

**REWRITING RAAVAN: UNMASKING THE VILLAIN IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S
LITERARY UNIVERSE**

M. Siva Ganesh

Reg. No: 19223064011003, Research Scholar, Lekshmpuram College of Arts & Science,
Neyyoor, Affiliated to M.S.University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Dr.Shirley Fernando

Research Supervisor, Lekshmpuram college of Arts & Science, Neyyoor, Affiliated to
M.S.University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

The epic *Ramayana* has been repeatedly composed over centuries, surpassing its earlier dimensions. In the *Ramayana*, Raavan is mentioned in parallel with Ram. The character Raavan is inspired in Amish's *Ram Chandra Series*, who presented Raavan in an alternative manner in contrast to the customary one. Amish's Raavan is not simply a one-dimensional villain. His strong desire for justice and his abiding love for his kingdom drive him to be a man of many paradoxes. He is a formidable opponent for Ram because he is also a brilliant corporate and a skilled warrior. This paper investigates Amish's reworking of Raavan, looking at the elements that help him change from a demonic king to a complex and lovable character. It also examines Amish's crafting of Raavan's character, drawing inspiration from various sources, including the *Mahabharata*, and other Hindu scriptures.

Keywords: Rewriting, Raavan, Ramayana, good and evil.

Amish Tripathi is an Indian author known for his exciting captivating writing style that combines past and mythical elements. His writing is characterised by a distinctive blending of narrative strategies that engage readers in the world of his characters and their epic adventures. In *Ram Chandra Series* Amish attempts to rewrite the darker side of the story of Raavan. It narrates the epic story of Ram with a new outlook. It reconceptualizes the story of *Ramayana* and gives voice to the voiceless characters.

Amish's Raavan is different from other versions of the *Ramayana*. He rewrites the character Raavan in his novel *Raavan Enemy of Aryavarta*, the third work in *Ram Chandra Series*. It parallels *Ram Scion of Ikshvaku* and *Sita Warrior of Mithila*. He writes Raavan's character with more honor and respect.

Amish claims that the feature of Raavan that causes him to react with hatred and rage intrigued him and inspired him to learn more about his past. There were a lot of complex and imperfect characters in Indian myths. One of the gifted and knowledgeable people in Indian myth is Raavan. From a postmodern perspective, the mythical character Raavan is viewed as a broad and complicated figure. Postmodernists disagree with the traditional understanding of Raavan as a one-dimensional antagonist. However, they emphasize that Raavan is a unique personality with both good and bad characteristics.

Critics claim that Raavan had a number of exceptional qualities, such as inventiveness, perseverance, and cognitive ability. Raavan, in their opinion, is more than just a heroic figure. Linda Hutcheon, postmodern writer asserts that, "Raavan is not simply a villain, but a complex and multifaceted character. He is intelligent, strong, and creative. He is also ambitious and ruthless. In the end, Raavan is defeated by his own flaws, but he is a tragic figure who deserves our understanding" (*Politics* 94).

Nowadays, Raavan is the subject of numerous books. The critics believe that Raavan is a native of North India and that his birthplace is close to Delhi. Despite being born into a Brahmin family, some Dravidian activists, particularly those who oppose upper castes and north Indians, consider Raavan to be a hero. Amish's story centres on Raavan, who is commonly described as the vital adverse guy. In the article "Complexity of the Central Character", Amish asserts, "explore the dark side with the story of Raavan. But learn from the tale of this tragic man. Don't surrender to darkness. Come to the light. Or at least, try" (Amish).

Raavan's mother, Kaikesi, arrived in Kannoj after Raavan was born, but the king rejected her. Raavan's family is recognised as the Naga family. Despite the fact that her children were Nagas, she made the courageous decision to live a life with them. Rishi Vishrava, the king, blamed Raavan and Kaikesi for Raavan's imperfections. The imperfections of Raavan as a Naga described in the following manner: "Raavan's cummerbund had come undone, revealing a small purple outgrowth from his navel—his birth deformity proved that he was a Naga. All across India, people believed that birth deformities were the consequence of a cursed soul, of bad karma carrying over from the previous birth. And such blighted people were called Nagas" (*Ram* 23).

Drawing attention to Raavan's situation, the author draws resemblance between his painful instances and the story of Karna. Karna was eliminated from the wedding selection after the Pandavas and the people in charge of it insulted him by claiming that his clan was not high. Amish recreates a moment in which Raavan's father insults Raavan.

Karna and Arjuna engaged in combat in the *Mahabharatha* scene known as "Swayamvara parva." Karna was made to feel inferior by his caste during the conflict. To defeat one another, they kept fighting firmly. This served as a sort of teaser for their epic combat. The wedding scene depicted as, "Behold the strength of my arms.--'Mark, how I have counteracted that feat,'--those were the words--intelligible to heroes alone--in which they addressed each other... Vaisampayana continued, 'Thus addressed (by Arjuna), Karna the adopted son of Radha desisted from the fight, for that mighty chariot-fighter thought that Brahma energy is ever invincible'" (Valmiki 242; 379).

Valmiki's *Ramayana* portrays Raavan as a man of selfishness. By rewriting Raavan, Amish has altered the story entirely. Vishwamithra was assured to assist Raavan and his mother. Vishwamithra has provided medical procedures to Raavan's family since he was a young boy. As a member of the Naga tribe, Raavan is considered a person who is physically challenged. Raavan's literal conception has been entirely altered by the author, who presents him as a positive-minded individual who overcame numerous obstacles in his career. There were no such plots in any story structure of the *Ramayana*.

Raavan had planned to work when he was younger. Raavan was asked to stay at Vaidyanath for free residence and refreshments by his uncle Mareech, but he turned him down. Raavan had an attraction for working in and exploring famous ports. Mareech and Raavan were hired as dock labourer, and he gradually learned to sail.

Raavan entered into an official partnership with the poor businessman Akampana. Akampana's business was "among the least profitable third-tier operations. He was notorious for delaying payments to his crew or not paying them at all. It had reached a point where men simply refused to work for him. But he did have a major asset—his own ship" (*Raavan* 55–56).

In the *Ram Chandra Series*, Raavan is classified as an expert corporate in sea. Kubaer was a clever merchant and the supreme leader of Lanka. He had a trading agreement with the kings of Sapt Sindhu. All the administrations of Sapt Sindhu allied themselves with Kubaer.

According to Amish's version, there was a peaceful and nonviolent society living in the Kalinga region. The great Kalinga battle of King Ashoka is still remembered by the citizens of Sapt Sindhu. After a bloody struggle, the monarch quit all forms of aggression and inspired kindness by keeping the people at peace. Vaishiyas comprise a significant proportion of Kalinga's population. Since the Shathriya Sapt Sindhu people rejected the Vaishiya system, Ayodhya gradually increased Kalinga's taxes. Kalinga and Chilika have no trade relations because of the high taxes.

Raavan noted the condition of Sapt Sindhu in the following manner: "The anti-Vaishya mood in the rest of the country had begun to seep through to Kalinga. Everyone wanted to ingratiate themselves with Dashrath, the powerful king of Ayodhya, who was also the emperor and overlord of the Sapt Sindhu. And it was well known that the mood in Ayodhya was anti-Vaishya." (*Raavan* 53)

Raavan read a lot of books, and his library was quite large. He never lent any of his books to anyone because they were a treasure to him. Raavan declined to give Kumbhakarna a book from his collection when he requested for one. "He was extremely possessive about his manuscripts. He didn't allow anyone to borrow them" (*Raavan* 89-90). He was a good singer and musician too, instead of giving books to Kumbhakarna, Raavan read him a poem which had been composed by him. Raavan's brother Kumbhakarna complimented him on his power and wisdom. Raavan was a clever leader, reader, writer, and warrior. The study "Inconspicuous Multi-personality of Raavan in Amish Tripathi's *Raavan - Enemy of the Aryavarta*" asserts the proud of the king Raavan and the condition of his land Lanka in the following manner:

The kingdom glittered with riches and had come to be known as golden Lanka with zero taxes, heavily subsidized living, free healthcare and education, twenty-four-hour water supply to house through lead piper, sprawling public gardens, sports stadiums, and concert walls and so on. The interesting thing is that there were no poor people such a way he ruled Lanka. People had been worshipping the mighty Raavan, who is thirty eight years old, as god and building temples for him. People are praising him greater than Vishnus and

Mahadevs for his loyalty, manner, and discipline, honest and caring of the people.
(kumar 349)

In order to depict Raavan as a passionate lover, novelist Amish presents the idea of Kanyakumari. The term "Kanyakumari" relates to the Virgin Goddess, and it was common practise of honouring young females. After a certain age, a different teenage girl would take on the position of Kanyakumari, and some young females were treated like living goddesses.

Raavan met Kanyakumari at the Vaidyanath temple. Raavan was drawn to her beauty the moment he met her. Immediately following a considerable amount of time, Raavan finally understood how much he loved the first Kanyakumari when he met another. However, he had no idea where she was from. He witnessed the voice of the Existing Goddess Kanyakumari when he was in bed with Dadimikali. Raavan saw Kanyakumari again during the fight with Krakachabahu's group, and it was as if he had seen a ghost. With the help of Kumbhakarna. Raavan later found out that Kanyakumari got married. Prithivi was her husband, and Vedavati was her real name.

Raavan started looking after Vedavati's family after learning that she was carrying a baby. Raavan's unconditional affection was known to Vedavati, who bestowed a long life upon him. Sadly, Vedavati and her husband were murdered by unknown assailants, and Raavan massacred everyone in that village out of rage.

Raavan is portrayed as a womaniser in mythology. In Valmiki's *Ramayana* Raavan's sister Shurpanaka criticizes the character of Raavan as, "[h]ighly infatuated with lustful gratifications you are incontinent and unchecked, thus you are unobservant of a calamitous jeopardy that has surfaced, though you ought to be observant of it as a king" (Rao 3.33.2). Amish portrays Raavan as honourable, compassionate, and able to show his love in a way that is appropriate, in contrast to epics. In the depiction, he is a passionate partner who is willing to go to any lengths for his beloved.

Raavan discovers, that his beloved Kanyakumari is actually the wife of another man. After that he treats her with civility and respect. He discovered at the end that Sita was the daughter of Kanyakumari. When he became aware his error, he revered Sita as a sacred goddess. Judith Butler predicts the character of Raavan as "He is a reminder that good and evil is not always easy to distinguish. He is a character who is both good and bad, and his story is a complex one that defies easy categorization" (*Gender* 126). In this way, Amish has given due importance and dignity to the character Raavan. Sunaina, mother of Sita's assertion apt for the declaration of raavan's character she said, " Don't assume that the powerful are always bad or that the powerless are always good. There is good and bad in everyone" (*Sita* 36). Raavan is a complex figure with a complicated past that is difficult to put into simple classifications.

To conclude, the author uses rewriting to explore the positive and intriguing experiences of the character Raavan, who was previously portrayed as a villain in this world. Raavan, as rewritten by Amish, deviates greatly from the character's initial characterization. Amish challenges readers to consider their preconceptions of good and evil by presenting Raavan as a comprehensive and empathetic character. Additionally, he questions the established hierarchies of power in

the society by arguing that even people deemed to be evil might have legitimate reasons and motives for their deeds.

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