



Evolution of Raavan: A Progression Towards Supremacy in Amish Tripathi's *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*

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Abstract:

Myth is used as a framing device which chronicles the events in society and thereby functioning as an alternate form of history. As narratives, it includes supernatural characters. But when decoded, it forms the foundation of a society. Amish Tripathi is one of the writers who is inspired by the Indian mythology and reciprocates in his books sided by the contemporary issues. His main concept is to humanize the Gods in mortal world, who are respected for their spirited service for the society. Thereby, he lays the possibility of any human beings to attain their high status, if they start working on it. Ram Chandra series stresses on the philosophical aspect that a person should realise their duties in the world and lead a life in the path of Dharma.

Key Words: Myth, Raavan

The Ram Chandra series by Amish Tripathi is a prequel to his debut book Shiva Trilogy. It describes the life of Ram who has constructed a near perfect society called Meluha. This series actually gives the reason, as to why Ram has taken the decision to form a new society, when he is already the emperor and an overlord of a great kingdom. Ram Chandra Series not only highlights the life of Ram but also brings into light the other main characters of Ramayana. This series has been narrated in a multi-linear technique where the readers chose to see the life of each character using different lenses in their own frame, celebrating their heroism and experiencing their struggle. Tripathi's *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta* is the third book in the series followed by *Sita – Warrior of Mithila*. It narrates the life of Raavan the main antagonist in Ramayana. Raavan is portrayed as the king of Lanka. Sri Lanka is situated on the southern side of India sharing its main borders. He is described as a demon king who is the descendant of the raakshasa clan with ten heads. He usurped the throne from his half-brother Kubaer. He acquired various powers through penance making him invincible. In spite of his demonic characteristics, Raavan is also an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. He is a great scholar excelling in all vedas. Being a Brahmin, he masters the skills of Kshatriya. Raavan authored many books on astrology and siddha medicine. He received the knowledge of political science from his guru Shukracharya. He loves to play the musical instrument veena. He has arranged his own musical composition. Siva Thandavam is one such musical piece composed by him for Lord Shiva.

Raavan is a man of contrasting characteristics with great knowledge and skills on one hand and his cruel ways on the other. As he rises to power, Raavan uses his brutal ways to subdue people under his control. The neighbouring kingdoms suffered extremely because of him. On the contrary, his own land Lanka enjoyed enormous wealth by every person in the society. Raavan goes to the extent of attacking Devas celestial gods. To curb his violent ways, Vishnu took up the human form. The myth of Raavan describes him as the son of great sage Visharva one of the descendants of seven great sages, whereas his mother . Kaikesi is a princess from Raakshasa clan making Raavan unusual combination of knowledge and arrogance. Unlike Kubaer, Kumbhakarna and Vibishana are his own brothers. It is because of his sister Shurpanakha he is made to kidnap Sita for revenge. The enchanting Shurpanakha fancies Ram and Lakshman to make them fall into her trap. In fit of anger Laskman cuts the nose of Shurpanakha which paves the way for Raavan to avenge the bloodshed. Raavan acquired various powers through penance making him invincible. His boons have made him indestructible even by the power of God. But he had his exceptions, Raavan does not consider that a human being would dare oppose him. Thus, Lord Vishnu takes up the human form to destroy his arrogance.

Raavan excelled using the powers of shape shifting and many more. Boasted by his dominion, he even tries to dislodge Kailash which is the abode of lord Shiva. On the contrary he cuts his head several times to please the lord and also chops his arms creating the musical instrument out of it. This makes Ravan an odd combination. Raavan and Kumbhakaran are said to be the gatekeepers in the abode of lord Vishnu. Jaya and Vijaya restricted the entry of sages and cancelled their meeting with the lord. They are cursed to be born as mortal beings enduring the hardships. Due to their desire to return quickly they choose to be enemies for three births in the upcoming ages. Raavan and Kumbhakarna are their second birth where they are slain by Ram. There are various other names for Raavan like Lankeshwar, Ravaneshwaran and Eela vendhar.

Dussehra is a festival celebrated all over India in various names which is related to the story of Ramayana. It is celebrated for the victory of Rama over Raavan. The effigies of Ravan are burned at the end of the festival signifying the procreation of goodness all over. In spite of the celebration for his death there are many other places where Raavan has been worshipped as he is the revered devotee of lord Shiva. There are many temples constructed for him honouring his devotion and powers. In Gujarat, Sachora Brahmins claim to be his descendants of Raavan. Apart from this there are many groups of people who claimed his lineage. The temple situated in Uttar Pradesh worships for the welfare of Raavan during Dussehra. They look upon him as a symbol of prosperity and as a saviour.

Raavan is seen in different versions of Ramayana in Buddhism and Jainism. He is described in the myths of Cambodia and Tibet where Buddha is believed to be the incarnation of Ram who defeats Raavan by offering him salvation. In the Jain version Raavan was killed by Lakshman in the end who is noted for his supernatural qualities with magical powers. Tripathi in his book portrays Raavan as a person cursed by his fate. He has been tested by times of extreme hatred from his dear ones. He is in the need to run away from the hatred of his father and his plan to kill his mother and deformed brother. He rebelled against the oppression and aspires to become a great person. Raavan becomes a pirate at a very young age who is resolved to achieve greatness through plundering and conquering. He is described as a man of contrast comprises of violence and profound knowledge. He rises to the position of king of Lanka from an ordinary man. Things tend to take a drastic change when he kidnaps Sita the princess of Mithila and wife of Ram. But the irony is that he is shocked by the truth behind the birth of Sita.

Raavan is the first son of Vishrava and Kaikesi. Visharva is a scientist and a spiritual person. Thus high expectations are laid upon the shoulders of Raavan to match his father's knowledge. Proving their expectations, he is highly intellectual and at the same time daunting in his appearance. Ravan seems to be matured in controlling his emotions for his young age. His scientific experiments with animals are looked upon with contempt by others in the hermitage. It seemed and obvious torture to the living animal. Raavan's expression remained inscrutable. He is not only interested in the scholarly knowledge like his father but also interested in playing the musical instrument Veena. He has also started training in martial arts which is contracted to his brahminical nature.

In spite of intelligence and talent Visharva hated Ravan for being a Naga. Nagas are persons born with deformities. People considered them as cursed because of their sins committed in their previous birth. They are hated almost all over the country. Visharva hides the secret of his son as it would diminish his

name and he too will be blamed for the reason behind his son's deformity. Thus his suppressed frustration lets out in the form of anger and hatred towards Raavan and Kaikesi. He blamed Kaikesi that his suffering is because of her sins and he is being a pure soul.

Raavan being recognised as talented by the neighbours could not accept his failures. He wants to achieve success by any means either through his power or through indirect ways. He is challenged by Dagar, another Veena player for the musical competition. Raavan knowing the seniority of Dagar secretly damages his veena, thereby wins the competition. Visharva who knows his son's stubborn nature finds out the truth. He warns Raavan in private and beats him up infuriated by his words. Kaikesi advises her husband to announce the actual winner in public, that it would improve the child's mind in accepting his failures and as a chance for correcting their mistakes. Visharva who cannot stand up to the advice of his wife abuses her in a fury. Raavan too has the same contempt as his father and does not acknowledge him as a parent. He describes Visharva as the husband of his mother and fights back without fear due to the loss of respect and love.

Raavan is happy about the arrival of his brother, while Kaikesi is afraid of another Naga child. As Visharva will not tolerate this, she does not inform him about the pregnancy during his departure. Proving her anxiety, Kaikesi gives birth to a Naga child. The news on the birth of deformed spreads quickly and people in the hermitage are angry about it. They stressed on killing the child as it would prevent them from further harm. They discussed and debated on ethics, arriving at the conclusion to annihilate the sacrilege through killing. Raavan, who is attached to his new born brother, swears to protect him by any means. He threatens the people through harming them to save his brother. He even decides to kill his uncle in the effort. At last, he escapes with Kaikesi and the new born child escorted by his uncle Mareech. "You don't know what you are doing! I am saving your mother! I am saving you!" the midwife screeched...you don't understand. He has to die. He is cursed. He is deformed. He is a Naga." (Raavan 30)

Raavan started his career as a dock worker and works heavily at the port. He has been slowly involved in smuggling. He notices the distinctive nature of Akampana's shape which travels twice the speed of a normal ship. Akampana is a failure in the smuggling business and none wishes to work with him as it will be a loss. Raavan takes over the ship and struck up at a deal for ninety percent of profit sharing between him and Akampana. He keeps the features of ships in secret and turns the business into a profitable one within two years. Raavan is efficient in business and makes profit out of it in a short time.

At the age of seventeen, Raavan becomes the wealthiest trader in Lanka. He is more comfortable and luxurious than before. He enjoys his success and attention out of it but does not show it off because of his serious nature which he maintained. He ensures that even the closest associates do not know about his weakness and it remains a secret. Thus he is called as a Trade Prince of Lanka. Raavan's hunger for success could not be satisfied. He works harder again and strives for more. Vishwamitra is a great sage who is known for his knowledge and anger. Kaikesi asks his help in providing medicines supporting her children. He agrees to give away the medicine for Raavan and Kumbhkarana for their exterior outgrowths to ease out the pain and to ensure long life. He decides to trade medicine for money and use them for his secretive scientific experiments. She ensures that medicines would reach his sons on time. After the continuous success, Raavan has direct dealings with Vishwamitra. Knowing the daunting nature of him, Raavan maintained calm posture during his presence and also it is because of the medicines from Vishwamitra that he and his brother can stay alive.

Raavan achieves success through exploitation. He triggers Kubaer to wage war against Sapt Sindhu by reducing their share in the profit. He convinces the king by stimulating the pragmatic businessman in him. To Kubaer, war leads to unnecessary expenses. He values profit to pride and at last agrees as Raavan assured the responsibility for the losses. He persuades Kubaer for royal communication to a great Kingdom like Ayodhya. Sapt Sindhu does not value Kubaer as a king. Dashrath, Emperor of Sapt Sindhu decides for war on the disrespect for his Kingdom. Raavan provokes Dashrath by not agreeing to any of his deals. He does not respect his enemies and thus calls the emperor by his name. He speaks with negligence and plays with the temper of Dashrath making him to lose the stability. The war with Kubaer ends tragically. Raavan manipulates the Lankan King for his personal vengeance. Dashrath is left with permanent disability because of the injuries in battle. The trade policies have reverse reactions throughout Sapt Sindhu. Trading which is not even an option for Ayodhyans has actually been controlling them in the name of Raavan. He exploited the country through his trade policies. The commissions are reduced to ten percentages. In

addition to that the prices of exports are reduced radically. The state of Sapt Sindhu reflects the hegemonic reign of Raavan. He not only controls trading but also strengthens military power with the enormous wealth of Lanka. The soldiers followed the command of their lord. Complete victory is their main goal and they go to the extent of achieving it. Soldiers burned the Devendrar community alive as they refused submission. When Dashrath battles against the troops of Raavan, he could witness the retreat of his own armies. The Ayodhyan soldiers are feared for the ruthlessness of their opponent. Dashrath could not believe this retreat from his soldiers who never faced failures.

Raavan controls the sea routes throughout the country. He is referred as the trade Prince of Lanka for his popularity. He multiplied his ships through the secret material from Vishwamitra. He controls rebellions through his military powers. The main reason for the success in the war against Sapt Sindhu is because of their ship the travels swiftly than normal ones. In short, Raavan controls the capitals and markets in Sapt Sindhu. The goods produced in Lanka are sold for the higher price in Ayodhya. In Lanka, wealth has flourished because of trading. Even before the rule of Raavan, trade as a main source for Lanka's economy. The rulers of Sapt Sindhu referred Kubaer as a trader and never as a ruler of an island. As the expenses for war are scarce, the wealth is used for other purposes. The amenities provided for the public are more than the necessity. Raavan who wins over Dashrath in the war does not want to subvert the powers of Kubaer directly. He planned systematically for the crown.

The corrective measures in management and foreign trade policies have improved the growth of the country. Raavan becomes wealthier than ever and his dominance over other Kingdom has also increased through key traders. His country is referred as golden Lanka for its opulence. People are provided with subsidiary houses and zero tax is implemented throughout Lanka benefiting people irrespective of their wealth. Basic necessity like medical and education are also provided for free of cost. The public places adorned with the gardens, stadiums and concert halls enhance the beauty of the city. Poverty is almost found nowhere inside the gates of Lanka. Raavan is the one who breaks the entrances in the society as a Naga. He transcends his limitations and voices for his own rights. He achieved his dreams and inspires others to follow the same path. .

Gramsci's cultural hegemony is based on ideology that controls the society in maintaining its power as a common idea. The dominance is monitored through superstructure. Ayodhya and the whole of Sapt Sindhu are dominated by warriors. The great rulers ensured their activity. It encourages their future plans in the battles. Proud nature of warriors started to dominate other classes in the society because of which they hated traders. According to them, trading does not involve much manual work and thus considered as trivial. For Gramsci, culture becomes a core element of hegemony which operates through effective leaders. Dashrath as a ruler outshined his ancestors expanding his territory. Further Gramsci argued that this dominance can be controlled by counter hegemony. The counter action helps in reviving the suppressed classes in the society. Similarly the trade policies of Raavan reacted against the contempt for traders in Sapt Sindhu. Raavan's key traders control the country thereby supporting him in the ladder of superstructure. The supremacy of Raavan goes to the extent of depleting the resources in Sapt Sindhu. Hegemonic power in a society is controlled by other hegemony. It becomes the obvious answer in maintaining stability

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