

Valmiki's real name was Ratnakara. He was the son of Prachetasa, a sage. Before this Valmiki was a robber by profession. Later with the teachings of Maharshi Narada he became a Rishi.

What is Valmiki - Valmika in Devanagari means “ant- hill”

Once when he was a very young boy, he had gone to the forest playing and was lost in the forest. His parents searched for him but could not trace him. They thought that the boy has been eaten by some wild animals. An hunter and his wife took the child and brought up the child as if their child. He was taught of the hunting and he learnt it fully. Later, the boy grew young and he was married to a girl from another hunter family. He got children also. When Ratnakara's family grew with the addition of children, he felt it uneasy to maintain his family with the little income. So, he took to a new profession of Robbery and went on attacking the people for money.

One day Maharshi Narada who was singing in praise of Srihari with Mahati named Veena, was passing nearby. Ratnakara, the hunter saw him, attacked him, shouted and demanded whatever he has, lest he shall brake his head. Narada was not frightened and told him that he has only the Veena, which he offered to give. Ratnakara saw the smiling, innocent face of Narada who was never frightened and was astonished at this. On seeing Narada's face, Ratnakara's cruel mind also melted with kindness. Narada Maharshi sat beneath a tree and was singing Harinama sankeertana.

Narada Maharshi told Ratnakara that Robbering and killing of animals is sinful job and asked him to give up that profession. Narada Maharshi told him to ask his parents, wife and children as to what profession – Robbery is a sin or not? Ratnakara thought Narada Maharshi is trying to escape from him by sending him to his parents and tied Narada with a rope to a nearby tree and went to his house.

He asked his father “I have been feeding you all by robbery and hunting. Is it a sinful job?”. His father told him that they are not happy with his profession and that they are ashamed of his robbery”. Then he went to his mother, who also gave the same reply. His wife and children also gave the same reply. Then he realized that whatever he was doing all these years was a sin and came running to Narada Maharshi and untied him from the tree and apologized for his misdeeds and asked the Narada Maharshi as to the remedy for the atonement of all the sins committed. Naradaru taught him the “RAMA RAMA Mantra” and asked him to sit beneath a tree and chant the mantra until his return. Narada departed from Ratnakara.

Ratnakara was chanting and chanting Rama mantra continuously amidst rain, sun heat, cold, hot, everything closing his eyes. He forgot himself. It went for years. An ant-hill grew all over his body like a mountain and Rathnakara was not to be seen by anybody. After several years, Narada Maharshi came near the

Valmeeka(the ant-hill) cleared the ant-hill and blessed Ratnakara to be a maharshi. Ratnakara came out of the Valmeeka . That is why he is called as “Valmiki”.

Who told Valmiki the story of Sri Ramachandra?

One day Narada Maharshi met Valmiki and told him the entire story of Sri Ramachandra – Dasharatha’s putrakamesti yaga, Ramachandra’s birth, his education, his journey with Vishwamitra and his killing of Tataki, Subahu, his step-mother Kaikeyee’s order to go to forest, killing of Rakshaas there, missing of Seeta Devi, meeting of Hanumantha-Sugreeva, his journey to Lanka in search of Seeta Devi, killing of Ravana-Kumbakarna, and finally getting back to Ayodhya, ruling of the Kingdom, etc.

What made him to write the “Ramayana” ?

Once Valmiki on his way to Ganga Snaana, came across a stream “tamasa”, seeing the stream was astonished and decided to have his bath in the stream.

When he was looking for a suitable place to step into the stream, he heard sweet chirping of birds, he saw two flying birds together. He was pleased to see the happy bird couple. Suddenly the male *bird fell from the sky after being hit by an arrow and was wounded. The spouse bird was screaming in agony. Then he realized that the bird was hitten by a hunter. Valmiki's heart was felt with pity. Suddenly came out from his lips, the following shloka,*

*maa nishada pratistham tvamagamahsāsvatl: samaa:
yat kraunchamithunaadekam avadhl: kaamamohitam*

This is the first shloka of Ramayana. It is regarded as the first shloka among all the puraanaas. He is regarded as the first Kavi or poet, i.e., “Aadi Kavi”. Ramayana is also titled as the first Kavya.

Meanwhile Brahmadeva, came and told him to write Ramayana with whatever story he has listen from Narada

Maharshi. He also blessed him to see whatever has happened in the past and whatever he writes will be true.

Valmiki brought up the children of Sri Ramachandra – Lava and Kusha. Why?

Once after Sri Ramachandra killed Ravana-Kumbakarna and brought back Seeta Devi, was ruling Ayodhya peacefully. But he heard a citizen of Ayodhya, telling that “Ramachandra had brought back Seetadevi, who was imprisoned by Ravana. Sri Ramachandra was wrong in bringing back her”. On hearing this Ramachandra told his brother Lakshmana to take Seetadevi and leave her near a sage’s ashram.

Before this, once when Seetadevi was preagnant. Ramachandra asked Seetha –“ You are carrying a child. Any wish you want to fulfil from me?”. Seetha Devi told “ I don’t have any wish. But when we were living in forest, we used to go the Ashrama of Rishis but I could not give

anything to Rishis. Now, I would like to spend some time with Rishi's wives”. Raama had agreed.

Considering these facts Sri Ramachandra had asked Lakshmana to leave Seeta Devi near the Valmiki Ashrama. Seetha Devi gave birth to Lava-Kusha, the twins. As such Seetha Devi was in the Ashrama of Valmiki and Lava-Kusha were brought up there. Valmiki Maharshi himself taught the children all the Veda Paataa, and adhyayana of Weapons. He also did the Upanayanam of the children. He also taught the entire Ramayana to the children – Lava & Kusha. They were singing all the time and once they sang the Ramayana in front of Sri Ramachandra when Rama came to know that they are his own sons, who were staying with Valmiki.

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