



THE FATAL NATURE OF POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH IN RAAVAN FROM AMISH TRIPATHI'S RAAVAN: ENEMY OF ARYAVARTA AND WAR OF LANKA

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Abstract

This paper discusses the very unexplored nature of traumatic growth that can be seen particularly in villainous characters. It pivots on the character of Raavan, the Lankatipati who is a famously written antagonist in the archives of Hindu mythology. But in the Amishverse, he is written as a villain re-portrayed from the original Ramayana. Not only can the villain be re-represented, but also the very theory of Post-Traumatic Growth can be dynamically altered by the nature of fatalism, to be a subjective concept of psychological growth, through this research on this particular character. The very idea is psychedelic in the sense that the domains of the PTGI (Post Traumatic Growth Inventory) can, in human subjective terms, bend to the anchors of Raavan's persona. The domains of PTGI to be viewed and dissected as per the character, to show this fatalistic dynamic of PTG, are Appreciation of Life, New Possibilities in Life, Personal Strength, Spiritual Change, and Relationship with Others.

Keywords: Amish Tripathi, Raavan, Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI), Post Traumatic Growth (PTG), Enemy of Aryavarta, War of Lanka.

Introduction

Amish Tripathi is a former diplomat and an Indian author, known as among the swiftest-selling authors of Indian English publishing history. He is well famous for his Shiva Trilogy and the Ram Chandra series. His books were sold for over 7 million copies. Since 2010, they also released translations of books into 20 International and Indian languages. He once served as the Minister of Culture and Education at the UK's



High Commission of India and as the Director of the Nehru Centre in London from 2019-2023. Additionally, he hosted documentaries on TV, recently on Discovery TV, in The Journey of India, with co-host Amitabh Bachchan, Legends of the Ramayana, and Ram Janmabhoomi: Return of a Splendid Sun.

Analysis

Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta is the third book of the Ram Chandra Series. It was published in 2019. It revolves around the narrative of Raavan, his life, his loss, how he became the King of Lanka, his battle against the Sapt Sindhu and his arrival into the present state of the previous two narratives. War of Lanka, is Amish Tripathi's fourth text in the Ram Chandra series. It is a piece of literature where the narratives of Ram, Raavan and Sita collide at once, after their narratives from the previous books of the series. It was published in the year 2022. To sum up from the previous texts, Ram marries Sita in the swayamvar put up by King Janak, despite the humiliation Raavan had to face for inviting him (by Janak's brother) but not welcoming him warmly. Raavan came in the hope of being accepted into the Sapt Sindhu (according to Kumbhakarna). He wages a war against Mithila from which his army along with his brother was struck by the Malayaputra's forbidden biological weapon released by Ram. In the 14-year exile for which Ram, Sita and Lakshman, had to live in the forest as punishment for the use of the weapon, Shurpanaka gets hurt for trying to capture Sita, and both Vibhishan and his sister fail in the mission given to them by Raavan. Raavan plans to get the Vishnu, Sita, under the instructions of Kumbhakarna and exchange her for the medicines he needs for him and his brother, from the Malayaputras. Raavan's soldiers capture Sita and put her in the Pushpak Vimaan. However, the identity of Sita's physical features led to the revelation that changed the entire course of the three narratives.

Even though the series is about Ram, it was Raavan who stole the spotlight when it comes to the importance of the very existence of the narrative. Everything began with Raavan. From the Battle of Karachapa, where Raavan's victory was blamed on Ram's birth (for which Ram had a hatred towards Raavan), to the blessed donation that Raavan gives to Vedavati, that led to Sukarman killing her to steal it and Vedavati's child being



left in a furrow, who later was adopted by the Queen and King of Mithila. This paper tries to reveal the very varied and entirely dynamic nature of Raavan's resurgence from his trauma regarding the death of Vedavati, his first love. But first, let us know the standard understanding of how mankind perceived post-traumatic growth.

When one talks about growth, one is left with the concept of positivity and development that leans towards the will to live and to live prosperously. But what if it can be said that there is another shade to growth? A fatalistic, negative but aggressive shade. That is what differentiates a hero from a villain. Heroes think positively, and villains think in a subjective positivity which an outsider can perceive as negative. From this, we could understand that what is that which isn't what you are truly used to, is something which from a different perspective is used to by another. Like saying the antonym of right isn't wrong, but left. Negativity to some people is subjective positivity to those who can see the world from multiple perspectives. A person who cannot comprehend or never had the situation to learn about positivity can create their own, which in turn helps them to fuel their motivation to achieve heights or become the greatest among men. For example, in Cruella, the protagonist uses her emotional and psychological aggression as a motivation to take revenge on her evil mother who pushed her adoptive mother off a cliff. There was no room for positivity, but the very aggression that drives one to do things to become successful in life. This is how a villain is motivated to excel in society. Such motivation is not recorded in PTG, as the theory is designed for positive characters. No one has ever thought that traumatic growth and motivation can exist in such natures as well.

Hence, the very nature of PTG can be altered from the perspective of Raavan in literature. Post-traumatic growth theory was postulated by Lawrence Calhoun, PhD and Richard Tedeschi, PhD in the mid-1990s. The theory elucidates that a person shows signs of growth from the recent event of their traumatic event, which ensures that they function effectively and efficiently in society. The theory was designed to show positive signs of growth; hence it applied only to positive characters. But this paper will make it possible, by making the theory suitable to the design of a villain as well through the measurement that Tedeschi and Calhoun created called the Post

Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) (Journal of Traumatic Stress, 1996). It entirely pivots on five domains: Appreciation of Life, Personal Strength, New Possibilities in Life, Relationships with Others, and Spiritual Change.

Personal Strength is something one has that assists them to handle their trauma, move on and carry on with their daily routine. In the dictionary of positive growth, it is said that trauma isn't pushed to your unconscious, but dealt with it head-on and is treated by clinical counselling. But clinical counselling never existed in Raavan's era.

Raavan did use art as catharsis, even if he denies it. He played his instruments and created a Raga called Vaashi Santaapani or the roar of the furious Goddess. He dedicated it to Vedavati, portraying either his anger towards her unjustified death or the anger she could portray against the injustice done to her. Kumbhakarna even told him that dwelling in the workaholic hours can push the negativity away.

"I am happy that work is consuming more and more of your time, Dada. Drowning oneself in work is the best way to push negative thoughts away." (Tripathi, 2019, p.203)

Raavan has been busy. He leveraged his wealth and authority over his armed forces in Lanka. He used his control over both piracy and militia to gain the dependence of Kubaer and many other traders. This shows the intelligence he possesses even at times of grief. He aspires to get his militia to get appointed as the official security force of Lanka. He wants to build an army so that one day he has the strength to wage a war against the land that did injustice to his beloved.

In the first stages of his grief, his talk of the masculine way of handling grief by suppressing it even when it festers showed his toxic nature of the journey of his traumatic growth and his talk of death to escape from pain was a clear sign that he was crushed by his trauma. Raavan grew up in a negative atmosphere. So, he sought the possible remedies that can soothe his ailing broken heart. He pushed his grief and concentrated on his goals. To become the King of Lanka. This was his personal strength.

To show traumatic growth, through appreciation of life, one needn't appreciate one's own life. He who sacrifices for the good of others shows the appreciation he has

for the lives of others. If such an attribute is expressed, then that is a sign of traumatic growth. Raavan never touched a hair on Sita because she was the long-lost daughter of Vedavati, his beloved, who was missing at Vedavati's place of death. He never knew she was found by the Royalty of Mithila. Raavan and Sita both reconciled and shared each other's narratives. Raavan revealed the truth about her mother and was able to cathartically go through his grief. After knowing the true identity of Sita, Raavan vowed to protect her and promote the existence of Ram and Sita in the Grand Narrative.

"Aaaanywaaay," said Raavan laughing, 'I have made some stuff for you as well.' Sita smiled. 'More paintings of my birth-mother?'

Raavan shook his head. 'No. Of you and your husband.' (Tripathi, 2022, p.155).

'History will remember Ram and Sita the way I painted and sculpted them.'

Sita smiled, used by now to Raavan's bombastic words and almighty ego." (Tripathi, 2022, p.155)

He showed appreciation for Ram and Sita by revealing their painting and sculpture. As a talented and gifted artist, Raavan has done them justice and portrayed them aesthetically and in a venerated manner. Not only did he show appreciation for Ram and Sita's life, but he also pleaded with Sita to leave the lives of his brother, Kumbhakarna, his uncle Mareech and his son Indrajith away from harm (despite the protests of his brother to fight alongside him, to which he had to surrender.)

"There are three good men in my army. My only request is that they be kept out of this. Kumbhakarna, my uncle Mareech, and my son, Indrajith.'

Kumbhakarna's response was instantaneous. 'No. I am staying. I am fighting.'

(Tripathi, 2022, p.57)

Relationship with others is a necessity for traumatic growth. He who is alone and introverted could die of loneliness. For a villainous character, Raavan had a healthy relationship with his brother. He once saved him from the midwife, when she tried to kill him because he was born a Naga. Raavan loves his brother so dearly that he would maim anyone who would stare at him with disgust because of his Naga features.

During his grief, Raavan did have a poor relationship with Kumbhakarna. His brother often suffered because of the way Raavan coped for the loss of Vedavati,



through drugs and female company. But Raavan healed the gap between them when his brother got struck by the Asurastra in Mithila. From then, Raavan would pay heed to his brother, especially when he advised him to kidnap Sita, revealing the existence of the Vishnu, an information Kumbhakarna got from the Vayuputras.

Raavan loved his son, Indrajith, as he was his pride and joy. The only thing he didn't regret from Mandodari. He had a relationship with Mandodari only through his love for his son. He was everything better than him and he was proud of it. He also had a very cordial relationship with his uncle Mareech, for saving both his mother and his brother from the members of his father's ashram. Raavan cared for these three members of the family so much that he pleaded with Sita to keep them safe.

Raavan had a very blessed relationship with Sita. He was the possible stepfather that Sita could have in another universe. And Sita was the possible stepdaughter Raavan could have in another lifetime. It was Sita who helped him overcome his grief. She gave him a reason to do something with his life.

Even though Raavan never talked much to Ram, he respected him. He honoured the existence of the narratives of Ram and Sita by creating a painting and a sculpture.

New possibilities often come as a charm to the future during a traumatic growth. It opens up to things that a character wished for that can later on be of support for them and honour them, their purpose and their existence. After Vedavati's death, Raavan had the future possibility of being the Lord of Lanka. He fought and aspired for it. He used his brain and skills to get what he wanted, making him an efficient villain. And he did become King. After he met Sita, he had new aspirations and possibilities for the future. He wanted to make sure that his narrative was never hidden and was told over and over by many, along with the narratives of Ram and Sita. This was one of the demands he put forth before the duel of Indra. He also hoped for the hospital in Vaidyanath to be funded and maintained by Ram as it is the place of Raavan's beloved. Judging from the noble character of Ram, the demands, including the burial of Raavan, Kumbhakarna and Indrajith, were met.

Spiritual change is a manifestation one goes through the process of traumatic growth. A person's meaning of existence and self-actualisation are the pivot concepts



in this domain. A person shows a stable and established relationship with their self, through heightened intrapsychic intelligence. This domain has three elemental branches: Religious Attitude (Emotional opinion and perspective towards one's religion, its pivot in the decision-making and one's relationship with God), Ethical Sensitivity (The sense of ethics and morality within one's belief system, the value given to it), and lastly Harmony (Establishing peace with the elements around your environment, finding calmness and acceptance).

When it comes to Religious Attitude, Raavan never showed much attention to the gods, nor did he respect the rituals, especially the grahapravesha puja conducted by his mother. Maybe it is perhaps due to the disdain he has towards his vain and selfish mother. But Raavan was an ardent devotee of the previous Mahadev, Lord Rudra. He was extremely religious when it came to Rudra. He was also respectful towards the god Ayyappa, the son of Rudra and the previous Vishnu, Mohini. He had a good religious relationship with the gods, despite his big ego and toxic masculinity.

Raavan, as he grew up, had limited Ethical sensitivity. Especially whenever he tried to dissect hares alive and burned ants with a glass. But his ethical sensitivity was internalised by the image of Vedavati and Kumbhakarna in his heart, as they always strive for him to do better. When he reconciled with Sita, his Ethical Sensitivity heightened and he started to care for the future. He was concerned with the future of Lanka from falling into the hands of the vain Vibhishan. He was concerned with the funding and maintenance of the hospital in Vaidyanath as it was Vedavati's place.

As for harmony, it is more like euthanasia. Peace for Raavan is death as he was a walking corpse after Vedavati's death and he wishes to be relieved from his misery. To say that he should live is a cruelty as he, himself does not wish to live to bear any more deaths of his loved ones in his life. He knows the role he has to play in this narrative. The role of the sacrificial lamb for the good of India. He was the necessary sacrifice for the narrative. And his acceptance of his death is his final traumatic growth. It was never his traumatic regression, as he was able to die honourably, with his future assets taken under Ram's care. He trusts him and he can die in peace. He served his purpose and did his actions for which he was born to do.

Hence, Raavan shows the dynamic and fatalistic nature of Post-Traumatic Growth through the five domains of the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI).

Conclusion

This paper tries to prove that Raavan, the antagonist of the Ram Chandra Series shows a variedly, dynamic and fatalistic nature of Post Traumatic Growth that can only be perceived in villains. Trauma faced by him is the death of his first love, Vedavati, also known as the Kanyakumari. The Post Traumatic Growth Theory in this paper is altered to apply to the design of a villainous character like Raavan.

Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) posits five domains that show growth from the adversity of trauma. Raavan shows all signs of the five domains in PTGI, in a subjectively positive manner, in the way he deemed, though his path was unorthodox to the positive growth expressed in the PTG theory. Despite the nature of his growth, it can be concluded that he showed signs of traumatic growth and found peace at the end of the narrative.

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