

**RAVANA : A SUPER HERO***Dr. Sahana Priyadarshini, Academician, Dept of English, GFGC, Malleshwaram, Bengalooru***Abstract:**

*Indian mythology has been very intrinsically woven and can be looked at, with several perspectives and the mythical stories can be retold and have been revised into several versions by several scholars. Character portrayals of the important characters have varied in the mythical contours of the writers. In the following paper, I have looked at Ravana as a super hero and have revised his-story to tell the readers that there is another face to every coin.*

**Keywords:** *Ravana, hindu mythology, culture.*

There is a lot of uncertainty related to the demons and Gods of Hindu mythology unraveling along with the concepts of being a civilian and barbarian and also voices out the cultural changes with the eras that have always left a legacy to the readers, historians and sociologists. The culture of the Hindu mythology has always seen a change mentioned with enormous reasons intertwined with each other.

The revised story of Ravana and his character analysis was pre planned and designed by the lord Vishnu himself as mentioned in the Bhagavat Purana; though the story is very popular and has several different versions, I would like to begin with the same myth to prove Ravana; a super hero and not the demon.

The myth begins with the two gate keepers Jaya and Vijaya doing their duty stringently and sincerely; these two gate keepers are often found in front of all the Vishnu temples and they are addressed as dwarapalakas in Sanskrit. Jaya and Vijaya were great devotees of lord Vishnu and their only aim in life was to serve their lord; one afternoon, the four kumaras, Sanak, sanandana, sanatana and sanathkumara came to vishnuloka to discuss an important matter with the lord, these four kumaras were the sons of lord brahma; who were born out of his thought and meditation, all the four kumaras chose to lead a sanctum life and endeavored to know the universe better and make the universe better.

The moment the dwarpalakas notice these kumaras; they stop them from entering the Vishnu loka and address them as kumaras, due to mastery in yoga and meditation these kumaras looked very young; both of them explain to the sages that lord Vishnu is taking rest, hence they cannot meet him now and should wait till the lord awakens but the enraged kumaras curse the dwarapalakas that they should be born on bhuloka and give up their divinity. The cursed dwarapalakas are later on rescued by lord Vishnu that their punishment can be divided into two options, if they have to gain their divinity back and serve the lord; the options given are that either the dwarpalakas have to take birth on earth for seven lives as his devotee or take birth as his enemies for three lives and finally attain salvation at his abode.

The dwarpalakas chose the latter option of being born as an enemy so that they will be relieved from their curse at the earliest; as a result, in the first life they are born as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha and in their second life they are born as Ravana and Kumbhakarana and in the third as Shishupala and dantavakra. These stories often make me think that there were many concepts that were passed on to generations as divine and evil or good and bad.

Our super hero was wrongly punished and cursed for no mistake at all, as it makes least sense when the great kumaras; with great mastery on meditation and yoga could not have control on their anger and ego. The story line begins with a warning call for the commoners; not to annoy the upper-class or the

Brahmin class because they have the power to curse anybody as they are the masters and the whole world is under their control. The concept of curse was introduced to the masses to instill fear in them so that there is no revolutionary leader born out of them, who would be a rebel and come up with new theories to make their life beautiful and even more meaningful.

Rational thinkers may annoy the apologists with a simple question, if the great almighty could not rescue his devotee from the four kumaras then how does he substantiate his existence to the whole world? Or is the almighty himself all in favor of the “concept of curse”? This is where the readers have to think and analyze and then blindly believe in the myths.

The character Analysis of our superhero is very tragic because it is based on a very weak foundation; the super hero takes his birth, as the fruit of curse for doing his duty promptly. The tragic hero Jaya is none other than our super hero Ravana. He was the grandson of lord Brahma; and belonged to the Brahmin clan and was the son of the great hermit Vishrava and the daitya princess kaikesi. The close observation of his lineage gives birth to a storm of thoughts; the first question would be that, if sage Vishrava is a Brahmin and lord brahma is his grandfather then why is Ravana called an Asura? The second question that gets raised is that, if Kaikesi is a daitya princess then why did the sage marry a daitya princess? The third question that raise is; is Ravana called an asura because he is a son of daitya princess or the society was matriarchal and in few references it is mentioned that, an asura is a person with great physical strength and great creativity with immense knowledge of varied subjects, if we have to go by it then Ravana is a hero because he carries the best in him. There are a few facts that prove Ravana to be a super hero than an antagonist of Ramayana; there are several places where Ravana is worshiped along with the god till date, there are several places in India and Sri Lanka where Ravana is worshiped. In Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh there is a huge Shivalinga supposedly installed by Ravana himself. Both Shivalinga and Ravana are worshiped by the fishermen community.

There is one Ravana temple in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh while there is a Jain temple at Alwar in Rajasthan. Thousands of Kanyakubja Brahmins of the village Ravangram of Netaran, in the Vidisha District of Madhya Pradesh, perform daily puja (worship) in the Ravana temple and offer naivedyam / bhog (ritual of sacrifice) to the Gods.

If Ravana was a cruel ruler, nobody would have worshiped him till date, there are also references to his just rule in the Srilanka; it is also said that he earned the lanka's prosperity by rightfully striving for it. There are rumors that show a complete negative picture that Srilanka was forcefully taken away from Kubera, these rumors are proved wrong as Ravana tells his followers to earn their right and not forcefully grab it from others. These principles are not commonly found in demon, but Ravana was a principled man and he strived hard to make his existence meaningful.

The other example that crowns Ravana is that of being an humble son; when he realizes that his mother toils every day to offer her prayers to the great lord Shiva; he promises her to bring the atmalinga of Shiva to her; so that she could continue to perform and offer prayers to the almighty, this example makes it very clear that, Ravana was the best son as he knew what his mother wanted and achieves it with great penance but is not able to bring to his mother because of the gods and their plots against him. Now! A question that arises is; what's the surety that gods are not being judgmental about Ravana? According to me Ravana worked hard and got the fruits of his efforts, he never employed wrong means to achieve his target then aren't the gods evil minded as they are more insecure and jealous of the super hero Ravana.

The apologists have wrongly publicized the characters as hero and the villain; and the ignorant masses continued to believe it, either because of the blind beliefs or because of the ignorance, Ravana had acquired and practiced principles that brought him name, fame and prosperity. He always respected his teachers, consulted his panel of ministers before making a decision, and was a master of ten different subjects and philosophies. He was a king to people of his kingdom and his people were very happy.

He was a great warrior as well as a learned scholar. Ravana was regarded as the most brilliant; he

had thorough knowledge of 4 Vedas and 6 Upanishads. He was known as Dahanana (ten headed demon), people have misinterpreted his ten heads for all the negative traits of a personality which Ravana never carried with him. He was crowned with the name "Ravana" as he tried to take away Mount Kailas to his mother so that she could easily offer prayers. However, Lord Shiva on the other hand forced the whole mountain with his toe and crushed Ravana's forearm. He screamed in agony and came to be known as Ravana (the one who screams). Since then he became a devotee of Lord Shiva and wrote the Shiva Stotram. There are references to the fact that Ravana is the greatest devotee of all; if Ravana had to achieve this title of being a great devotee, it should be because of his principled life and not for his immoral deeds.

Ravana has throughout been a warrior because he has openly challenged his enemies and won the challenges; he has never been a part of conspiracy or a conspirator of anything in the world; such personality traits belong only to the ones who could be super heroes and not the villain or a demon.

The Scholar Ravana was a master of many sciences. He was well versed with Ayurveda. He has authored Ravana Samhita which talks about the science of Ayurveda. Ravana was also the greatest astrologer of his time, and was aware of esoteric practices similar to black magic. Once he captured all the nine planets and vehemently made all of them to be in laganbhava to make Meghanatha, his son, the greatest of all. Ravana knew 64 different kinds of arts and had a deep understanding of the Vedas. Haven't people always told that knowledge can be only conquered by the students who are polite and willing to learn; Ravana is the best example for being the most humble and polite as he is the master of ten different subjects.

Ravana was a master of *tantravidya* and created an optical illusion of thoughts while fighting his enemies. He wrote "*Ravanasamhita*" a famous Book which is an excellent compilation of his scholarly works.

Ravana was a great Ayurvedic physician and Vaidya Shiromani. He wrote valuable books: Nadi Pariksha (detailing of pulse-examination), Arka Shastra (compiling usage and dosage and cures of every herb for complex diseases), Arka Pariksha (work tinctures and extracts), Kumara Tantraya (Gynecology and Pediatric Medicine), Uddisa Chikitsa and Vatina Prakaranaya. Ravana was the founder of *SINDHURAM* (siddha) medicine. This medicine cures wounds.

A writer's thought process is always unique; as Ravana has authored a few books that give the readers a distinctive picture of the writer's assertion on equality, being a rebel, leader and a revolutionary, his works clearly indicate that he was an individual in no comparison, it would be completely judgmental to address him as the Demon.

On his deathbed Ravana taught lessons of Politics to Vibhishana and shared experiences from his own life. He guided him to have always good relations with charioteer, cook, gatekeeper and his brothers, because those are the ones, who can harm us the most. He advised Vibhishana never to underestimate the strength of his enemy, a mistake which he made. He asked Vibhishana to always believe in astrology and movement of stars which can never be wrong. He told him to trust a minister who criticizes, a mistake he made in case of his brother Vibhishana. The great Rama himself considered Ravana as a great Brahmin. He was a true warrior and he lost the war to Rama because his brother Vibhishana cheats him and not because of his weakness.

The above said qualities of the super hero were never highlighted in the popular epic Ramayana; unfortunately people only tend to believe and remember a negative incident more than that of positive qualities; everyone in the society chides Ravana for abducting Sita but has anybody questioned Ram and Lakshman for disrespecting a woman with reference to Shurabannaka; who is again represented as the most ugliest and a demoness on this earth. But Ravana makes sure that Sita gets all respect and security in the Ashokavana and offer to marry her after winning over her husband; which has always been the tradition of the kings, to take the wives of the defeated kings under their care and look after them as wives so that no other man ever disrespects them.

The politics of representation has always been determined by the author and not by the reader, the reader; most of the time tends to believe the presentation by the author because again the reader is made to believe that it is scripted by God himself. While I analyze the character of Ravana; I find him to be a super hero as he is much more principled than anybody else hence there is nothing wrong in calling him as a super hero.

**References:**

1. Mani Vettam: *Puranic Encyclopaedia, A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special references to the Epic and Puranic Literature. Delhi: Motilal Banaarasidas* P.354, ISBN0-8426-0822-2, (1975)
2. Rao, Desiraju Hanumantha: *Valmiki Ramayana Aranyakanda Sargga -18* verse; 3-18-22
3. Aiyangar Narayana: *Essay on Indo Aryan Mythology* Volume (P.413)