

= Tara (Ramayana) =

In the Hindu epic Ramayana , Tara (Sanskrit : तारा , Tārā , literally " star " ;) is the Queen of Kishkindha and wife of the monkey (vanara) King Vali . After being widowed , she becomes the Queen of Sugriva , Vali 's brother .

Tara is described as the daughter of the monkey physician Sushena in the Ramayana , and in later sources , as an apsara (celestial nymph) who rises from the churning of the milky ocean . She marries Vali and bears him a son named Angada . After Vali is presumed dead in a battle with a demon , his brother Sugriva becomes king and appropriates Tara ; however , Vali returns and regains Tara and exiles his brother , accusing him of treachery .

When Sugriva challenges Vali to a duel , Tara wisely advises Vali not to accept because of the former 's alliance with Rama ? the hero of the Ramayana and an avatar of the god Vishnu ? but Vali does not heed her , and dies from Rama 's arrow , shot at the behest of Sugriva . The Ramayana and its later adaptations emphasize Tara 's lamentation . While in most vernacular versions , Tara casts a curse on Rama by the power of her chastity , in some versions , Rama enlightens Tara .

Sugriva returns to the throne , but spends his time carousing and fails to act on his promise to assist Rama in recovering his kidnapped wife , Sita . Tara ? now Sugriva 's queen and chief diplomat ? is then instrumental in reconciling Rama with Sugriva after pacifying Lakshmana , Rama 's brother , who was about to destroy Kishkinda in retribution for Sugriva 's perceived treachery . After this incident , Tara is only mentioned in passing references , as the mother of Angada and Queen of Sugriva , as the story moves from Kishkindha to the climatic battle in Lanka to retrieve Sita .

Tara 's intelligence , presence of mind , courage , and devotion to her husband Vali is praised . She is extolled as one of the panchakanya (" five (revered) women ") , the recital of whose names is believed to dispel sin .

= = Birth and early life = =

In the Ramayana , Tara is addressed by Vali as the daughter of the vanara physician Sushena . Sometimes , verses are added in the Bala Kanda , the first book of the Ramayana , which describe principal monkeys created by various deities : Vali and Sugriva are described as sons of the king of the gods , Indra and the sun @-@ god Surya respectively ; while Tara is described as the daughter of Brihaspati , the guru of the gods . The 12th century Tamil Ramavataram and the Telugu Ranganatha Ramayanam state that Tara and Ruma rose , along with other apsaras , from the ocean of milk during its churning by the gods and the demons , to acquire the elixir of life (amrita) . In the Theyyam drama tradition of Kerala , the gods tire and request Vali to help in the churning . When Vali just starts churning , Tara rises from the ocean and thus is gifted to Vali .

According to the Javanese wayang puppet tradition , Tara (Dewi Tara) is the apsara daughter of Indra and his wife Wiyati . Her siblings include a sister called Dewi Tari , the consort of the demon @-@ king of Lanka , Ravana (Rahwana) and brothers Citarata , Citragana , Jayantaka , Jayantara , and Harjunawangsa .

While the Ramayana states that Tara first weds Vali , some Ramayana adaptations sometimes present a polyandrous relationship between Tara , Vali and Sugriva . The Ranganatha Ramayana states that Tara is given to Vali and Sugriva as a reward for helping the gods . A Tamil folk tale tells that after the amrita emerged , Tara rises and is given as a common wife to both Vali and Sugriva . In the Mahabharata , there is a reference to Vali and Sugriva fighting over an unnamed woman , who the mythologist Bhattacharya believes to be Tara .

Some Ramayana retellings including some Mahabharata versions , the Narasimha Purana and the Mahanataka portray Tara as originally Sugriva 's wife that Vali snatched . The Thai Ramakien says that the gods give Vali and Sugriva a trident and Tara respectively , but Vali grabs Tara too and marries her . The Balinese dance Kebyar and the wayang tradition also tells that Tara was married to Sugriva (Sugriwa) initially , but appropriated by Vali (Subali) .

In all versions , Angada is born from Tara 's marriage to Vali .

In the Ramayana , Vali goes to fight the demon Mayavi in a cave and instructs Sugriva to close the door of the cave if blood flows out from the cave , implying that he has been killed , but if milk flows out , it indicates that Mayavi is dead . After a year of combat , the dying demon turns the colour of his milky blood to red by sorcery . Sugriva believes that Vali is dead and closes the only opening to the cave . Sugriva also appropriates ? sometimes interpreted as marriage ? Vali 's " widow " Tara . After Vali returns , rejecting Sugriva 's explanation , he exiles Sugriva and not only re @-@ acquires Tara , but also seizes Ruma , Sugriva 's wife , in retaliation . While Vali 's act of usurping Ruma when her husband is alive is universally criticized by Ramayana commentators , they excuse Sugriva 's taking of Tara , as his wife , as he believed she was widowed .

In the wayang variant , Vali (Subali) goes to battle the demon brother @-@ rulers of Kishkinda , Jatasura and Lembusura , in the cave . Similar to the Ramayana , Sugriva (Sugriwa) presumes Vali dead . The gods crown Sugriva the king of Kishkinda and grant him Tara as a reward for aiding his " dead " brother . Vali returns and instigated by Ravana , seizes Tara and the kingdom .

= = Death of Vali = =

After his wife Sita is kidnapped by the demon @-@ king Ravana , Rama and his brother Lakshmana wander the forest searching for her . Upon meeting the monkey @-@ warrior Hanuman , they are taken to the exiled Sugriva . Rama forms an alliance with Sugriva , whom he will help ; in order to defeat Vali and regain his wife Ruma and his kingship . In return Sugriva will aid in the search for Sita . As agreed , Sugriva challenges Vali in the wrestling contest , but Rama is unable to distinguish between the two fighters and Sugriva loses the contest . Rama explains his predicament to Sugriva and tells him to re @-@ challenge Vali , but this time , Rama garlands Sugriva to differentiate him from Vali .

= = = Tara 's warning = = =

In the Kishkindha Kanda of the Ramayana , when Sugriva re @-@ challenges Vali for combat , Tara suggests that " appearances are deceptive " and normally , a combatant would not return so soon to a fight again after a decisive defeat . Having heard of the growing friendship between Sugriva and Rama , she cautions Vali . She urges him to forgive Sugriva , to anoint him as the crown prince , as a diplomatic move , and live peacefully with him , and also befriend the exalted Rama . Tara begs Vali to act on her advice , but acknowledging Tara 's love and devotion , Vali argues that a warrior like him cannot refuse a challenge ; despite this , he promises to not kill Sugriva , but just crush his pride .

In the Mahabharata retelling , when Sugriva re @-@ challenges Vali , Tara dissuades Vali from going to the fight and points out that Sugriva may have found a protector . Tara , described as lustrous like the moon , is praised by Vali as one who understands the language of all creatures and is astute to clarify her statement . Tara warns him about Sugriva 's alliance with Rama and the plotting of Vali 's death at the hands of Sugriva and his advisers . Vali not only disregards Tara 's advice , but also suspects Tara of cheating on him with Sugriva . Vali leaves , speaking harshly to Tara .

In Kamban 's Ramavataram , Tara warns about Rama 's plans to kill Vali . However , Vali dismisses her warning as unfounded , arguing that Rama , a man of dharma , would not shoot him when he and Sugriva are in a duel . Vali leaves , promising Tara that he will slay Sugriva .

= = = Tara 's lamentation = = =

In the Bala Kanda Book of the Ramayana , where the whole work is summarized , the lamentation of Tara is mentioned as a significant event .

Ignoring Tara 's sound advice , Vali engages in combat with Sugriva . While fighting , Rama shoots an arrow at Vali from behind , fatally wounding him . The news of Vali 's death reaches Tara ; she rushes to him with Angada . She sees monkeys running in terror on the way . They advise her to go

back to the palace and consecrate Angada as the king . Tara refuses and says that she needs to see her husband first , leading them back to Vali . Embracing the dying Vali , Tara laments his death while reproaching Sugriva and Rama . Tara accepts Vali 's death as punishment for seizing Ruma and exiling Sugriva .

In North Indian manuscripts of the Ramayana , some interpolations elaborate Tara 's lament . Tara mentions the hardships of widowhood and prefers death to it . She blames Rama for unjustly killing Vali and tells him that if they had forged an alliance , Vali could have helped him recover Sita . Tara invokes the power of her chastity and curses Rama so that he will soon lose Sita after he regains her . She declares that Sita will return to the earth . The curse also appears in the North @-@ western Indian manuscripts . In several vernacular adaptations of the Ramayana like the Oriya Vilanka Ramayana by Sarala Dasa , Tara 's curse is reiterated . Apart from the usual curse to Rama of his separation from Sita , in the Bengali Krittivasi Ramayana , Tara additionally curses Rama that in his next birth , he will be killed by Vali . The Mahanataka and the Ananda Ramayana narrate that Vali is reborn as the hunter who kills Krishna , Rama 's next birth .

Hanuman consoles Tara , telling her to look towards the future of her son , Angada . Hanuman suggests that Angada be consecrated as king , compensating her loss but Tara declares that since his uncle Sugriva is alive , it is inadvisable . With his last breath , Vali confesses his folly of abandoning Sugriva and urges Angada and Tara to support Sugriva . He declares that :

" Tara is ... thoroughly knowledgeable about deciding subtle matters and about various portents . Whatever she says is right should be done without doubt , for nothing Tara believes turns out to be otherwise . "

Vali requests Rama to take care that Tara is not insulted and advises Sugriva to unquestioningly follow her advice .

Vali dies in the embraces of Tara , who mourns his death in a painful and rebuking speech . According to Lefebvre , Tara 's lament has been significantly expanded , if not added completely , over the centuries . In South Indian manuscripts , some later interpolations elaborate Tara 's lament , in which Tara asks Rama to kill her and lead her to Vali . Rama consoles Tara , saying that she should accept the preordained destiny . Rama guarantees her that her rights and those of Angada will be protected and that she will enjoy " continued comfort " . He tells her that a wife of a hero should not hold personal sorrow .

In the Adhyatma Ramayana , while Tara wails over the death of Vali , Rama preaches to her , saying that the body is ephemeral , while only the soul is eternal ; he tells her she should not grieve over the decay of Vali 's body . Tara questions him asking " if the body is destructible , why does one feel pleasure and pain " . Rama informs her that due to ahamkara (egoism) the mind is chained in bondage to desires . He declares that Tara will remain untouched by karma and be emancipated from the bondage of life . Having heard his sermon , and because she had been devoted to him in a previous birth , Tara thus becomes free of egoism and undergoes self @-@ realization . This discourse of Rama also appears in Tulsidas 's Ramacharitamanasa , but it is curtailed to just two verses and is possibly borrowed from the former text . Rama says that the body is perishable , but the soul is immortal and listening to this , the enlightened Tara bows to Rama and gains the boon of supreme devotion .

A Ramayana version portrays her as trying to stabilize the kingdom after Vali 's death in her arms . She declares that " With his last breath , King Vali begs you , his faithful subjects , to follow his brother [Sugriva] as your rightful king . " Angada cremates Vali , aided in the funeral rites by Tara and Sugriva .

= = Marriage to Sugriva = =

After Vali 's death , Sugriva acquires Vali 's kingdom as well as Tara . The Ramayana does not record any formal marriage or any ritual purification ? like the trial by fire Sita had to undergo when she is reacquired by Rama from Ravana ? that Tara must undertake to marry Sugriva or return to Vali following his return from " the dead " . The lack of the description of formal marriage suggests , according to some critics , that Tara 's relationship to Sugriva is neither widow re @-@ marriage nor

polyandry , but simply appropriation by Sugriva . In the references of the coronation of Sugriva as king , Angada is also described as the heir @-@ apparent crown prince , while Tara is mentioned as Sugriva 's wife . The Adhyatma Ramayana declares that Sugriva acquires Tara .

While Vali 's acquisition of Ruma ? the elder brother taking his younger sister @-@ in @-@ law as wife ? is universally condemned ; however as in Tara 's case , the elder brother 's widow marrying her younger brother @-@ in @-@ law seems to be a social norm . Ramashraya Sharma considers that Rama 's silence on the marriage of Tara and Sugriva does not signal non @-@ acceptance of the act , but rather that he is not concerned with the issue of the sexual relations of the " loose " characterized vanaras , in which Tara and Ruma exchange hands between the brothers . The Ramayana mentions that Sugriva indulges in sexual pleasures of women , including Ruma and Tara , who " he coveted " . In the Ramayana however , Angada criticizes Sugriva for his lustful marriage to his elder sister @-@ in @-@ law Tara , who is like a mother to him . Though a political marriage , Tara serves Sugriva loyally .

The commentaries of the Ramayana suggest that it would be right for Sugriva to marry the widowed Tara . The Amritakataka of Kataka Madhava Yogindra says that this was right as they were animals . The Tilaka by Nahesh Bhatt (Ramavarma) justifies Sugriva 's marriage to Tara since Sugriva was her dead husband 's brother . It further states that Tara should remarry , as she did not belong to the first three castes and was young . Tara 's action of taking Sugriva as her husband after Vali 's death is seen as her attempt to secure the futures of Angada and the kingdom .

In some rare instances like in Ramavataram , Tara does not remarry . Sugriva treats her as a mother figure and salutes her .

= = Tara pacifies Lakshmana = =

The rainy season ensues and ends , and Rama in despair fears that Sugriva has forgotten his promise to help him trace and recover Sita . Rama sends Lakshmana to Kishkindha to remind the complacent monarch of his promise to help . Irritated that the city is barricaded , Lakshmana kicks down the city gate and threatens to destroy Sugriva and the monkey kingdom with his divine power . Lakshmana is unable to tolerate Sugriva breaking his vow to Rama , enjoying material and sensual pleasures , while Rama suffers alone .

When the agitated Lakshmana ? reaching the inner chambers of Sugriva and his harem ? reproaches Sugriva for being ungrateful to Rama and forgetting his promise , the critical edition of the Ramayana states that Tara voluntarily intervenes to calm the wrath of Lakshmana . In some Ramayana adaptations and North @-@ western Indian manuscripts of Ramayana , it is Tara , not Ruma in whom Sugriva is engrossed when Lakshmana arrives . The South Indian manuscripts portray the drunk Sugriva , who is engrossed in lustful revel , as being ignorant of Lakshmana 's anger and sending Tara to pacify him , in some versions , even though she is drunk . Though intoxicated with " half @-@ closed eyes and unsteady gait " , Tara manages to disarm Lakshmana . The intoxication of Tara is also described in the original Ramayana , but in a different context . Tara is described as having made it a habit to visit Sugriva always in a tipsy state , before indulging in the " new pleasures of love " .

The Ramayana narrates : Tara says that Sugriva is mindful that through Rama , Sugriva has gained the kingship , Ruma , and herself . She defends Sugriva saying that even the great sage Vishwamitra was tempted by pleasure , Sugriva ? a mere forest dwelling monkey ? is fatigued by his past hardships and is relaxing , but not partaking in carnal pleasures . Tara informs Sugriva that Vali told her that Ravana is a mighty king with several rakshasas in his service . She reminds Lakshmana that without an ally like Sugriva , Rama cannot defeat such a powerful foe . Tara informs him that Sugriva has summoned all monkey commanders and troops to the capital . The Adhyatma Ramayana also presents a similar description , where Tara , Angada , and Hanuman are sent by Sugriva to calm Lakshmana . In a condensed one @-@ verse description , the Ramacharitamanasa says that Tara and Hanuman were dispatched by Sugriva and were successful in appeasing Lakshmana by singing Rama 's praises . In the Ramavataram , though not Sugriva 's consort , Tara pacifies Lakshmana . The usual epithet of Tara , lustrous as the moon , in the

Ramavataram signifies her white clothes , the sign of a widow . Lakshmana is reminded of his own widowed mother seeing Tara .

Pacified by Tara and praised further by Sugriva , Lakshmana begs for Sugriva 's pardon for abusing him . It is only through the diplomatic intervention of Tara that the crisis is averted .

= = Commentary = =

Ahalya Draupadi Kunti Tara Mandodari tatha

panchakanya smare nityam mahapataka nashanam

Remembering ever the virgins five -Ahalya , Draupadi , Kunti , Tara and Mandodari

Destroys the greatest of sins .

Orthodox Hindus remember the Panchakanya : the five virgins or maidens , in this daily morning prayer ; though none of them is considered an ideal woman , who could be emulated . Tara , with Ahalya and Mandodari , belong to the Ramayana , while the rest are from the Mahabharata .

V. R. Devika , author of Tara : Unsung heroine describes her as a woman " treated like an equal and her opinion mattered as if she were one of the lieutenants . " The Ramayana presents Tara as a woman , intensely loved and respected by Vali , her husband . Her regard is so great that her counsel to Vali sometimes have a commanding tone . Pradip Bhattacharya , author of the book Panchkanya : Women of Substance describes Tara as " a woman of unusual intelligence , foresight and confidence . " Tara 's devotion to her husband is also praised .