

Our Path Finder: GURU VALMIK JI

The life and times of Guru Valmik ji are shrouded in history. Ancient Indian history, lacking authentic recorded material and frequently archaeological arti-facts, present us with a problem when analysing the period of Aryan and Dravicham struggle. History if one can call it history, was 'recorded' by this Victor Aryans who naturally depreciated the Nagas and Dravidians. I say 'recorded' because most of the Hindu texts were first memorised and later after hundreds of years were written down with much distortion, mythical symbolism and sometimes down right lies! There is much chaff and little wheat in the Hindu texts but never the less it is still possible to piece together the life and mission of Guru Valmik from fragmentary evidence of the ancient texts and modern archaeology.

When Guru Valmik was born? It is a difficult question to answer but a clue is provided by two things for which the first recorded dalit hero Guru Valmik is famous for - the yog Vashishat and the Ramayana. The Ramayana and yog Vashishat in their present forms have had been completely distorted. We know for a fact that parts of Ramayana were later deleted, distorted and added to by the crafty Brahmin priests and writers.

Here I quote Valmik who himself praised Ravana on several occasions - 'Ravana was a great and good man. He was magnanimous and handsome. But he (Ravana) chastised Brahmins whenever he saw them performing Yagarns and drinking Soma Juice.' (Ravan and his Lanka (Hindi) by Chander Parsad Yagiasu)

But in Hindu Ramayana's Ravana is described as a notorious demon king, while Valmik mentioned Ravana as a great learned man a great saint, a master of of scriptures, I quote Ralph T.H. Griffith, translator of the important work of Valmiki Ramayana in English. Griffith has written in introduction of Ramayana of Valmik, 'There is every reason to believe that the seventh Book (Uttara Kanda) is a later addition.

Hence the original Ramayana of Valmik ji is some what older and altogether different from Hindu texts. Ramayana is essentially the story of the so called Aryan expansion into south India. This expansion was facilitated by the use of iron tools and weapons and his use of iron in North and Central India was introduced round about 1000 BC and 250

years. Many people may disagree with the date of Ramayana but I have archaeological evidence.

I feel that in our community there is a tendency, from self respect viewpoint; to ascribe as older date as possible for Gurus but this thinking can only discourage the younger generation from learning about their culture and history and hence it must be avoided. So we can safely say that Guru Valmik was born around 3000 years ago an ancient date by any standard!

What kind of society was Valmik born into? This question is somewhat easier to answer. Around about 1500 Bc the Nomadic barbarian Arayns invaded N.W.India and over ran an already ancient, by decaying, civilisation later known as the Indus Valley civilisation was renowned for many features it gave to the Indian Society e.g. architecture, drainage system, waterlocks trade, system of standard weights and measures, grannaries, written script, astronomy (the Nak-Shatrya system) medicine Lokayata philosophy etc, etc., The first 10 chapters (mandalas) of the Rigveda are filled with descriptions of battle between the Aryans and the Indus Valley people as is amply testified by the Vedic Seers.

The society that emerged from these battles was a fusion of the two cultures although the pure Arayan way of life and the AUTVOCHOTHONOUS Indians way of life survived side by side for a long term. This is testified by the fact that the modern Hinduism retains many aspects of the Haraapa Culture, Arayan arrogance and a large tribal population on its periphery. It was within this tribal population that Guru Valmik was born.

The very name Valmik leads itself to such interpretation. Bal means a leader. The generic name given to incedently is also a totemic sign (which survivors is Hindu mythology and worship). Tradition tells us that Valmik was born in the Naga nation. The Nagas were the UN ARAYAN Dravids, according to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The name Valmik is clearly patronymic according to Professor Vogel, who incidentally, in his book 'Indian Serpent LORE' has done the most indepth study of the Naga history and tradition. So it is possible that the name Valmik itself is a title rather than a proper name as it is mentioned in very many scriptures that Valmik's name was Ratnakar.

॥रो०वा०॥
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॥श्रीमहागणपतये नमः॥ ॥श्रीशमचंद्राय नमः॥ ॥अविरलमदजलनिवहं भ्रमरकुल
नेकसेवितकयोलं अभिमितफलदातारं कामेशं गणपतिं वंदे॥१॥ याकुंदे दुतुखारहारधवला
या श्वेतययासनायावीणावरदंडमंजितकरायाशुभ्रवस्त्रावृतायात्रया सुतशंकरप्रभृतिभि
देवी सदावंदिताः स्तानः पातु सरस्वती भगवती निःशेषजात्यापहा॥२॥ विरमतिमहाकव्येनाभियथे
कानिकेतनस्त्रिभुवनपुनः शिष्योयस्यप्रतीक्षणमात्मभूः किमधिकरणकीटककस्यश्वस्थितिरित्य
साबुदरमविशद्वं नस्यैजगन्निधये नमः॥३॥ जयतिरघुवंशतिलकः॥ कीर्त्याद्दयनंदनोरामः
दशवदननिघनकारी दशरथिः पुंड्रकोशः॥ आशानायरामजरापरा मचंद्रायवेधसो रघुनाथायनाथ
यसीतायापतये नमः॥४॥ कर्जंतरामरामेति मधुरं मधुराहंशः शरुह्यकविताशाखा वंदेवास्त्रिकि
कोकिलं॥७॥ जयतिरघुवंशतिलकः प्रथमकविर्द्विजवरः सवास्त्रिकिः॥ मधुललितपदनिबद्धः
कृतमिह रामायण्येता॥८॥ यः पिवंस्सतं रामावदितामृतसागरं अरुचसंभुनिवंदोः प्राचेतसमक
मर्थः॥९॥ गोः शरीरुतवारं सिमशकी कृतशरुसांशामायणमहाबाला रलं वंदे निलात्मना॥१०॥
अंजनीनंदनवीरं जानकीशोकनाशना कपीसमीरुहंतारी वंदे लं काभयंकरं॥११॥ उद्धंघ्यसिंघोः सक्ति
रं सवीर्यः शोकवर्जितनकात्मनायाः॥ आशयते नैवदशतिलं कानामितं प्रांजलियं जनेयं॥१२॥

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Guru Valmiki's father was apparently named Varnu Parcheta; not the old Vedic God Varun but Varnu Parcheta of the Nagas, who it is said for reasons of inter tribal unity had four wives, namely Manlocha, Gauri, Urvashi, and Chareshni. These four wives of Varnu Parcheta produced ten sons as follows: Bhrgu Muni, Nurid Muni and Guru Valmiki from Chareshni; August Muni, Rishi Vashisht and Sukhen Vaid from Urvashi; Hastamal and Pushkar from Manlocha; Bal and Sura from Gauri.

Above information is gleaned from Bhagwad Puran (Sakandh 6, chapter 18) and Uttra Kand (Sarg 19).

THE RAMAYAN

INVOCATION

Praise to Valmiki bird of charming song,
Who mounts on Poesy's sublimest spray,
And sweetly sings with accent clear and strong
Rama, aye Rama, in his deathless lay.
Where breathes the man can listen to the strain
That flows in music from Valmiki's tongue,
Nor feel his feet the path of bliss attain
When Rama's glory by the saint is sung!
The stream Ramayan leaves its sacred fount
The whole wide world from sin and stain to free.
The Prince of Hermits is the parent mount,
The lordly Rama is the darling sea
Glory to him whose fame is ever bright

Glory to him, Prachetas holy son
Whose pure lips quaff with ever new delight
The nectar-sea of deeds by Rama done.
Hail, arch-ascetic, pious, good and kind!
Hail, Saint Valmiki, lord of every lore!
Hail, holy Hermit, calm and pure of mind!
Hail, First of Bards, Valmiki, hail once more!

No doubt all the brothers of Guru Valmiki were great. Dravidian Seers and Naga heroes whose names survive because of their great deeds and services not in Puranas only but also in the work of Kalidas and in the Uetra Kand of Ramayana itself. The reason for this is simple. In those days geneology was very important and in a tribal society the person of one's own nation or tribe would be considered as one's brother. According to Professor Vogal's research Varnu Naga was king of the Nagas and a regent of Western quarter. Interestingly he is also the God of SEA; later on. I am of the opinion that the name Varnu Parcheta and his above mentioned characteristics make Guru Valmiki the inheritor of the Haraapa tradition. The Aryans have no need for a Sea God. The Haraapa or the Indus Valley people were dependant on sea trade and had

Naga cult as well as Shiva and Mother Goddess Cult.

Valmik was a fighter against oppression. He was a great Scholar, The first Indian to codify music and much more.

Ramayana portrays the story of the first aggressive Arayan expansion into Central and South India. Rama is not a pure Arayan as we know from his dark colour but of mixed parentage. There are other reasons for believing that there was a fusion of two cultures in Rama's own family. Sita, his wife is born out of a furrow when King Janak ploughed the land in order to stop draught! This alone links her to earth mother goddess which incidently swallows Sita at the end of the story. This points to a matrilineal society, a society in which the man has right to a property by the virtue of him marrying the woman to whom the property belongs; the property itself being transmitted through the female line. A large part of India was matriarchal in character at one time. The present Khasi tribe is still martrilineal. The reason for the Kaikeyi's insistence that her own son Bharata should inherit the Kingdom after Dasratha is perfectly in line with the matrilineal tradition! Dasratha had made promise to her, on their marriage, that her son would inherit the kingdom. The fact that Bharata was brought up in his maternal grandparents home also points to Kaikeyi's matrilineal background. Hence the so called Arayan expansion into Central and South India was not an expansion of Arayan race but the spread of a new mode of living. This mode was partiarchal, monarchical, more class ridden and exploitative. The copper age autochothonous population with their matrilineal tradition were not so backward but the Arayan culture was more aggressive and assisted by iron, it spread, motivated as it was for more land and people to rule. Here archaeology and ethnology agree well with tradition.

According to Valmik, Rama is not a re-incarnation of the god Vishnu. This idea was later introduced in the Ramayana. Rama is an ordinary mortal who lies, cheats, has no scruples, double crosses and uses people where convenient for his own ends. Anyone who thinks that Rama was an ideal man should read the 'The Ramayana (A True Reading)' by Periyar E.V. Ramasami who has laid bare the underlying contradiction running in the whole length of Ramayana. Valmik in the true fashion of an epic poet was accurately describing the changes that were taking place in his time, albeit in a slightly secretive form so that these could be preserved for the future generations. He would not be able to save his epic

poem from the Brahaminical contamination. The Brahamins deleted portions of Ramayana, added to it and distorted parts of it to suit their own slave/feudal ideology. No wonder Hanuman is considered by the Hindus to be a shining example of loyal and faithful servant. The tribesmen of Western Orissa to this day consider him a traitor! And so he was to Bali, his rightful king.

But readers may ask what connection have tribesmen of western orissa with Ramayana? First of all Lanka of Ramayana is not the Sri Lanka or Cylon of the present day. Cylon used to be known as Singhla. Markande Puran, Kathasaut Sagar, Mahabharta, Badmavada Kavya all refer to Lanka and Singhla separately. The astronomer Varahmihira refers to Singhla and Lanka as two different places. In early literature Ravana's country was refered to as Tamraparni or Singhla. In Bal Ramayana itself on the occasion of Sita's marriage the King of Lanka and the King of Singhla were present. Anyway Cylon or Sri Lanka has no folk memory of Ravana or Rama! So where was the Ravana's capital?

It may have been at Sonepur in Western Orrisa. Recently stone inscription dating back to 1703 A.D. found in Bastar revealed that the Dandakaranya forest mentioned in the Ramayana was near the kingdom of Raja Bhanjdeo and that the territory of Lankeshwara - Ravana, by another name - was close to Dandakaranya. Also Rama's sojourn began in Chitrakut and all through the routes from Chitrakut to Bastar Rama's folk tales are very popular among the tribals. A copper plate found at Sonepur refers to Somshwar Deva, a prince calling himself the lord of Pashchim Lanka (Western Lanka). According to Valmik himself Lanka was close to Mahendra Giri Hill which is in the Ganjan district of Orissa. The Ramayana mentions sal tree which flourishes in Orissa but one does not find any such tree in Cylon. One further point. In the Sonepur area of Bihar the tribal tradition has contempt for Hanuman. Every year his effigy is burnt, crushed, and finally thrown into the river as a mark of disrespect. While Cylon has no folk memory of Rama or Ravana the Binjhal tribe in Sambhalpur have several such tales about Lanka. Women of Orang tribe sing folk songs about Ravana. The Gonds, both in Orissa and in Madhaya Pradesh claim that they are descendants of Ravana! What is more last year archaeologists at Sonepur excavated a fort running nearly two kilometres along the bank of the river Tel Among the relics they discovered were two massive pillars each 27 feet high one containing the skeleton of a house and another of a baby. A quantity of aims were also unearthed at

this place. The provisional date of this place is 600-700 B.C.

So it appears that Ravana far from being a demon was probably a ruler of the autochthones. Valmik himself extoles the virtues of Ravana. According to the Ramayana, Ravana was a brave fighter, chivalrous, sincere and well learned. We know how the Arayan seers labelled the Draavidians as monsters and demons. If we accept Sita at her face name i.e. furrowed land then the fight was not for a human female but for land; not any land but cleared and fertile land.

A short article such as this can not possibly do justice to Ramayana and its analysis but needless to say that while analysing its contents it is well worth remembering history, archaeology and past and present sociology of the places in question. It is also worth remembering that Valmik was not writing for people of 3000 years in the future but for the near future generations. The Brahminical distortions have also contributed a great deal about the confusion. Only science can lighten our path and guide us and we must remember this when discussing even Valmik!

So what is the importance of Valmik to the twentieth century Dalits? People who forget their past are fated to repeat their past mistakes. The ruling intellegensia in the form of Brahamins tried their level best to destroy our literary and historical past so that we may not take pride in the history of our struggles. The caste system was thrust upon us as divinely originated. Did not Krishna another alleged incarnation of Vishnu declare in Bhagvad Gita that he had created the caste system? Valmik challenged the monarchichal class/caste system by stopping Rama's Ashavmedh Yajna Horse. Later Brahmin writers would try to hide the facts that Rama was killed by Valmik. Most prominent scholars agree that last Kand of Ramayana appears to be a forgery which has neither the literary merit nor the style of the bulk of the rest of Ramayana. The Brahamins tried to vilify Valmik by calling him a petty bandit who achieved salvation by inadvertently reciting the name of Rama! What cheek?

People who have no sense of the history cannot create their own future. Valmik is a part of our own history. We need to learn about our past, about Valmik in order to check our future course. Valmik stood at the beginning of a class/caste society. We stand near its end, but our struggle is the same. This struggle links us to Shambuk Rishi, Eklavya, Baba Jivan Singh, Shadeed Udham Singh alias Ram Mohammed Singh. The torch was lighted by Valmik. Let us carry it forward.

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