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## Primordial poet Maharishi Valmiki

Maharishi Valmiki, honored with the distinction of becoming the world's first poet through his narration of Ram's tale, was initially named Ratnakar in his youth. Being the youngest and much indulged, he fell into bad company and eventually became a bandit. Interestingly, those involved in cleaning tasks in our nation regard themselves as descendants of Maharishi Valmiki.

In the Uttarkanda section of the Ramayana penned by Maharishi Valmiki, he reveals that he was the tenth child of Pracheta. Ratnakar, the youngest of Pracheta's ten sons, eventually gained renown as Maharishi Valmiki.



In the Ramayana, Maharishi Valmiki has extensively described various subjects such as habitat, crafts, geography, governance, politics, diplomacy, family sentiments, war strategy, battlefield tactics, Ayurveda, and more. In his epic, Maharishi Valmiki presents his poetic hero, Ram, as the ultimate embodiment of truth, dedicated entirely to the highest truth, presented as the truthful son of King Dasharath. It's noteworthy that in the canto where Maharishi Valmiki describes the promising rise of his hero, he also introduces the sage Vishwamitra. This illustrates that Ram's birth wasn't just for the entertainment of his parents or the citizens of Ayodhya. Instead, it was for uplifting the vast community, alleviating their suffering, and serving humanity.

In the Ramayana penned by Maharishi Valmiki, Ram's various life stages have significantly contributed to the enhancement of human values. During his exile, Ram's pursuit of life's objectives wasn't limited to men, women, saints, gods, and demons but also to animals and birds. The name of Jatayu can be mentioned in this context. If enduring pain can lead to the welfare of the people, then tolerance becomes a form of penance. Valmiki has conveyed this very message to humanity through his work, the Ramayana.

In Valmiki's portrayal, Guha is not just a mere character; he feels like a mirror to Rama's soul. Even though Guha hails from the Nishad clan, he rose to become the respected leader of Shringaverpur, home to many sailors and horsemen. These very people served as protective barriers for Ayodhya. When Rama entered his kingdom, Guha didn't just welcome him; he embraced him with all the warmth and love of an old friend. The depth of his hospitality was so profound that he was even willing to give up his kingdom for Rama. In return, Rama hugged him, deeply touched by Guha's genuine warmth and reception.

A significant feature of the character depiction by Maharishi Valmiki is that humanity's esteem reaches its pinnacle only when human values are under threat. This may appear counterintuitive at first glance. However, the foundational essence of the entire life-world's existence and grandeur is based on this principle. This eternal truth continually empowers the ongoing struggles of living beings and fuels their desire to live (jijivisha). The Ramayana is primarily a family epic. The core essence of this epic revolves around the family, which forms the foundation for social harmony, human dignity, and the profound sentiment of brotherhood. Maharishi Valmiki emphasizes this point through almost all the characters in his timeless creation.

### **References:**

1. 'Valmiki ke Ethihāsik Ram' by Vishwanath Limaye
2. 'Bharatiya Sahitya Ke Nirmata Valmiki' by Ilapavuluri Panduranga Rao