



## Decoding an unusual Philanthropic Raavan in Amish Tripathi's *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*

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### Abstract

Tripathi Amish's books, backed by tremendous research, deep in thought and with true philosophical depth, unsurprisingly stand taller in the literary world. They flow a current of liberal progressive ideology: about gender, about caste, about discrimination and so on. *Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta*, the seventh book of Amish Tripathi, the sixth book of Amish verse, and the third book of the Ram Chandra Series, has projected a different perspective of the unimaginable superhuman Raavan that chronicles the life of Raavan until the time he kidnaps Sita. With much ease, an author can humanise a God because God is known for His compassionate nature, but it is hard to refine a demonic character to be higher than what it holds. Amish has skillfully achieved the tough task of uplifting Raavan. He redefined the devilish Raavan into an acceptable philanthropist, too. There are some precious gems among us who can make a difference through the donation of money, property or service. They simply change the lifestyle of people with their philanthropic nature and peculiar characters. Clinging to these criteria, in this paper, I analyse the philanthropic nature of Tripathi Amish's Raavan, who is arguably the most complex villain in Indian literature.

Key words: compassionate nature, complex villain, demonic character, philanthropic, welfare.

### 1. Introduction

Rehashing mythology is a double-edged sword, and if done wrong, the book could feel like a mundane re-telling of an extremely well-

known story. Done right, however, we can have a chance to delve into some of the deepest and most complex characters ever put on paper. Thankfully, having fallen on the side of the latter,

Amish managed to get an entire generation in India started on good books. He has added humanity and complexity to the characters that have been considered Gods ever. Most surprisingly, he has drawn the screen-obsessed present generation who look for science and logic in everything, towards the made-belief mythological stories through his well-organised blend of intermediate situations containing the elements of both tradition and modernity.

To every child, growing up in India, the facets of the great epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha are inseparable. We have often heard the conflicting sides of Raavan – one of the most debated characters in the history of Indian mythology. There are instances where he is kind, generous, compassionate and servile; then there are situations where he is shown to be vile, arrogant, cruel, sadistic and selfish. Incorporating such nuances into a story is an arduous task. Amish Tripathi has brought out the above miraculously into his mytho-fiction *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*.

In the book of *Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta*, there are a surprising number of evidences to exhibit the unusual philanthropic nature of Raavan. Amish Tripathi describes Raavan with a perfect blend of compassion and fury, love and rage, strategy and spontaneity. Raavan is arguably the most complex villain in Indian literature yet the devoted lover side of Raavan gave this book a completely different take of Ramayan. The author has given an entirely new background and identity to the character of Raavan. He recreates his humongous personality alongside various events from his childhood till adulthood and creatively portrays the different reasons why he became such a menacing antagonist.

This paper is organised as follows: the first section gives a brief overview of the features of philanthropic people. The second section examines the areas where Raavan was philanthropic. In the third section, a critical study is presented. The discovery is outlined in

the fourth section. The précis of the paper is in the final conclusion section.

## 2. Literature Review

In her 2019 article titled, *Cultural Mooring in Amish Tripathi's Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta*, Kavitha Vishnu Sankari K has explored the ancientness and mythopoeia embedded in the book. Her work has mostly focused on cultural connections such as code of conduct, traditions, customs and religious practices, lifestyle, music, ethics of war, festivals, and languages, but Raavan's unknown personality of philanthropy hasn't been paid any attention to by the author. This paper aims to find out the unusual philanthropic Raavan in Amish Tripathi's *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*.

## 3. Research Methodology

I, the researcher, have used the method of 'close reading'. After a careful and thorough reading of the book *Raavan*, I emphasize the single and the particular over the general, affected by the close attention to individual words, the syntax, the order in which the sentences unfold different notions and structures. This method enables me to discover not only the content what has been written but also how and why it is written. The interpretations that I could infer undoubtedly kindle the insight.

## 4. Objective of the paper

Encouraging the act of philanthropy definitely facilitates to build and achieve lasting impact amongst the youth. It helps establishing a culture of giving for generations, and passes on positive attitudes towards money and helping others. The powerful form of philanthropy brings out the desirable changes of empathy for the downtrodden. The main objectives of this paper are,

- To know the unique characteristics of philanthropic people and their significance in the modern materialistic society through the book *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*.

- To discover how and how far the demonic monster Raavan is a humane Raavan.
- To stimulate the readers to be philanthropy and to make this world a better place to live in.

## 5. Discussion

In this highly ambitious world, philanthropists, with their kind heart and helping nature, keep the world calm and serene. They do make their optimum efforts for the welfare of others by means of dedicating their time, wealth and energy in all the ways possible. Still, philanthropy is a word that can be easily misinterpreted or misused. According to Arin Kerstein, an Economic Program Analyst, Millennium Challenge Corporation, the following distinctive characters make people genuine philanthropists.

1. Philanthropists are altruistic
2. They are empathetic
3. They have heightened social awareness
4. They are far-sighted
5. They are politically involved
6. They are business-minded

Sticking to the above characteristics of a philanthropist, the munificence of the bestial Raavan is critically analysed as follows.

### 5.1 An altruistic brute

Acting out of unselfish concern for the well-being of other people without any obligation of duty, loyalty or fear is altruism. The situation was unhealthy in Raavan's house. His mother had birthed a vikarma child, Kumbhakarna. The midwife was about to kill the new born child as she was instructed. "Raavan, though nine years old, realized to his horror

that the midwife was about to smash the new born Naga baby Kumbhakarna's head on the ground. On seeing this, Raavan was ready to attack anyone who dared to try and harm it, not bothering about the consequences." (R-EA 30)<sup>1</sup> The selfless concern for the welfare of others and venture to alleviate the struggles of others without seeking anything for his own personal benefit exhibit his altruism.

### 5.2 An empathetic monster

Raavan was empathetic enough toward the struggles of others. He felt the necessity to do what is in his power to combat the struggles of his subjects because he envisioned the problems and the hurt that come to him as his own. One of the very pathetic situations in the book Raavan that the terrific scene goes like this, *Samichi was an eight year old girl, who was sold by her own father to a courtesan Vasantpala, begged to rescue her from that house. Raavan had a feeling that the girl's loss of speech had more to do with the torture she had suffered at such a young age. He took pity on her and not only paid enough gold coins to free her but also enabled her to revenge her father in style.* (R-EA 30)<sup>2</sup> Saving Samichi from a desperate position and envisioning the situation from her point of view projects Raavan a real philanthropist.

### 5.3 A socially cognizant ruler

The alert and activeness of Raavan regarding his surroundings and fulfilling the need of his people was thoroughly astounding. He had transformed the small island kingdom Lanka, into the world's supreme power. Thanks to Raavan's unimaginable, futuristic thinking ability, "Lanka by then had absolute control over the trade routes and glittered with riches and had to be known as Golden- Lanka with zero taxes, heavily subsidized living, free healthcare and education, twenty-four hour water supply to houses through lead pipes, sprawling public gardens, sports stadiums, concert halls and so on. To our surprise, there were

<sup>1</sup> Tripathi, Amish. *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*. Westland Publications private Limited, Chennai, 2019, p30.

<sup>2</sup> Tripathi, Amish. *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*. Westland Publications private Limited, Chennai, 2019, p30.

*no poor people in Raavan's Lanka."*(R-EA 265)<sup>3</sup> The highly mindful ruler Raavan has provided his people really the kingdom which every citizen dreams for. His subjects were really indebted to him ever.

#### 5.4 A callous visionary

A visionary always foresees the upcoming and is ready with the full pledged requirements. Amish's Raavan possessed this trait and had an influence over his people to direct them to achieve their goal effectively. So as to make the vital societal change, a strong, well-analysed, long-term plan was always in hand.

*The meeting with the Kanyakumari Vedavati had transformed overwhelmed Raavan into a new person-full of hope and enthusiasm. He had been planning how to use his immense wealth to help India. He was contemplating the conquest of a small kingdom in the Sapt Sindhu, to be set up as a model dominion for the common people. He also wanted to build a large hospital attached to the Vaidyanath temple which would treat poor people from across Sapt Sindhu free of cost. (R-EA 179)<sup>4</sup>*

Awareness about the self wealth and the knowledge about its amazing utility to the welfare to the society is an iconic trait of a good philanthropic.

#### 5.4 A political wizard

Starting his career as a mere deck worker at the tender age of nine, as a result of Raavan's tactical move, indomitable spirit, and unmatched political strategies, slowly lifted downtrodden Raavan to the level of Great Iraiva (Lord). *"Money was pouring into Lanka at a furious pace. Raavan was then the prime minister of the*

*island kingdom and the general of the Lankan army, making him the most powerful man in the land. "* (R-EA 245)<sup>5</sup> The ability of Raavan led, inspired and guided the transformation of other individuals, groups and his country at large due to his political accountability, transparency, availability and integrity.

#### 5.5 A business-minded prudence

Raavan regardless of his poor economic background assessed his business from the customer's perspective that quickly made a name for himself as a smart lad and talented sailor who was willing to take risks and sneak out goods in the most adverse conditions. *"Before making a deal with Akampana, Raavan considered the facts before him. He cleverly assumed that with no bio-fouling, Akampana's ship could travel at nearly twice the speed of other ship, a huge competitive advantage. He had a strong faith that his numbers never went wrong. He calculated that if he could build a fleet of two hundred ships as soon as possible, and run them continuously on the main trade routes- spice, cotton, ivory metal and diamond- he would recover his investment in three years. After that, it's pure profit."* (R-EA 60)<sup>6</sup>

Like the smart philanthropists, Raavan used his intuition in decision making, to chart new paths and in being diligent in surrounding himself with only the highest quality people, programs and customers.

#### 6. Findings

Despite being a monster in nature, Amish Tripathi's Raavan possessed humane attributes in the book, *'Raavan- Enemy of Aryavarta'*. Producing an everlasting impact on himself was the main focus of Raavan. He never wanted to just dwell on the safer side. Instead, he dared to achieve greater things. He too had a warm heart to propel Dharma through his soul and had a

<sup>3</sup> Tripathi, Amish. *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*. Westland Publications private Limited, Chennai, 2019, p265.

<sup>4</sup> Tripathi, Amish. *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*. Westland Publications private Limited, Chennai, 2019, p 179.

<sup>5</sup> Tripathi, Amish. *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*. Westland Publications private Limited, Chennai, 2019, p 245.

<sup>6</sup> Tripathi, Amish. *Raavan-Enemy of Aryavarta*. Westland Publications private Limited, Chennai, 2019, p 60.

vision to do something good for the land of ours, which was suffering in poverty, chaos and disease during his reign. He rose to the level of a hero by taking care of his dear and near ones.

Like a genuine philanthropist, he didn't merely suggest the solutions but took the problems in his hands and solved them by all means. Very effective and prudent usage of money and resources available was the main concern of the unusual philanthropic Raavan. He made sure everything was in an organised manner to attain the positive, desirable changes in the world. He led a life of purpose and on no account did he encourage useless preaching, even if it was his own mother. Instead, he looked for an example.

Irrespective of the above-discussed traits and capabilities of Raavan, he couldn't be called a philanthropist because he did charity to the unworthy rulers and the wealthy traders of his kingdom. It is the downtrodden and the poor who indeed need charity but what Raavan did was considered a haughty act and showy.

## 7. Conclusion

Very rare writing, due to divergent thinking and the uncommon perspective of Amish Tripathi, makes this brutish Raavan a unique hero in his own world. Amish has recreated the character of Raavan in a peculiar way, so that he desired to be more or less equal to God, but was very cruel in nature. Raavan took care of his mother and his younger brother since he was a child. The Kingdom, which he created almost single-handedly, came to be known as Golden Lanka, glittered with riches. He had acquired a God like status in the kingdom. People had begun to worship his likeness in a few temples. Amish's monstrous Raavan undoubtedly was generous, but not a true philanthropist. An unusual Philanthropic Raavan has ventured that we perform any action which concerns others because we expect a reaction, hopefully a reaction that will make us happy.

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