayana, canonical. In contrast, Odysseus's journey is an admirable physical adventure.

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