

**Concept of Dharma in Anand Neelakantan's Asura: Tale of the
Vanquished and Ajaya: Roll of the Dice**

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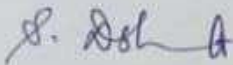
DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Concept of Dharma in Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished and Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is carried out by me **NARMADHA S** during the period from **JANUARY 2024 - MAY 2024** under the guidance of **Dr. (Mrs.) Grace Priyadarsini Appadurai**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (SF), Coimbatore, and, has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

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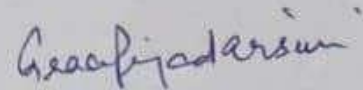
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ABSTRACT

Since we have been studying the Ramayana and the Mahabharata for so many years, we have concluded that men are gods who fought for dharma. Through a comparative analysis of these two works, the study examines the multifaced dimensions of Dharma encompassing moral duty and righteousness as portrayed through the lens of characters traditionally labelled as antagonist. By scrutinizing the narrative arcs of character such as Ravana and Duryodhana, this thesis aims to contribute to a richer understanding of Dharma within the context of contemporary literature.

In Asura, it presents a compelling narrative that challenges traditional notions of Dharma within the context of Indian Mythology. This thesis aims to delve into the intricate layers of Dharma as portrayed in the book and implications for the character and their society. Furthermore, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural and philosophical significance of Dharma within the context of Indian literature and Mythology.

In Ajaya, Neelakantan describes about Duryodhana as a multifaced character whose actions are driven by a different interpretation of righteousness. Through a nuanced analysis of Neelakantan narrative, this study aims to explore the philosophical underpinnings of Duryodhana's Dharma, examining personal motivations that shape his character.

NOTES

In the text, abbreviation is used for the name of the primary texts in the parenthetical references which are follows:

- *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* ATV
- *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* ARD

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As an art form, literature shapes the world because it creates everything from clichés to trends. The purpose of literature, as many think, is not only to produce entertainment or give aesthetic pleasure but also to allow a person to travel back or forth in time and learn about life in different societies. One can receive a better understanding of different cultures through recorded histories in the form of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction. Literature is a medium to promulgate ideologies and is often called an expression of society. It explores everything, allowing one to escape reality and imagine a new world.

Besides these, literature also plays its role as a therapist, recognition, entertainer, and teacher who teaches knowledge. It soothes melancholic souls for millennia. English, as a dominating world language, is known only little about the origin of English literature. The period is extended, for it opens in the 5th century, c.450. In the Renaissance period, which is also known as the Elizabethan period, English literature became famous all over the world. Later on, after several literary movements and ages, English literature began to spread worldwide, resulting in the birth of modern literature.

The English language entered India during the 17th century when Englishmen came to the country as traders and began to rule. Thus, English education was introduced, which brought a new life and opened a new vista of knowledge to Indians. It gave a new path to Indian English literature or Indian writing in English, which is just two centuries old. This is due to the language that remained in India, even after receiving independence. Within the English education and study of English literature, Indians learned to adopt the English

language's reading, speaking, and writing. Historically, Indian English literature has passed through several phrases, such as Indo-Anglican, Indo-English, Indian writing in English, and Indian English literature (IEL).

In the present era, the term Indian writing in English is used broadly. Indian writing in English is also referred to as literally Renaissance in India, as it gave a new birth to Indian literature. Indian English literature is the product of the historical encounter between the two cultures, Indian and Western, for about 190 years. It differs from other English literature worldwide in subject, theme, narrative styles, geographical settings, cultural background, and use of language. Such Indian writings, which necessarily belonged to Indian literature, are also known as creative literature.

There appeared to be an initial doubt whether Indians could produce such creative writing using English. Sir Aurobindo, an Indian philosopher and poet, regarding the doubt, stated that many Indian writers, such as Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, M. K. Gandhi, Nehru, etc., have already produced creative literature that had been appreciated as excellent by good English critics. There was also a time when another doubt appeared during India's struggle for freedom regarding the acceptance of English as a language of the land. However, many writers, including Rammohan Roy, Bepin Pal, Tilak, Gokhale, C. R. Das, Rabindranath Tagore, and many others, used the English language effectively to benefit their motherland.

For those who received an English education, English is a creative expression of Indians and Indian heritage.

English was used to connect the intellectual contact between India and England. M. K. Naik, in his book *History of Indian English Literature*, remarks that writers like Aubrey Menon, Ruskin Bond, etc., were distinctively Indian. In contrast, writers like Ruth Prayer

Jhabvala and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, who were not Indians by birth, carried Indian sensibility and ethos into their writing with due sincerity.

In the Indian literary scenario, the novel plays a role as a new entrant during the middle of the 19th century. Despite this, the first novel was produced in 1794, when Sake Dean Mohamed published his travelogue named *The Travels of Dean Mahomed*, which was influenced by the Western novel. Later, English writing became extant in India. The earliest novel written in India was Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Rajamohan's Wife*, published in 1864 in a weekly journal named *The Indian Field*. Fiction and nonfiction writings like letters, journals, political manifestos, articles, speeches, philosophical works, etc., were produced in Indian English literature during the 19th and early 20th centuries, which was considered wealthy and varied.

Raja Rao, one of the Indian Triumvirates of novelists, along with R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand, is best known for his novel *Kanthapura* (1938). This new generation of Indian authors, who wrote almost exclusively in English, hit the bookshelves, including R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. Begin with Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the early history followed by this Triumvirates, who contributed to Indian fiction in the 1930s. Raja Rao could be named the first of the Indian masters of English prose.

A myth is a well-known tale created in antiquity to explain supernatural occurrences or support religious beliefs or traditional social customs. The Oxford English dictionary defines the word "mythology" as either a collection of myths or the study of myths. It usually refers to a collection of traditional Stories that are sacred and supposed to be true. It is a tradition that was inherited from forefathers. It denotes the experiences Over generations, well-liked by

individuals or society as myths or folklore, which are generally transferred from one generation to another based on recitation of stories.

In Indian mythology, each tale has its speculation corresponding to some common concepts.

Since mythology typically incorporates superhuman characters, it is essential to study them from a "time perspective." The volume of knowledge in the myths not only transmits religious experiences but also projects role models of behavior patterns. They explain the patterns of worship and attempt to reconnect modern society to the bygone ages.

Hinduism is the oldest religion among other Indian religions, and the mythology of Hinduism is rich with multiple themes and superhuman characters, which shows the belief in many gods and goddesses. Like other mythologies, Hindu mythology talks about certain characters, such as gods, goddesses, men, and women, especially heroes, and the stories of their adventures, whether triumph or tragedy, tales of honor or tales of vengeance, passed down from generation to generation. There are many Hindu mythology, such as Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and Epics.

Epic poetry is a literary genre, a lengthy narrative poem about the supernatural deeds of superhuman characters who deal with god or other superhuman forces. The purpose of epics is to shape the mortal universe for their descendants. Indian epics, written in the Indian subcontinent, are traditionally called the *kavya*. The two famous works synonymous with the epic literature of India are *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, both written in Sanskrit and together form the canon of Hindu scripture. *Ramayana* talks about the history of Rama's life and death, whereas *Mahabharata* talks about the great war for the throne of Hastinapur. Both epics represent the core of India and its cultural heritage.

Writers worldwide refer back to their conventional mythology to address contemporary issues by reinterpreting the past in the light of the present. In the essay, *Tradition and Individual Talent*, the twentieth-century poet and critic T.S Eliot remarked, "Pastness of the past will be present in the future." Today's popular and bestselling books include lesser-known stories in Hindu mythology that are retold innovatively. There is a surge in books, movies, and art that analyze episodes and epics of Hindu mythology, re-reading and deriving unexplored meanings from a contemporary perspective.

Retelling Hindu myths played an essential role in the Indian nationalist struggle (it helped in imagining a nation-state). The myths and the traditional narrative styles played an essential role in the revival of culture and acting as a unifying force within the society. It helped me imagine an Indian nation-state's identity, history, and culture.

The earlier Indian fictional writers assigned perspectives, meanings, and connotations to the traditional myths. They used archetypes of legendary heroes, symbols, character types, and themes. The Novels like *Krishna Key* by Ashwin Sanghi go back and forth in time, from Krishna's life (from birth to death) to contemporary times when a killer believes himself to be the Kalki avatar. Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* recreates Shiva, Sati, and other related mythological characters as humans. Krishna Udayshankar's *The Aryavarta Chronicles* also relates mythological characters with human situations and sensibilities.

Contemporary retelling also attempts a version of feminist revisionist mythology that aims at a strategic revisionist use of gender imagery to transform culture and subvert the heritage that women inherit. Devdutta Pattanaik's *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of Ramayana*, Moyna Chitrakar and Samhita Arni's *Sita's Ramayana*, Sujoy Ghosh's *Ahalya, Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen*

are few examples of popular literature that weave threads of sexuality and feminism in the narration of myths.

Attempts at subverting morality and the notions of evil and good, books like *The Aryavarta Chronicles* by Krishna Udyasankar, *Asura: The Tale of the Vanquished* by Anand Neelakantan, *Duryodhana* by V. Ramanathan, *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* by Gurucharan Das attempt to raise important issues of morality from the contemporary perspective. Spoken from the perspectives of the villains of the stories, the books aim at reformulating the notions of Dharma that dominate Hindu ethics. Books like Devdutta Pattaniak's *Shikandi and Other Tales*, *They Do Not Tell You*, and *The Pregnant King* attempt to retell the narratives from the perspectives of marginalized voices of the epics.

Anand Neelakantan's two novels, *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished- The Story of Ravana and His People* (2012) and *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice- Epic of the Kaurava Clan 1*, are retellings of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata epics respectively. In *Asura*, the story centers on Ravana, who is depicted as the son of a Brahmin father and Asura's mother. He is mistreated by his brother, the Emperor Kubera of the Sri Lanka kingdom. Ravana is shown to be mobilizing forces and acquiring the throne of the Empire here.

Sita is portrayed as Ravana's daughter who had to be abandoned due to a prophecy. She was ordered to be killed, but she survives. Then, she is kidnapped by Ravana when Rama and Lakshmana are in exile. The story shows the Ramayana War and the ultimate defeat of Ravana. Neelakantan has based the book on the alternative Ramayana, which is especially recited in southern India. The story is narrated by Ravana and a fictitious character, Bhadra, who represents the typical Indian person, gullible to the politicians. Sita has been presented as Ravana's daughter in the lesser-known versions of Ramayana. However, once this view is

adopted, the whole motif of this story changes drastically. Ravana is not a ten-headed demon here. The author has given a symbolic explanation for the ten faces.

The greatest deconstructionist, Anand Neelakandan, was born on 5 December 1973 in a quaint village called Thripoonithura, on the outskirts of Cochin, Kerala. Located east of mainland Ernakulam, across Vembanad Lake, this village was the seat of the Cochin royal family. He has authored three fiction books based on the Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Anand Neelakantan's books are Subaltern and thought-provoking and deal with logically viewing well-known stories through a new prism. The success of *Asura* followed up with his hugely successful *Ajaya* series, which tells Duryodhana's Mahabharata in an attempt to break usual storytelling. In 2013 and 2014, *Asura* and *Ajaya*, respectively, were both shortlisted for the Crossword Award. More than nine languages, including Indonesian, have been translated into English for all his publications. Columnist for Hindu, Indian Express, Pioneer, Washington Post, and other publications.

Additionally, he writes a lot in Malayalam and frequently has his pieces published in esteemed literary Malayalam magazines. He is also a prolific writer in Malayalam and regularly publishes his stories in prestigious literary Malayalam magazines. He is a cartoonist, too, and many of his works have been published. Anand's books voice the suppressed party or the defeated party.

According to Amazon, Anand Neelakantan's *Asura* is one of the 100 books to be read in a lifetime. The book has sold more than half a million copies across the years. Free Press Journal appreciates this book: "Rama is worshipped as an avatar. Ravana is evil incarnate.

However, not for Anand Neelakantan, who thinks Rama may be a god, but Ravana is the more complete man. Brilliantly conceived, this book commands attention for its style and content".

Books penned by Anand Neelakandan are *Asura: The Tale of the Vanquished* (2012), *Roll of the Dice* (2013), *Rise of Kali* (2015), *Baahubali: The Rise of Sivagami* (2017)

Anand Neelakantan was awarded the Kings International Literary Award 2017 Kalinga Literary Festival. Indian Express listed him as one of the most promising writers, Daily News and Analysis listed him as the second most talented writer of 2012, and the second writer of 2012 by Financial Express. His first book, *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*, was shortlisted for the Crossword Popular Award in 2013, and his second book, *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*, was shortlisted for the Crossword Popular Award in 2014.

Amish Tripathi is an Indian author known for his novels in the mythological fiction genre. His famous works include the "*Shiva Trilogy*" ("*The Oath of the Vayuputras*," "*The Immortals of Meluha*," and "*The Secret of the Nagas*" "*Ram Chandra Series*." Tripathi's books often blend mythology with a modern narrative, making them widely appreciated by readers in India and beyond. Tripathi's books often explore Indian mythology, history, and philosophy in a fictionalized narrative, earning him a significant readership in India.

Ashwin Sanghi is a 1969-born Indian author known for his historical and mythological fiction novels. Some of his notable works include "*The Rozabal Line*," "*Chanakya's Chant*," and the "*Bharat Series*," which explores historical and mythological themes. Sanghi often blends ancient Indian wisdom with a modern storytelling style in his novels. His writing style often incorporates intricate plots and rich historical research.

Devdutt Pattanaik is a 1970-born Indian author, mythologist, and speaker known for his extensive work in demystifying Hindu mythology, symbolism, and folklore. Some of his well-known works include "*My Gita*," "*Jaya: An Illustrated Mahabharata Story*" and "*Sita*:"

An Illustrated Ramayana Story" Pattanaik is also recognized for his ability to present complex mythological concepts in a more accessible and contemporary manner.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a 1956-born Indian-American poet, writer, and novelist well-known for her works. Her pieces frequently examine the experiences of Indian and Indian-American women, addressing themes such as immigration, cultural identity, and the intersection of tradition and modernity. Some of her notable books include *"The Mistress of Spices," "Sister of My Heart,"* and *"The Palace of Illusions,"* a retelling of the Mahabharata from the perspective of Draupadi. Divakaruni's writing is celebrated for its emotional depth and cultural insights.

Kavita Kane is a 1966-born Indian author known for her novels that retell stories from Indian mythology, focusing on the perspectives of lesser-known or marginalized characters. Her works often provide a fresh and nuanced take on familiar mythological tales. Some of her notable books include *"Karna's Wife: Outcast's The Queen," "Sita's Sister,"* and *"Menaka's Choice."* Kane's writing delves into the complexities of characters and situations, offering readers a different viewpoint on well-known mythological narratives.

An epic is *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*. Tale of victory and defeat. The story has been told countless times. Every Indian is familiar with the captivating tale of Rama, the divine incarnation who slew Ravana, the malevolent demon of darkness. Moreover, as is typically the case in historical accounts, the story that the winners tell is the one that lives on. Ravana's voice had never been told. This fiction is about the persecuted outcasts of India who have treasured this legendary narrative of the defeated Asura tribe for three millennia.

The overwhelming emotion in the entire book is anger. It is pent-up anger about a civilization being destroyed by invading barbarians and being labeled demons for living according to their culture and striking back at the invading hordes. The tale is also narrated by Bhadra, an asura who fought under Mahabali and several others before becoming a recurring and critical figure in Ravana's life from when he led the raging army against Kubera. The narrative begins with Ravana's last moments, as he lay dying on the battlefield. The book shows Ravana in a good light, whose only fault was that he defied the prevalent societal norms and lived life on his terms, as opposed to Rama, who was deified by the higher castes and made into an ideal image.

Ravana is portrayed as passionate, arrogant, and brilliant. Leaving Lanka to seek their fortune, the brothers Ravana, Kumbhakarna, and Vibhishana learn under Brahma, the scion of the Brahma family specializing in arts, crafts, and music under the protection of Mahabali, the once mighty king of the Auras now hiding in the jungles in Central India. In his last lesson, Mahabali attempts to instill values of self-control and sacrifice in Ravana, who mocks them and proclaims his preference for the base emotions that make a man rather than the higher values that make a God. Ravana then returns to Lanka with high ideals of returning the Asura Empire and civilization to its former glory.

Ravana, the king, and Bhadra, the commoner, make a formidable team as they establish the Asura kingdom in Central and South India with their Golden capital in Sri Lanka. Then comes the nemesis of the mighty Asura empire, Sita, whom Ravana himself brings in.

Ravana claims that Sita is his long-lost daughter whom he brought back to protect her from the male-dominated barbaric Deva culture. In war, Ravana's actions are very much like those of many mighty kings who believed themselves invincible, and Rama's actions are very much

like those of a commander directing his hand on soldiers in guerrilla warfare. There is the constant theme of Rama's double standards; he does not hesitate to strike from behind while portraying himself as the epitome of Dharma. He constantly plays into the hands of Brahmins to prove himself a righteous king.

Neelakantan has shaped Bhadra as a representation of the commoner. Bhadra's voice is the voice of the silenced and suppressed majority. Bhadra anchors the story. His character gives it a third perspective. Bhadra is the bridge between the ancient world of the Ramayana and today.

"Bhadra is the window that allows us to gaze at that hazy period through modern eyes," states the author in an interview.

However, personal loss follows Rama even during his victory. Questioned by a citizen of his kingdom on accepting Sita as his wife and queen after she has been in Lanka for so long, Rama decides to banish Sita from his side even though she has undergone the Agnipariksha, test by fire at Lanka before the victorious soldiers to prove her chastity. When Rama is reunited with Sita after twelve long years through the valor of his twin sons Luv and Kush, Rama again asks Sita to go through a test of fire to prove her chastity. Tired by the constant demands to prove her virtue from her husband, Sita enters the Earth, While Rama returns with his sons to Ayodhya to rule. However, Rama is never happy, and he finally enters the Sarayu River and gives up his life.

According to the epic Ramayana, Lord Rama underwent only pain till his death since it was his virtuous duty. However, Ravana lived and died like a king. Just because Ravana is the enemy of Rama, a man considered God, does not necessarily make Ravana evil. Neelakantan justifies his writing of the book by saying that Rama is imperfect without Ravana, and the same applies to Ravana too; Ravana in his book, for instance, is symbolic of everything that

humankind is at this point: angry, arrogant, conceited, proud and ambitious. There are shades of Ravana in each one of us. Rama, on the other hand, is what every human wants to be sacrificing: dutiful, selfless, and devotional, but cannot fully be. This book attempts to make the masses realize that everything cannot be black or white. Good and evil, both, co-exist in each one of us. Neelakantan, in his introduction to the novel, discusses the reason behind the portrayal of Ravana as Dasamukha or Ten-faced. He begins his Ravanayana by narrating the death of the great Asura king, Ravana. The whole book is divided into 65 chapters. Neelakantan portrays both Asuras and Devas as tribal rather than giving them the position demons and Gods, respectively. Ravana speaks about himself and his exploits, stressing his fights as a half-breed (his father is a Brahmin and his mother an Asura woman), growing from poverty to becoming King of a kingdom which was extended over the entire country. Bhadra's narrative talks about a group of people who lived plain lives and how these ordinary people's lives were desolated by war in which they had no pledges. Sita, Ravana's daughter, gets a prophecy that she will cause the collapse of the Asura race. So, she had been thrown into a swam to die. Then, she was found by King Janaka and grew up as the princess of Mithila.

The novel explains how the common Asuras elected Ravana as the king of Lanka. Common Asuras looked upon Ravana as their savior, who had the strength to release them from the clutches of Devas. They thought that a better world was waiting for them under Ravana. To an extent, their hope was fulfilled. However, even when Ravana achieved success, the poor Asuras found that their life had still not changed to a great extent. Then, it proceeds to the events that led to the great war of Ramayana. This novel also seeks to expose the mistakes of the Deva race, which is depicted as conventional and prejudiced. It speaks about the freedom

the Asura community benefitted from. The story of Vamana and Mahabali is illustrated, along with the Agni Pareeksha underwent by Sita and the meeting between Bali and Ravana. There exist human emotions behind these stories. Moreover, these human emotions are looked at from a different approach.

It is also important to note how Neelakantan has digressed from the original version of Ramayana. Without a doubt, the most widely read and enduring Indian classic that everyone adores is the Ramayana. The literal translation of "Ramayana" is "the march of Rama" in pursuit of human values. As a literary work, it blends the external richness of deliciously sophisticated storytelling with the inner happiness of Vedic literature. This account of Ramayana is Sri Rama by the great sage Valmiki and is referred to as the "*Adikavya*" (Original Epic). Regarding the Valmiki Ramayana, Swami Vivekananda has said, "Compared to the language in which Valmiki has depicted the life of Rama, no other language can be more pure, chaste, beautiful and simpler."

It is essential to know that there is not one Ramayana in India. In reality, Valmiki's original composition in Sanskrit is left over by elderly citizens and rarely read. The most common Ramayana's are in the vernacular Indian languages. For example, the Ramayana of Kamban was written in Tamil in the eleventh century in South India; in North India, the Ramayana of Tulsidas, the *Ramacharitamanasa*, is celebrated. Even among the Hindus living in far-off places of the Indian Diaspora, such as Fiji and Trinidad, the *Ramacharitamanasa* is the devotional text of Hinduism par excellence.

Roll of the Dice is the first book in the *Ajaya* duology by Anand Neelakantan. This book re-imagines the story of Mahabharata from the perspective of the most vilified character of all time, Suyodhana, well known as Dhuryodhana. Anand Neelakantan had brought about

the side of Dhuryodhana that no one has ever dared to showcase before in their mythological re-tellings, whether books, movies, or series. The plot undertook was highly challenging because with Asura, most of us would have at least heard a few good things, characteristics, and traits of Ravana, so showing him in a good light would have been considerably more straightforward and okay, when compared to justifying Duryodhana's character.

Ajaya, the Epic of the Kauravas clan, is an attempt to view the *Mahabharatham* from the side that lost the war. One of the meanings of Duryodhana is that it is challenging to conquer; in other words, it means *Ajaya* (Unconquerable). Though named Suyodhana, the Pandavas used the derogatory 'Dur' to slander him as one who does not know how to wield power or arms. 'Duryodhana's story includes those of Karna, Aswathama, Ekalavya, Bhishma, Drona, Shakuni, and many others. It is the narrative of the others – the defeated, insulted, trampled upon who fought without expecting divine intervention, believing in the justice of their cause. If our Lord Duryodhana was an evil man, why did great men like Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and the entire army of Krishna fight the war on his side?

This paper is divided into four chapters, including introduction, conclusion and two more chapters in between.

This paper concentrates on the Dharma of Ravana and Duryodhana, giving a cheerful look. Dharma is the way of the higher truths. It tells about the basic principles and duties fulfilled by an individual. It also deals with the right way of living.

CHAPTER II

DHARMA OF RAVANA

The Dharma of Ravana refers to the philosophical principles and moral code associated with Ravana, the antagonist in the Hindu epic Ramayana. Ravana is depicted as a complex character with immense knowledge, power, and devotion to Lord Shiva. An adaptation of the Ramayana, an Indian classic told from the viewpoint of Ravana, the legendary demon king. Through vivid storytelling, Neelakantan explores the complexities of good and evil, power and ambition, and the blurred lines between myth and reality. This thought-provoking narrative challenges conventional interpretations of the Ramayana, offering a fresh and compelling examination of one of the world's oldest epics.

Some of the well-known Indian legendary characters are Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Rama, Lord Brahma, Lord Hanuman, Lord Krishna, Lord Ganesha, Lord Indra, Lord Surya, Goddess Parvati, Goddess Laxmi, Goddess Saraswathi, Goddess Durga. Authors like Amish Tripathi, Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anand Neelakantan, Kavita Kane, Ashwin Sanghi, Namita Gokhale, Shivaji Sawant, Amruta Patil, S. L. Bhyrappa, Roopa Pai, and Sharath Kamaraj have given another look to popular Indian legendary characters like Hanuman, Duryodhana, Rama, Sita, Shiva, Ravana, Draupathi, Krishna, Pandavas, Kunti and Shakuni.

In Hindu mythology, many gods and demons have complex histories and have lived long and dynamic lives. Some characters have rich backstories, while others have existed in many avatar forms. To worshippers, these histories provide an essential element, for they create a more holistic picture of the God or goddess, and this depth of character helps create

strong relationships between the devotee and their God. In the Ramayana, the most interpreted epic in human history, the character of Ravana is introduced as the antagonist demon king who had been banished from heaven after insulting Brahma. Ravana was offered a choice to be reborn on Earth seven times as Vishnu's friend or three times as Vishnu's enemy, which he chose later.

Ravana takes place during his second rebirth (of the three). Despite having this backstory to Ravana's life and having an answer to how he became a demon, many issues plague his character. First, his representation in the Ramayana is incredibly docile for a typical demon (nonetheless for the demon king of Lanka). The only vitriolic act he commits is the abduction of Sita, while the rest of his actions are arguably quite thoughtful and kind. Second, his love and affinity for Sita (a highly dharmic character wholly committed to Rama) is highly uncharacteristic for an adharmic demon. How can a creature whose existence depends upon adharmic behavior love and care for someone like Sita, the epitome of Dharma? The last main trait of Ravana is his status in both Jain doctrine and Vedic scripture: in both sources, he is never mentioned as a demon and instead is celebrated as a god.

This novel never mentions Ravana as the demon, and it is from his perspective. Readers can find the reason behind each of his actions through this novel. As in all mythology, rituals, and symbols, Ravana is used as a metaphor for how to or how not to live one's life.

The book *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* emphasizes the defeated's voice rather than the victor's commonly known version of Ramayana. It explores the struggles of Ravana and

his life that made him what he was and aims to establish a connection between the well-known incidents detailed in the modern Ramayana epic and the social construct, as it may have been and changed at the time, by telling the story of Ravana and the events in his life that shaped who. Ravana challenges the concepts of Dharma and provides depth amidst many standard tropes.

For quite a long time, the character Ravana is accepted to be the most wretched evil presence in Hindu folklore, and the day of his passing is praised as a celebration all over India as a triumph of good over malevolence. Ravana is imagined as a multi-headed evil presence lord of Lanka. He could change into any structure with his ten heads and twenty arms. Ravana, who was the Lord Lord of all things considered and of the fortification island of Lanka (present-day Sri Lanka), was destined to be the child of Pulastya, one of the makers of Prajapati, Vishrava, a Brahmin sage and Kaikesi, the Daitya princess. Sumali, the ruler of the Daityas, Kaikesi's dad, needed her to deliver a remarkable beneficiary, so he needed her to wed the most dominant being in the human world. Sumali rejected the other world rulers since they were less impressive than him. Kaikesi sought among the sages and picked Vishrava last. Vishrava cautioned her that on the off chance that he weds her, their kid would tend towards malevolent as she had moved toward him at an unseemly time by acknowledging her solicitation for marriage.

Ravana was halfway Daitya, furthermore, incompletely, Brahmin. The name he was given during childbirth was Dashanana/Dasagriva, alluding to how he was brought into the world with ten heads. Ravana once went to Kailash to meet Lord Shiva; however, Nandi, Shiva's guard, denied his entrance. Irritated, Ravana attempted to lift Mount Kailash, where Ruler Shiva and Goddess Parvati dwelled. Irate Shiva set his toe onto the mountain, along

these lines squashing.

Ravana's fingers. Ravana let out a gigantic thunder of torment, yet simultaneously, he culled out his nerves, played Shiva's acclaim, and played out the Shiva Tandav Stotram. The entire world trembled with his clamor. Satisfied with his supplications, Lord Shiva uncovered himself and entitled him with another name, Ravana (due to the natural sound when he shrieked).

Ravana, as depicted in the many Ramayana versions, is arguably unrecognizable compared to his former self. The only adharmic act recorded is his kidnapping of Sita- a far cry from the raping and pillaging demon he is supposed to be. It is not explicitly stated whether his love for Sita is why he forgoes raping or harming her. However, he acts beyond a neutral or apathetic state and arguably into a thoughtful and kind one. There are moments in the Ramayana where Ravana seems to treat Sita better than Rama himself.

This novel gives the reason for Ravana kidnapping Sita. It is because Sita is Ravana's daughter, and he does not want Sita to suffer in a place where women are not treated equally. It is also essential to recall that Ravana is a demon and a king. This means he must fulfill kingly Dharma and conflict with his Dharma as a demon. These two types of Dharma seem mutually exclusive but are not and are what explain the discrepancies in Ravana's personality and role in the Ramayana. Looking at different accounts of Ravana's character in this novel may help to shed light on this ambiguous character.

The Chief Antagonist, Ravana, the king of Lanka, in the Ramayana, the Hindu epic, and its translations. According to the Ramayana, Ravana is the oldest son of the wise Vishrava and Rakshasi Kaikeshi. He kidnapped Sita, the wife of Rama, and brought her to

his realm in Lanka. He imprisoned her in Ashok Vatika and declared his intention to marry her there. Later, with support from Rama, King Sugriva and his army of Vanaras assaulted the Lankan Ravana. After they defeated Ravana, Rama saved Sita, his cherished wife.

Most people believe that Ravana is a representation of evil. Ravana was a renowned scholar who possessed many other traits. He knew the four Vedas and the six Shastras inside and out. His knowledge of the Vedas is evident when he says, "By the time Brahma and Mahabali had reached the commentary on the Atharva Veda, I was confident that I could challenge any pseudo-scholars on the Vedas" (ATV 39). Ravana is regarded as Shiva's most esteemed devotee. Pictures of Ravana are associated with Shiva in some places. Additionally, he can be found in the Lanka, a Buddhist Mahayana scripture. Ramayana and Jatakas, as well as in Jain Ramayana. He is portrayed as one of Vishnu's cursed doorkeepers in several scriptures.

A temple priest named Hariom Tiwari explains how Ravana was a noble king in the Dravidian Gaud tribe. Ravana is described as brave and intelligent but also highly arrogant. His depiction of having ten heads implies his high intelligence, for they signify that he has knowledge that spans all ten directions. In the northern city of Kanpur, there is a temple to Ravana and a following of Ravana devotees. They still follow the Vedas in terms of their position on Ravana's character, explaining how his only flaws were arrogance and doing more for demons than for the Brahmins. Vishnu took it upon himself to "break" Ravana's arrogance and thus came to Earth as Rama.

Ravana possessed other positive virtues and was a noble, intelligent king. He excelled in music and had vast knowledge of sacred books, medicines, and sorcery. However, his character in the Vedas showed some foreshadowing of his propensity towards evil

(arrogance and high intelligence being classic traits of villains), and the leap towards the holistically demonic figure he is often presented as seems quite vast. Ravana's story is fascinating, and the telling aspect is his perception of himself in the Jain community. In addition to these narrative differences, according to Jainism, the supernatural aspects are also removed from the story. For instance, Jain texts do not describe Ravana as having ten heads; instead, they explain a story of his childhood where a necklace reflected ten gems onto his head.

Ravana was a model researcher in his childhood despite his forcefulness and self-importance. He aced every one of the Vedas, the sacred books and human expressions under his father's tutelage. Notwithstanding his acing every one of the Vedas and the heavenly books, his grandfather Sumali buckled down stealthily to guarantee that Ravana also held the ethics of the Daityas. Ravana was likewise given to Lord Brahma. Brahma, who was satisfied by Ravana's exceptional stark compensation, which he had performed for a few thousand a long time, gave him aid. Ravana requested interminability, a solicitation which Brahma cannot drawback. Ravana then requested total immunity and matchless quality before the divine beings and sublime spirits, just like evil presences, snakes, and wild brutes. Scornful of mortal creatures, Ravana did not request insurance from people. Brahma allowed these shelters and gave him extraordinary qualities through divination and learning of awesome weapons.

Ravana procured his honored position through foul methods when he defeated his stepbrother Kubera, the God of riches, from the island. His body was shrouded in scars, won in unlimited fights with the Gods. Three injuries, specifically, were from the plate of Vishnu, the jolt of Indra, and the tusk of Airavata, the elephant of Indra. Ravana was made

strong through his dedication and atonement to the incomparable God Brahma and could change into any structure he wished, from men to mountains to death. He was influential because he could cause seismic tremors and storms. In any case, it was anticipated that Ravana's end would come because of a lady.

From science to the drug, Ravana had become famous in all fields. It was not simply his insight that made him a man that individuals appreciated and dreaded. He is an incredible enthusiast of Lord Shiva. He would ponder for a long time to please Lord Shiva: one could not deny that he was an exceptionally enthusiastic lover. To such an extent, Ruler Shiva was inspired by him, and he gave him the ability to utilize divine weapons and respect that just a persevering aficionado could win. According to the Asura people, their fertile imagination made Shiva a lovable God who demanded nothing, and no rituals were required to pray to him. Ravana says, "He (Shiva) was the Asura's friend, cousin, son, father, or anything one could imagine" (ATV 26).

Ravana was equipped to perform ten separate attitudes. This is depicted by deporting him as a ten-headed lord. Be that as it may, Ravana is likewise depicted as having nine heads, as he had offered ahead to Lord Shiva to satisfy him. He is the most prominent researcher, a proficient ruler, and a maestro of the Veena. Ravana is likewise portrayed as the creator of the Ravana Samhita, a book on Hindu crystal gazing, and Arka Prakasham, a book on Siddha drug and treatment. Ravana had intensive information on Siddha and, what is more, political theory. He was likewise a specialist in the Vedas and crystal gazing.

People trust that the war between Rama and Ravana began simply because Ravana Kidnapped Sita, yet this is not the reality. Individuals neglect to recollect what had happened to Surpanakha. The war began when Lakshmana removed Surpanakha's nose

after she had proposed to Lord Rama. Indeed, even after Lakshmana's demonstration, individuals consider Pearl as sunny, incredible, and Godly. Ravana delivered retribution on war like any other sibling who might read retribution for what had happened to his more youthful sister.

Therefore, he is considered a shrewd beast. Sri Lankans neither assemble sanctuaries nor love Ravana, yet take a gander at him as the most significant Lord sold out by his very own sibling whom he adored so much and met a grievous end. For them, he was the ruler who opposed trespassers, one who was honored with bounty learning, and the person who was double-crossed by his sibling when he attempted to retaliate for his sister's respect.

Individuals consider Ravana, who had kidnapped Sita, as underhanded, and Rama, who had sent a similar Sita to an outcast when she was pregnant. When the war was finished, and before they could return to Ayodhya, Sita experienced a trial by flame to clear herself of doubts of betrayal. When they return to Ayodhya, Rama discovers that the general population is still investigating the ruler's virtuousness. They do not think about what she had done in Lanka to demonstrate her modesty, and he exiles her to the timberland. Rama, who needed to substantiate himself as the biggest Lord, sent his significant other, who was pregnant with his kid, into an outcast, and they called it Dharma.

Rama could not secure his significant other, who had left everything and gone with him when he was sent to the out for a long time. Later in his life, the family was brought together after Sita had conceived an offspring. Again, there was still an inquiry that questioned her virtue, and Sita, who could not have uncovered this torment any longer, called Mother Earth to remove her with her, and Mother Earth swallowed her.

Rama, the real reason for Sita's demise, is considered an extraordinary ruler and adored as God. It was said that Sita was Ravana's little girl, and is there any good reason why it should not be that way? Ravana had seized her little girl to shield her from the Deva lords after seeing what they had done to his more youthful sister, Surpanakhai. The Devas and the Asuras are two distinct factions whose practices are extraordinary. For the Asuras, the Devas were dependably a risk. The Deva lords, to amplify their limits, assaulted the Asura towns, ravaged their riches, assaulted the ladies, and slaughtered everybody.

Ravana then chose to fabricate a country for his Asura family where everybody was considered equivalent and could live cheerfully. He widened his limits to render retribution on the Devas who had done significant mischief to the Asuras. He took the war on the Deva kingdoms, and the Asura armed forces did what they had encountered in the hands of Devas to them.

Devas adored Master Vishnu, and the asuras venerated Lord Shiva. Devas read the Vedas and Puranas and continued performing pujas, and they rehearsed the station framework. They considered the other station untouchables, yet it was not the equivalent in the Asura tribe, where they regarded everybody as equivalent. This is a direct result of this routine with regards to the Devas the standing framework developed, and on the off chance that they had not begun it, at that point, everybody would live as equivalent; what is more, there would not be any way similar to the discouraged and the untouchables.

Indeed, even in the war field, the Devas did not follow the war guidelines. More often than not, Ravana's realm was assaulted amid the evening, which was against the principles of war. When Hanuman entered Lanka around evening time and was gotten by the Asura armed force anyway, he got away and set fire to the entire of Lanka.

The incredible ruler Rama executed Bali through foul methods. When the monkey ruler Bali was in battle with his sibling Sugriva, Rama took cover behind the trees, shot Bali with his bolt, and executed him, which was against morals. Individuals still consider him an incredible individual. When he chose to manufacture an extension to Lanka, Rama needed to play out Purohit's ceremonies and requested that his adherents bring an incredible sage to perform it. He said that Ravana had accepted it. It was Ravana, a half-Brahmin, who played out the ceremonies of Purohit when Lord Rama built the Rama Seth to lead his monkey detachment to assault Lanka.

Following a thousand years of repentance, Ravana sought help from Lord Brahma to attain everlasting status. However, Brahma cordially declined to say that his life would be aggregated at his navel. Ravana's sibling Vibhishana, who has moved sides amid the war, uncovers the mystery about Ravana to Rama on the tenth day of the war. Just after Vibhishana sold out his sibling, who had adored him so much, Rama could execute Ravana, an incredible statecraft professional. After Rama stroked the bolt in Ravana's navel, he sent Lakshmana to go to Ravana and get familiar with statecraft and more discretion from the withering ruler.

In Northern India, it is popular to burn an effigy of Ravana, his brother, and his son to express hatred for the demon. On the other hand, in Baijnath, devout Hindus do not allow for the burning of the effigy, for they are Shaivites (as was Ravana himself) and believe any attack of Ravana could result in punishment from Shiva. Despite Ravana's evil traits, he was a strong and dedicated devotee to Shiva (another example of him possessing virtuous traits).

This shows how worshiping different deities throughout India creates unique relationships to Ravana. From a Vaishnavite perspective, Ravana is the enemy of their God,

although Shaivites have much less animosity towards their fellow Shiva devotee (despite his deeds in the Ramayana). Another example of an unusual portrayal of Ravana is in the Adhyatma Ramayana, which contains an abbreviated Valmikian account of the story, which was reinterpreted in a devotional light. In this interpretation, Rama is aware that he is an avatar of Vishnu, and because of this, Ravana pretends to be his enemy in order to die by his hand.

Ravana knew that if one dies by the hand of Vishnu, they would be rewarded in Vaikuntha, therefore explaining his reasoning. Rama and Ravana's relationship also mentions the admiration Rama initially had for Ravana. It is known that when Ravana says, one thing I cannot understand is why Rama came and stood Against. This represents another depiction of Ravana and Rama, but this time within a modern medium a comic book. Due to the popularity of these comic books, the versions of these narratives chosen are often the most agreed-upon versions. Still, this story is awe-struck.

Rama is not the most common thought when recalling these two characters and their relationship. It is interesting to see an example of Rama being impressed by Ravana, and this could be a precursor to his agitation with Ravana's understandable arrogance. It also may justify Ravana's arrogance, for Rama himself is an impressive hero, so Ravana's appearance must have been awe-inspiring.

The mystery of Ravana's intentions is only confounded in the Ramayana, for he arguably performs fewer evil deeds than Rama himself. Madhusudan Dutt, a 19th-century Bengali writer, supports this and argues that Ravana displayed more robust virtuous characteristics than Rama did himself. Despite his role as the antagonist, Dutt explains how Ravana possessed more masculinity, honor, consistency, reliability, and justice than Rama.

One reason is that Rama could not protect his wife from abduction. Dutt went further to argue that the poor role model of Rama is what allowed for colonialism in India, but whether or not that is true, it again shows the plurality of the role of Ravana and brings into question the merit of Rama. Having delved into different accounts of Ravana's history, one can see more fully the complexity of his character. It has been created by centuries of interpretations colored by the unique cultures adopting them.

Research only further reveals Ravana's confounding character, which makes creating a value judgment on his actions more complex than initially imagined. Ravana is full of contradicting traits, from being full of hatred to being full of love for Sita and having no restraint to practicing patience. His dynamic character parallels humanity and its capacity to be good and evil, creating a relatable model of our inner conflicts. The lack of cohesive evidence of Ravana's morality makes many people uncomfortable, for there is no concrete box to place him in. This is perhaps why so few scholarships have been written on him.

Narratives are dynamic and alive; there is no better representation of this than the Ramayana. The act of interpretation inherently changes the structure of the narrative, and the people and cultures of India are very accepting of these innate hermeneutic issues. Where many cultures attempt to cling to the most "original" text, for the belief that it provides the closest relation to the author's intended "truth," it seems the audience of the Ramayana accepted the impossibility of maintaining such "original truth" and instead adapted the text to best fit their ideologies. The Ramayana represents the innate power of narrative and exemplifies how narrative can maintain its relevance even when reinterpreted.

The epic finishes with Ravana's annihilation, as in the Ramayana. This tale is contradictory with the historical backdrop of Ramayana, yet in addition to position segregation, as Yadav stated: " Power will keep on having a place with the Highborn protected to guarantee that the rest of the nation's stay low. Deadened by the framework. powerlessness to do as such. Never set out to inquire". The deconstruction of the sacred texts and the inclination to consider folklore, with thought processes that adapt the divine beings and uncover concealed voices under shimmering valor, have many years of custom. While Western journalists, for example, José Saramago (*The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*) and Nikos Kazantzakis (*Last Temptation of Christ*), attempted to oust Jesus on the human stage, Indian society essayists emerged with obscure sides of famous sagas, Ramayana and Mahabharata Muritunjaya, Pratibha Ray, and Yagnasseni will reference some of them.

The presentation novel by Anand Neelakantan, conceived as a specialist, is a substantially more inflexible mission for Ramayana, using aspect changes and counterage. Situated far outside the outskirts, the more straightforward reason is to eradicate Asura as "others," utilizing distinctive words to depict the equity of equity with size by structuring business records in which the divine being plays people with excellent qualities. Set in sixty-five sections, the story passes the best numerous legends, starts to create "The End," and finishes with the last part, "The Beginning." Complex vocabulary finishes the end and clarifies the Indian idea contained in the story. As appeared on the front of the digital book, this story is by Ravana, an improper devil ruler in Ramayana who had captured Rama's significant other and asserted godlikeness Vishnu's manifestation.

Dharma is a term for a law or principle that is significant to Hinduism, Buddhism, and yoga. That governs the universe. To live out their Dharma, an individual must act by this

law. It is one of the four central ideas of Hinduism, along with Artha, Kama, and Moksha. It is also comprehensible. Several texts depict him as one of Vishnu's cursed doorkeeper's behaviors and ethics that make life possible.

Dharma implies that there is a proper way for each person to carry out their life and serve both themselves and others. Dharma is closely related to duty and selfless service, or seva, and is fundamental for life. Although it can be challenging since it has no single-word English translation, a close adaptation is the "right way of living."

The core term for the word Dharma in Sanskrit is the verb dhri translates as "to hold," "to maintain," or "to preserve." Throughout the early Vedas and other historical Hindu literature, Dharma was used to describe the cosmic law that brought the orderly universe out of chaos. Afterward, it was used in different contexts, such as human actions and lifestyle choices that keep the family, society, and environment from devolving into anarchy. Among these were the ideas of obligation, rights, religion, and morally righteous condition; Dharma hence came to be seen as a way to uphold and preserve righteousness.

Dharma can also refer to a person's purpose or mission. People have traditionally believed that a person's Dharma is predetermined. Dharma, hence, came to be seen as a way to uphold and preserve righteousness. Dharma can also refer to a person's purpose or mission. Traditionally, people have believed that a person's Dharma is predetermined.

Universal laws set the path in life; according to the Bhagavad Gita, doing one's Dharma poorly is better than doing someone else's well. It is claimed that all beings must accept their Dharma for harmony and order in the world. If individuals follow their Dharma, they pursue their most accurate calling and serve others properly. To Hindus, all entities are

according to the Buddha's teachings and the Four Noble Truths. Living this "right way" is said to lead to enlightenment and self-realization. Most importantly, when life is aligned with Dharma, it brings joy and fulfillment.

Ramayana is the source of "Rama Dharma," or the righteousness of Rama, which has become the foundation of social order and moral values in Brahman-Hindu religious societies. Rama and Sita are both held up as role models of Hindu virtue. Rama has become an archetype of the righteous king and an ideal man/husband, whereas Sita has become the embodiment of a good, loyal, and chaste woman/wife.

In India, folklore, sanctuary craftsmanship, and Cataclysm still live with convention. These archives, aside from day-by-day discussions, are a piece of life. Nobody in this story, even Ravana himself, is divine or devil. Despite what might be expected, each individual is human; the least difficult is the inverse of the inverse through the station and his adoration for vitality. Along these lines, phrases, including Deva, are the best bans of rejection, with no other foundation viewed as good if not identified with the ideas of holiness and wickedness.

Ravana, the principal foe in the epic Ramayana, is commonly seen as a representation of evil. However, mythology also portrays him as well-versed in the Vedas and numerous other scriptures. Given his qualities, is there something else one could take other than following the wrong path he represented from the life of the Lankan king? Here is one example. That demonstrates Ravana's spiritual wisdom: When Lord Rama defeated Ravana's army in the great battle, he saw the latter take his final breath and broke down in tears.

Laxman asked Lord Rama, sadly observing the older brother, "Dear brother, why do you have tears in your eyes?" Lord Rama responded, "We had to wage the war to restore faithful

Dharma and righteousness for which killing Ravana was inevitable.

However, the treasure of Ravana's commitment and expertise would soon be lost with his death. Laxman, I would like you to visit Ravana immediately and ask him the valuable lessons he can impart in his final moments." Thus, Laxman immediately went to Ravana and explained his reason for coming. However, Ravana remained mute and did not answer. I could not comprehend it, so Laxmana returned to Lord Rama and conveyed the quiet of Ravana. " You have to consider Ravana to be a learned scholar, brother. He stated Lord Rama with a vast reservoir of information.

Therefore, you must exude humility and respect in your speech and behavior. Realizing his fault, Laxman returned with folded hands and a lowered head, showing Ravana the deference, the learned monarch so richly deserved. In prayer, he asked Ravana about the three most important and valuable lessons that one must learn in life. On this occasion, Ravana shared the following lessons with Laxman.

Clarity of Preya and Shreya: One must learn the difference between Pleasure (Preya) and Fulfilment (Shreya), for they are not necessarily the same. What seems 'good' for one may not be 'right' for another. Consciously choosing the path of fulfillment over pleasure means doing what is right over what feels good. This is essential for a seeker to progress upon the spiritual journey. For instance, having sweets and chocolates would give pleasure to a diabetic person, but it is certainly not the right choice.

Never Underestimate the Opposition: One must never underestimate the strength of those who oppose. Whether it is people outside that are against it or one's vices within – never misjudge or downplay their power to influence thoughts and actions. Ignoring and

belittling their abilities leads to nowhere but defeat. Thus, if one is on the path of pleasure, do not underestimate the strength of fulfillment, for it can empower one to withdraw from the wrong and embrace the right. Moreover, if one is on the path of fulfillment, one must not undermine the power of pleasure, for it can distract from righteousness.

Never Divulge Deepest Secrets: One must not freely disclose the secrets to others, especially when in doubt. People around will start doubting if one needlessly speaks about the deepest, most important secrets of life in public. This consequently breeds self-doubt and harms the thought process and the ability to make the right decisions. Even on the spiritual path, if one reveals the progress of Sadhana to someone who doubts their ability, then the energy of that suspicion would influence Sadhana adversely. These few teachings from Ravana's life edify us about the depth of his spiritual knowledge.

Being an Asura, Ravana needed to have a primary education. "My brothers and I never had an education to speak of. No Brahmin was ready to take us for free even if we worked for them" (16). Ravana never showed any interest in his father's teachings; many times, he and his siblings mocked him. "In our mud verandah, Kumbakarna, Soorpanakha, and I mimicked them. Only my youngest sibling, Vibhishana, watched with awe. His eyes used to be fixed on the Brahmins as he listened to their jabbering with rapt attention" (16). The above incidents follow his father's transfer of properties to Kubera.

Ravana and his family were left with nothing. Their growing up was very difficult. However, in all these situations, Ravana never strayed from the path of righteousness. They learned that the truth could be bent to suit one's needs. Ravana said that their Dharma was based on simple things, "Our Dharma was based on simple things: a man should be true to

his words; he should speak from his words; he should speak from his heart and not do anything he considers wrong. One should not cheat even if one is sure to fail. One should honor women and not insult anyone. If there was justice, we had to fight it at any costs" (ATV 17).

According to the quotation, Ravana redefines the notion of righteousness, the value readily attached to Rama's image. Here, he references Rama's mistreatment of Sita and Surpanakha in the traditional Ramayana. He also questions the way Rama has shot Bali to death from behind while the latter is fighting with Sugriva. Invoking a warrior's principle (Buddha), Ravana affirms that "one should not cheat even if one is sure to fail." Such criticism of Rama's actions, which is commonly practiced in the oppositional telling of The Ramayana, is reiterated in Asura for two exciting reasons.

First and foremost, the legitimacy of Rama dharma is exposed and challenged by the alternative Asura dharma, which is not adequately represented. This suggests that one supreme dharma type is irrelevant and no longer valid. Referring to the warfare strategy that is deployed by Rama's army when they attack Lanka at night time while people are asleep, Ravana remarks, "We are dealing with an enemy who has no scruples, no sense of fair play and dharma. They are ruthless barbarians who will stoop to any levels to achieve their goals" (ATV 365). Aversion caused by unfair techniques is similarly shared by Bhadra, a common Asura man who witnesses what his king (Ravana) is up against, "at the same time; he faced a sly and ruthless enemy who did not care even when civilians were killed and burnt enemy cities through arson and treachery" (ATV 367).

Bhadra's objection to Rama's warfare has a twofold effect here. First, it directly brings Rama's heroic embodiment, particularly an aspect of his righteousness or Dharmavira, into question. Here, if readers identify with Bhadra, what Rama's army does needs to be revised. He states that it was "the sudden attack in the dead of night, flamed-tipped arrows were shot towards the marketplace" (ATV 355) and goes on to say, "people ran out. Screams rang through the sky. Flesh burned. Houses were gutted and thick, black smoke swirled upwards. It was like being in hell" (ATV 355). This unfair play, as described by Bhadra while he was running for his life, casts a shadow on Rama's reputation of compassion.

Another reason why Rama's Dharmavira is being brought up is that it is pertinent to the ancient history, or say, the mythical history concerning the Deva versus the Asura conflicts. The relevant questions concerning who the Aryans are and how they are connected with the Indus Valley Civilization are still debatable today. From what is presented in the novel *Asura*, it is clear where the author stands. Anand Neelakantan believes that the Asuras were the civilized people of the Harappa who had lived peacefully until the invasion by the Deva or Aryan, which was led by their supreme God, Indra. The unfair strategic attack of Rama's army on the Asura kingdom is used comparatively as a point of reference in explaining the cause of the decline of the Indus Valley civilization.

Identifying himself with the Asura, the tribe that settled by the river banks and were civilized, Ravana recounts that the Asura civilization was at its peak before the Aryan's invasion, and the society was much more culture-oriented as there was no efficient leadership or plan for national defense. This makes the city an easy target for the invaders. Ravana reminds himself of the ancient history of his Asura tribe as if he wants to suggest that the history is now repeating itself when the same group of people resort to the same tactic in

conquering the other's land. Lanka is now brutally attacked by the Deva army in the same fashion as how things had happened to the Harappa. What arises in Ravana's mind is the memory of the horse-riding nomad tribes invading the Asura (people of the Harappa), ultimately leading to their civilization's decline and destruction.

"The mighty Asura army met the horse-riding savage tribes near the river Jhelum. The leader of the plunderers was named Indra...Thousands were slain; women, irrespective of age, were gang-raped, children burned alive, and granaries plundered. Magnificent cities crumbled" (ATV 22). By connotation, Ravana means to stress that the Deva/Aryan tribe, to which Rama belonged, is uncivilized and the way that they invade the Asura (comparatively, the Harappan) in order to usurp the city is blatantly barbaric. Therefore, the badge of righteousness (Dharmavira) attached to Rama is questionable.

All over India, the death of Ravana is celebrated by burning his image as he was portrayed as so evil that people celebrate his death. Ravana is one of the most fabulous kings ever to rule Lanka. Only during his reign did the country flourish to a large extent. Even today, people in Sri Lanka consider him the best king ever to rule. Ravana had made a name for himself in all fields, from science to medicine. It was not just his knowledge that made him a man people admired and feared. As he is said to be a great devotee of Lord Shiva, he meditates for years to please him; one cannot deny that he is a highly ardent follower. He was so impressive to Lord Shiva that he granted him the ability to wield heavenly weapons, a privilege that could only be attained by a dedicated follower.

Ravana was capable of performing ten separate skills. This is portrayed by depicting him as a ten-headed king. However, Ravana is also portrayed as having nine heads, as he had offered a head to Lord Shiva to please him. In addition, Ravana is portrayed as the writer of

the Siddha medical text Arka Prakasham and the Hindu astrology text Ravana Samhita.

Ravana was well-versed in both political science and Siddha. He was also an expert in the Vedas and astrology.

People believe the war between Rama and Ravana started only because Ravana abducted Sita, but this is not true. People fail to remember what had happened to Surpanakha. The war started with Lakshmana cutting off Surpanakha's nose after she had proposed to Lord Rama. Even after Lakshmana's act, people consider them tremendous and Godly. Ravana, like any other brother who would take revenge for what had happened to his younger sister, took revenge on them, and for this reason, he is considered an evil monster.

Sri Lankans neither build temples nor worship Ravana, but they see him as the greatest king betrayed by his brother, whom he loved so much and met a tragic end. For them, he was the king who resisted invaders, one who was blessed with abundant knowledge, and the one who was betrayed by his brother when he tried to avenge his sister's honor? People consider Ravana, who had abducted Sita, as evil and worship Rama, who had sent the same Sita into exile when she was pregnant. Once the war was over and before they could return to Ayodhya, she underwent an ordeal by fire in order to clear herself of infidelity. When they return to Ayodhya, Rama discovers that the people still do not believe she is chaste, and he banishes the queen into the desert. Rama, who wanted to prove himself as the greatest king, sent his wife, who was pregnant with his child, into exile, and they called it Dharma.

Rama could not even protect his wife, who left everything and accompanied him when he was sent to exile for 14 years. Later in his life, after Sita had given birth, the family

was reunited, and again, there was still a question that doubted her chastity. Sita, who cannot bear this torture anymore, calls Mother Earth to take her away with her, and Mother Earth swallows her. Rama, the actual reason for Sita's death, is considered a great king and worshiped as God.

It was said that Sita was Ravana's daughter, and he had kidnapped her daughter just to protect her from the deva kings after seeing what they had done to his younger sister, Surpanakhai. The Devas and the Asuras are two different clans, and their practices differ significantly. For the Asuras, the Devas were always a threat. The Deva kings, to enlarge their boundaries, attacked the Asura villages and plundered their wealth, raped the women, and killed everyone. Ravana then decided to build a nation for his Asura clan where everyone was considered equal and could live happily. To take revenge on the Devas, who had done considerable hurt to the Asuras, he decided to broaden his boundaries. He took war on the Deva kingdoms, and the Asura army did what they had experienced in the hands of Devas to them.

Devas worshiped lord Vishnu, and the Asuras worshiped Lord Shiva. Devas read the Vedas and Puranas and kept performing pujas, and they practiced the caste system. They considered the other caste as untouchable, but it was the same in that the Asura clan treated everyone equally. It is because of this practice of the Devas that the caste system emerged, and if they had not started it, then everyone would live as equals, and there would not be anything like the downtrodden and the untouchables. Ravana comments on Devas that "They will uproot the current system, demolish a million myths, and rewrite history" (ATV 41).

Even in the war field, the Devas did not follow the rules of the war. Most of the time, Ravana's Empire was attacked at night; the winch was against the rules of war. One

Hanuman entered Lanka at night and was caught by the Asura army; however, he escaped and set fire to the whole of Lanka. The great king Rama killed Bali through foul means. When monkey king Bali indulges in a fight with his brother Sugriva, Rama hides behind the trees, shoots Bali with arrows, and kills him, which is against ethics; still, people consider him a great person. When he decided to build a bridge to Lanka, Rama wanted to perform the purohit rites and asked his followers to bring a great sage to perform it. He said that Ravana had mastered it. Ravana, a half-Brahmin, performed the purohit rites when Lord Rama constructed the Rama Seth to lead his monkey brigade to attack Lanka. After a thousand years of penance, Ravana prayed to Lord Brahma for a blessing of immortality. However, the latter politely declined, saying his life would be concentrated on his novel.

Ravana's brother Vibhishana, who has shifted sides during the war, reveals the secret about Ravana to Rama on the tenth day of the war. Only after Vibhishana betrayed his brother, who had loved him so much, could Rama kill Ravana. Ravana was a great practitioner of statecraft. After Rama stroked an arrow in Ravana's navel, he sent Lakshmana to visit Ravana and pick his brain about diplomacy and statecraft from the dying monarch.

One of the Qualities of Ravana, he is a Gentleman. During the war between Lord Rama and Ravana, Sita was still in Ravana's custody. Even during the war, Ravana lost his soldiers and family members but never harmed Sita. He had thought of killing Sita once, but he gave up the idea of thinking of it as a cowardly act, in which no demon would ever do that. People always tend to view Ravana as a villain for his one big mistake, but no one knows that one can also learn so many good qualities from him.

Above are Ravana's good qualities, which he possesses. However, Ravana's bad qualities took over his good qualities, and Ravana became a threat to humanity or Dharma. It is believed that lord Rama Kills Ravana and Protects the Dharma in Treta yuga. The only mortals, Kartavirya Arjuna and Vanara Vali, who could physically defeat him. He was the Emperor of the Three Worlds. With his combined might and intelligence, Ravana conquered not only He is the supreme ruler of Asuras (demons) in three distinct realms, ruling not only humans but also celestials and other beasts. Ravana Sanhita, a book considered the holy grail of Hindu Astrology, was initially authored by Ravana.

His Pushpaka Vimana, which Lord Rama used to fly back to Sita after her rescue, is very popular. However, what has yet to be widely known is that Ravana had several such aircraft and airports for landing. Some of the locations in Sri Lanka that are still mentioned are Weragantota in Mahiyangana, Wariyapola in Kurunegala, Thotupola Kanda in Horton Plains, and Gurulupotha in Mahiyangana to as airports Ravana used. Legend has it that Ravana had a flying chariot (Pushpak), and he flew Sita to Lanka. So, Ravana was rich and had a private Jet. Ravan's empire was huge, spreading across India, Malaysia, and several other places. Ravana was one of the distinguished fighters in Angampora, the traditional martial arts of Sin hale.

When a man goes to great lengths to achieve his dreams, breaking down barriers and overcoming obstacles, the world usually applauds him. He is praised and supported, revered, and written about. However, one man, replete with the admirable qualities one loves to see in others and ourselves, was abhorred by history.

Anand Neelakantan accomplishes the deconstruction of the Ramayana dream into the general arrangement of occasions and may help the legends remember the divine being, which are the best plots of senior police and military. Who gets Ravana? He is not a rebel. He is a ruler whom Rama talks with splendid expressions. That is why Rama asked Lakshman to dissect Ravana's administration craftsmanship while Ravana was at the last minute.

In each other's society story, it is said that Rama needed the most learned Brahmin cleric to make eggs sooner than surrendering. When he asked, everybody said that the most logical Brahmin lived outside Ravana. Rama sends Ravana a challenge to return and yawns to crush Ravana. Ravana touched base at Rameswaram, did Jagi, and favored Rama sooner than the battle for his appearance. This story has yet to be utilized in Epics; however, such a declaration is not required for other fanciful individuals. This kind of reprobate was observed in the Indian convention several years back—the answer to why Ravana is sufficient.

The idea of telling from the victor's perspective is valid. This work is particularly likable because it tells how the author recounts the story from the point of view of individuals, and the complexity between the two stories is exceptionally excellent. Ravana recounted the story from the beginning and informed readers concerning the troubles he saw in Lanka as a negative thing and about the incredible objectives conveyed to Mahabali. When he sat in the honored position of Lanka, the story is from the Lord's point of view. In a downright appraisal of that, one can find that Bhadra, a customary man faithful to Ravana, more often did not comprehend numerous things and recounted the story from the point of view of a poor man. While everyone has heard that Lanka has become a golden nation, Bhadra informs everyone more regarding the situation in Lanka.

Another proper part of *Asura*, with the assistance of Anand Neelakantan's digital book, is that the writer is not attempting to attack *Ramayana* or acclaim Ravana; however, he is just endeavoring to fill in the losing story. That makes us counsel standards and concede that wrongdoing might be wrongdoing since it is introduced along these lines. There might be stories or different intentions behind Ravana's activities that prompted his thrashing. For what reason did Ravana capture Sita? Does he genuinely plan to make him ruler or have another reason on his back? His activities have different purposes, and his aims may be better than those exhibited. As a rule, victory affronts the washouts; perhaps this happens to Ravana.

A theory like deconstruction used in this book has changed people's views in the 21st century. It has made people think from different perspectives and taught them not to judge anyone based on their actions. Everyone is excellent/wrong in their way, and one should not be branded as good/evil based on their actions. For example, people who taught Ravana as an evil character changed their minds, and they started to see the good in him.

Moreover, the author consciously constructs a fictional world within this physical world. No superhuman, no Godly powers are attributed to the characters. Everyone becomes instrumental to fate and acts according to their role. *Asura* questions the heroes' authenticity and the epic's God-like figures. Everything under the universe is questioned in an age of deconstruction, multiple identities, and innumerable possible voices. Rationality and logical reasoning lead to new realities, fiction, and narratives in literature.

The novel becomes unique through its narrative style and representation of the mythical characters as it rephrases the version of Rama, Ravana, Sita, Mandodari, Bhadra, Soorpanaka, and several other known and unnoticed characters. The novel seems realistic

when the characters attain roles as usual: ordinary, ambitious human beings who strive for their existence. The novel's author provides logical and justifiable reasons with comprehensive human potential. Hence, the narrative strategy should be appreciated.

Narratology, which deals with the properties, style, weaving pattern, authorial stands, verbal evidence, perspectives, voices, standards, notions, etc., of narratives, illuminates the discussion of the text in various topics and contexts. Narration is a process that started from time immemorial, but its wide application and exploration of different possibilities make each text of literature unique. As mentioned, the story is narrated by Ravana and Bhadra. Ravana starts the narration and uses flashback mode. Amid that, Bhadra supports and follows the same event with his viewpoint. Thus, the novel shares two first-person narratives that are intertwined. After Ravana becomes the King of Lanka, both consecutively narrate different events in their chronological order, and with Ravana's death, Bhadra remains the single narrator who provides the rest of the story.

The narrative in *Asura* covers the entire life of Ravana, Bhadra, and Sita, while Rama, Mandodari, and other secondary characters are portrayed only as the primary characters' lives. The plot begins with Ravana's death scene and develops as a flashback to his life from childhood to deathbed. The other narrator, Bhadra, who at first supports Ravana's narration, later acquires his voice as the promoter of the story. The reader can see different people associated with them between these narrations. The marginalized characters, too, appear in the fiction. The voices of the other characters are unheard, but they reflect the minds of those characters according to Ravana and Bhadra's views. Sita, Mandodari, Mala, Soorpanaka, Arasi, and Ravana's Mother are some female characters who have yet to hear voices in the fiction directly.

However, if read seriously between the lines, readers can see that the silence in the classic gets explored here, and the submerged voices are given representation. Though the female characters have no direct representation in the novel, their mindset, behavior, character, etc, are projected through the voices of Ravana and Bhadra to various extents.

Their unarticulated voice is heard through the articulated voices of the narrators. These articulations may deconstruct the myths.

There is a flaw that is built into every person. No individual is born without a flaw. Every God does make mistakes. A person should not be judged by the mistakes they make. No one has the right to judge another person, for no one is perfect. This includes Gods, too. No single person is greater than the other, and nobody is wrong. Everyone has their way.

Certain things will be encouraged by a few people, while a few will dislike the same thing. It does not mean that things are bad. It is just that everyone's perspective differs.

Asura personifies two opposing cultures into the persons of Rama and Ravana. In contrast, both cultures had a social pecking order per economic status; the Vedic culture introduced the concept of birth linked with a man's profession. While Ravana dared to accept Mandodari as his wife and queen even after she was gang raped by the Vanara soldiers, Rama repeatedly asked Sita to prove her chastity and banished a chaste and pregnant Sita from his side. While one culture was about doing one's duty, the other was hedonistic. By raising these differences, Neelakantan questions why an entire civilization and its king were termed demonic and another culture and its king, despite prejudices and shortcomings, applauded as Dharma and Lord.

From a man's perspective, things would have looked good, but from another man's perspective, the thing would have looked horrible. This was the same with Ravana. Ravana

was branded as an evil demon king as he had kidnapped Rama's wife, Sita. Ravana wanted to protect his daughter from the deva kings, for he thought that his daughter Sita was suffering and would suffer more in the hands of the deva prince as the culture of the devas and asuras were different. The Devas never gave equal rights to women, whereas, in the Asuras clan, there was no discrimination between men and women.

To protect his daughter from the deva prince, Ravana kidnapped his daughter. This was his intention for kidnapping his daughter. However, others who did not know the actual intention behind the kidnap judged him for his act. For them, Ravana kidnapped Lord Rama's wife, Sita, and he was branded as an evil demon king. Even today, so many women in our country expect to get a husband like Rama, as he was faithful to his wife and had not married anyone else, although he was a king and could have as many wives as he needed. However, they fail to realize that even though he was faithful to his wife and did not marry anyone else, he failed to protect his wife, and he just let go of her when she was pregnant just because people doubted her chastity. Even after he reunited with Sita after twelve long years through the valor of his twin sons Luv and Kush, Rama again asks Sita to go through a test or prove her Chasity.

He was tired of the constant demands to prove her virtue to her husband. Sita enters the earth. Despite such things, people still expect to get a husband like Rama, who was projected as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and worshipped as a god. People liked Rama because he did what they wanted, and they disliked Ravana because he was against Rama. A person is always judged upon one single thing. That is, if one does what others want, He will be considered excellent, and if he does what he likes, he will be considered evil.

Deconstruction has taught people to refrain from following things that have been followed for years instead of looking at things from a different perspective. It helps people to understand each other. Deconstruction helps analyze the archetypes and creates a platform for people to think out of the box and not just unthinkingly follow what others say. It has also taught people not to judge others. Slam Sethu, the scaffold made of stones worked by Ram's military that associated the terrain to the island kingdom of Lanka, exists though it is now submerged. In the interim, in Lanka, Ravan's dedication to Lord Shiva earned him the regard of God.

To such an extent that he assembled his enthusiast sanctuary, this is the primary time when the sanctuary is devoted to the person who implored and not the one being petitioned. Today, it exists as Koneswaram Temple in Sri Lanka. When Raavan conveyed Sita to Lanka, he initially assumed her position in Sitakotuwa, presently a place of interest in Sri Lanka. From here, he took her to the delightful woods, which, in Valmik's content, was called Ashok Vatika. There is a genuine Ashokavanam in Sri Lanka.

When they state, "Hanuman set Lanka ablaze, " they mean that he set fire to specific pieces of Ravana's castle. The ground here is said to be dark, which is not at all like the encompassing region. The image beneath is from Ussangoda, which, as indicated by folklore, was the runway for Raavan's Pushpak Vimana. Agni Pariksha, which took place to test Sita's virtue, is said to have happened in Divurumpola in Sri Lanka. There is a tree in that accurate spot, and even today, the nearby question is settled through discussions and dialogs under that tree.

CHAPTER III DHARMA OF

DHURYODHANA

One of ancient India's two principal Sanskrit epics is the Mahabharata; the other is the Ramayana. It tells the epic story of the Kurukshetra War and the princes of Pandava and Kaurava and their respective endings. It also contains philosophical and devotional material, such as the Bhagavad Gita. The Mahabharata is considered a holy book in Hinduism and one of the longest epic poems ever written. Duryodhana, a complex character in the Indian epic Mahabharata, embodies the duality of human nature. His story delves deep into themes of dharma, ambition, jealousy, righteousness, and the consequences of one's actions.

Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, was born to King Dhritarashtra and Queen Gandhari. His birth was marked by inauspicious omens, foreshadowing the tumultuous path he would tread. From a young age, Duryodhana displayed traits of arrogance and entitlement, nurtured by the adulation and influence of his conniving uncle Shakuni. His rivalry with the Pandavas, particularly with Yudhishtira and Bhima, shaped the course of his life and the fate of the Kuru dynasty.

At the heart of Duryodhana's character is his insatiable thirst for power and his obsession with outshining the Pandavas. Despite being born into royalty, he felt overshadowed by the Pandavas' virtues and accomplishments. This sense of inadequacy fueled his desire to prove himself superior at any cost, even if it meant resorting to deceit and treachery.

Duryodhana's ambition closed his eyes to the results of his deeds, setting him on a course of the results of his deeds, setting him on a course of Duryodhana's relationship with

his family, particularly with his father Dhritarashtra, was fraught with tension and manipulation. Dhritarashtra's favoritism towards his son closed his eyes to Duryodhana's flaws, enabling his reckless behavior and exacerbating the rift between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Despite Gandhari's attempts to instill virtue in her son, Duryodhana remained stubborn and defiant, refusing to heed her counsel.

Duryodhana's interactions with his cousins, the Pandavas, were marked by envy and resentment. He viewed them as obstacles to his ambitions rather than as kin, fostering a deep-seated animosity that culminated in the Kurukshetra War. Duryodhana's refusal to acknowledge the Pandavas' rightful claim to the throne and to offer them even a sliver of land in the kingdom led to escalating tensions and, ultimately, to the war that decimated the Kuru dynasty.

One of Duryodhana's defining moments was the infamous game of dice, orchestrated by Shakuni to humiliate the Pandavas and strip them of their kingdom. Duryodhana's participation in the rigged game revealed his moral bankruptcy and willingness to stoop to any depth to achieve his goals. His refusal to return to the Pandavas' kingdom, even after they completed their exile, demonstrated his obstinacy and his disregard for dharma.

Despite his flaws, Duryodhana was not devoid of redeeming qualities. He was fiercely loyal to his comrades, particularly Karna, whom he regarded as his closest ally. Despite his low birth, Duryodhana's unwavering support for Karna was a testament to his capacity for friendship and willingness to defy societal norms. However, his loyalty often closed his eyes to Karna's flaws, leading to tragic consequences for both.

Duryodhana's downfall was sealed by his arrogance and inability to recognize his limitations. His refusal to heed the warnings of wise counsel, such as Vidura and Bhishma, only hastened his demise. Even on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Duryodhana remained defiant to the end, facing his enemies with unwavering resolve. His death at the hands of Bhima symbolized the inevitable consequence of his actions and the futility of his quest for power.

Duryodhana's character in the Mahabharata is a nuanced portrayal of the human condition, encompassing virtues and vices. His tragic flaw, his relentless pursuit of power at any cost, ultimately led to his downfall and the destruction of his dynasty. However, amidst the darkness of his character, glimpses of humanity and complexity make him a compelling figure in the epic narrative.

Duryodhana, a central character in the epic Mahabharata, is not typically worshiped like gods and goddesses. However, there are some localized instances where he is venerated or respected, albeit not universally. In certain areas, especially in South India, small pockets of people admire Duryodhana for his valor, leadership, and unwavering determination despite his flaws. These admirers see him as a complex character who displays courage and loyalty to his family and allies. They often focus on his sense of duty and commitment to his principles, even if they were at odds with the Pandavas.

Anand Neelakantan decoded the narrative enigma with Suyodhana, along with the narrative shift. Suyodhana becomes the representation of the unnoticed community through the novel's narration. The minority language distanced itself from the language of the community because the narration became the language here. The population count in this research did not determine the minority community. However, through the focus, vitality, and

privilege given to a particular society, the notable character representations of non-privileged communities were Karna, Jara, Ekalavya, Vidhura, and Sathyavathi. In this, Suyodhana and Kripa, even from an aristocratic society, voice the voiceless. Apart from Suyodhana, Ekalavya, Jara, and Karna took the same majority language of narrative elements as their deterritorialization, which means their representation of the minor community through not in the language of the minor community but in the language of the majority community, which is the narratives.

This deterritorialization was often used more to shout out to the majority community than the minority community. However, it would also become a literary note in this narrative language. Vidhura, being the prime minister of the guru clan, had been questioned for his knowledge when Vidhura quoted Vedas for the role of the women. "What right has a shudra to quote the scriptures?" (ARD 25).

Throughout the novel, beyond his knowledge Vidhura is mistreated because of his birth. Anand Neelakantan lighted the unuttered pain of Vidhura beyond his wisdom. Political integration of the minority community was noted when guru Drona entered Hastinapura and encountered a Nishadha boy near the fort gate. On seeing a nishadha, Drona became enraged because of the presence of a nishadha near him. Seeing a nishadha as a minority community in the novel, the political system impelled them with its logocentric approach. The Nishadha community encountered a political upheaval throughout the entire novel.

This was wisely depicted in Anand Neelakantan's (2013) statement below: What a nishadha so close to the main fort gate of Hastinapura! An untouchable walking on the royal highway? Is this how the king runs his kingdom? What can one expect of a blind man? It is no wonder such transgressions of dharma happen here. (ARD 32) Vidhura was seen only as a

politically embellished aristocrat. However, even Vidhura's voice remains unheard. Vidhura sacrificed his entire life for the welfare of Hastinapura. He rarely visited his family. Being a prime minister, he never used those luxuries to which he is an actual right. Instead, he drowned in an inferiority complex which he dwelled inside him. Though he was more loyal to his motherland and did not even use his chariot for his purposes and built his own house himself, he cannot walk into the court of Hastinapura with broad shoulders because of the moral inferiority he had within him.

Anand Neelakantan elucidated clearly in the below statement: Vidhura stood silent, thinking that the kind of education he received would now be impossible for any shudra boy. Things had changed so much for the worse in this land. Like him, no one with the baggage of low caste could aspire to be even a clerk in government service, let alone the prime minister of Hastinapura. Merit no longer counted. Every position was based on caste. (ARD 85) Karna, known for his identity as a shudra boy, rejected or mocked his longing for knowledge. Apart from the political integration, Karna represented the collective identity of his community. Karna was mocked and hated throughout his life because of his dreams beyond his community. When Drona rejected Karna for his birth, but those who seek knowledge will.

As stated in Anand Neelakantan's following statement, "Sudra has found God in love by serving society. Who or where someone is born has no bearing on this. You can be the Brahmin father's shudra son or vice versa" (ARD 69). When Parasurama found out about Karna's cheating on him based on his caste, Parasurama, who celebrated Karna as his son, throned him at the very moment. Karna was the collective identity of Shudras.

According to the Vedas, a Brahmin is someone who has searched for and discovered Brahma or someone who has discovered God inside themselves through knowledge-based

ideas. Do I and Drona seem to have found God? Most days, I cannot even find my way home. One who has discovered God in action via doing their duties is considered a Kshatriya. A Vaishya is a person who has discovered God via commerce and generating wealth, and A wanted to uplift their life and had the quest for knowledge and wisdom. The minority community would have an identity crisis forever, and they were restricted towards the chase for identity, being small or minor in number; apart from having an individual identity, their representation of self would be a collective identity. Individualism would be lacking in the minority community. However, here, Karna remained as a representation of the collective identity. Self was a total lack in a minimal population. Hence, it would be a collected identity.

In the case of Karna, Anand Neelakantan used narrative language and plot enhancement in favor of Karna to make him an individual representation of the collective identity. Along with Karna, Ekalyva was another individual representation of the collective identity of the Nishadha community. The minority community revealed itself in Anand Neelakantan's statement "What caste are you?" Drona repeated, this time to Jara, who blinked a few times. He did not know. Nobody had told him. Nobody had ever asked. "Boy," Drona said to Ekalyva, "beware of this casteless fellow. He is evil. He will bring you bad luck. Could you get rid of him? You at least have a caste. It may be a low one, but you still have something. You have your caste dharma. He has nothing. No values move him to life, and he will stoop to anything. He is no better than an animal. Look at his evil face. As long as he is with you, you will have no luck. Now, return to the forest and live a fulfilling life that befits your caste. Be a good nishadha; perhaps in the next life, you will be born into a higher caste.

Gradually, through many lives and diligently following your caste dharma, you will become a Brahmin in one of your rebirths; the Gods have ordained that you spend this life as a

nishadha. Accept what has been ordained. Do not ruin it by associating with low people like that boy and fall further." (ARD 115). However, the pain of the nishadha was more than that of a shudra. Karna was rejected, but Ekalyva was served his right thumb. Ekalavya, throughout the novel, is searching for an identity as a nishadha. However, Ekalavya's pages remained unread. When Karna considered to learn, it passed onto Ekalavya, and he practiced independently by observing Drona. When he revealed himself as a learner, his thumb worked for it. Ekalyva seemed to be an iconic depiction of the minority community.

Hence, he became an individual delineation of a collective identity. When Varanavata was built, and the new city became concrete, Ekalavya's aunt and sons moved into Indraprastha for a new beginning. However, even there, they were treated based on their communal origin, which can be noted when one of the cousins of Ekalavya asked about their identity as a minority community. Even in the mind of a young boy, it has been registered to the fact that they were not allowed to seek their identity and individualism because of being dark-skinned.

Anand Neelakantan states, what is dharma?" the untouchable women asked the mother of the five great warriors. "Perhaps you will not understand it now but do not worry. Eat and rest." Kunti smiled again. At that moment, the youngest Nishadha boy ran into the room. When he saw Kunti, he hesitated momentarily and ran to his mother. (ARD 299) Even Mahaswetha Devi voiced for the Nishadha woman and her five innocently murdered sons in Varanavata instead of Pandavas in her short stories collection Kurukshetra.

Anand Neelakantan depicted the unheard melancholy of the woman and her sons, who have died without knowing their purpose of birth, the reason for their death, and the betrayal of trust. The Grand narratives have blurred the murder by Kunti and her sons of dharma.

Suppose Yudhisthira should not have allowed the massacre of that woman along with her sons instead of Kunti and the Pandavas. Being a prince, Yudhishtra should have voiced out for the truth and justice instead of trapping the innocents.

This massacre of the minority community was left unnoticed and unquestioned. If the minority community had been seen without the theoretical assertion and if minority or colonized had been seen through the empathetic lens, people who would have been less spoken of in literature and the people whose suffering have been dominated over the plot line that revolved around a particular aristocratic society can also be seen as a minority community in the literary as well as social context. Those people have been considered minorities in social contexts because the literature of any particular era or period is focused on or written in favor of the happenings of the upper-class society for political, social, and economic reasons.

Such people of literary minority during a particular period in a literary context because of the systematic domination of certain characters of the aristocratic society. This happened mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, the traditional plots revolved around the hero of the higher society and greater moral values, which had been the literary setup of text during that period. Secondly, the dominance of the higher-class society acted in such a way that the life and death of the poor were not given the same value as the aristocrats.

Thus, through these two broad understandings of the text, the aristocratic society had been taken as the majority community, and the oppressed had been considered the minority community, which took the subplot in this text as a minority literature. Jara, along with Ekalyva, was the commoner representation in the novel. Jara was not a mythological character but was born out of the imagination of Anand Neelakantan to speak for the minority in the

grand narratives not only against the cultural orientation along with the social and the political custom but also against the taboo that had been created through centuries.

The centered idea of the blurred vision was made in favor of the victor's recorded history, and all the victims were hidden under the label. Jara was the outcome of a distinguished and disintegrated vision through naming the blind dog Dharma. His total manifestation of dharma and its proclamation had been questioned, and including the characters portrayed as representing the existing community made it more of a minority literature.

The individual consciousness of Jara and his moral journey from thief to a disciple of God is seen throughout. Jara was a minor reflection of the backward community, and he connected the novel between the author and society. Jara made the author responsible for representing the men of the minor social community. General Hiranyadhanus, the father of Ekalyva, was a complex creation of the social enigma, which was unique and the foremost consciousness of the individual response to collectivism.

The existence of the lineage through Hiranyadhanus and Ekalyva created and demonstrated hope for their community. On the other hand, Mayasura, the most significant architect, remained unfocused on his efficacy and got deluded in political integration. The authors have made the entities stick to the particular and centralized interpretation of the collective consciousness among the diverse community, which was minor or small in its role in the grand narratives.

"The Roll of the Dice" by Anand Neelakantan is the second book in the *"Ajaya"* series, which offers a unique perspective on the epic Indian mythological tale of the Mahabharata,

focusing on the Kauravas, the antagonists of the original story. In "*The Roll of the Dice*," Neelakantan delves into the complex characters and political intrigues of the Kaurava clan, particularly Duryodhana, the eldest Kaurava prince.

The narrative begins with the aftermath of the Swayamvara, where Duryodhana loses the opportunity to marry Draupadi to his cousin, the Pandava prince Arjuna. Duryodhana's ambition and desire for power drove him to plot against the Pandavas, especially his cousins Yudhishtira, Bhima, and Arjuna. He resents their growing influence and popularity among the people of Hastinapura. Duryodhana's envy is further fueled by the advice of his cunning uncle, Shakuni, who manipulates him into believing that the Pandavas pose a threat to his claim to the throne.

Duryodhana becomes increasingly obsessed with undermining his cousins' legitimacy as tensions escalate between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. He engineers various schemes to humiliate and discredit them, including the infamous game of dice where Yudhishtira gambles away his kingdom, wealth, and even his wife, Draupadi.

Neelakantan explores Duryodhana's psyche, portraying him not as a one-dimensional villain but a flawed and deeply conflicted character driven by his insecurities and thirst for validation. Despite his ruthless actions, Duryodhana is depicted as a tragic figure trapped in a cycle of ambition and resentment.

The novel also delves into the dynamics within the Kaurava family, highlighting the strained relationships between Duryodhana and his brothers, particularly his virtuous and righteous younger brother, Dushasana. Duryodhana's toxic leadership and the manipulative

influence of Shakuni further exacerbate the familial tensions, leading to tragic consequences for all involved.

"The Roll of the Dice" challenges the traditional narrative of the Mahabharata by presenting a nuanced portrayal of its characters, especially Duryodhana, shedding light on the complexities of power, ambition, and moral ambiguity. Neelakantan's retelling offers readers a fresh perspective on one of the most enduring myths of Indian literature, inviting them to reconsider notions of heroism and villainy.

The story begins with the Kauravas and Pandavas as children, each gradually displaying the temperament and skills to play a significant role in future events. Bheem is muscular and brawn but little brain. Suyodhana is passionate and stubborn, to the point of foolhardiness. Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, is imbued with Brahmin ideologies and superstitions. The plot thickens as the princes grow up together in the Hastinapur palace, permanently shadowed by the conflicting ambitions of their influential mothers and bound by the strict Kshatriya code imposed by Grand Regent Bhishma. Pawns of destiny are in the hands of vested interests, and the cousins and their allies move inevitably towards internecine conflict and ultimate chaos.

Guru Dronacharya is usually perceived as the great warrior of Brahmin heritage. However, here, we also see his feet of clay and rigid ideologies, which make him both vulnerable and arrogant. Indians are familiar with the story of Ekalavya and his yearning to become a skilled archer under Drona.

Ultimately, Drona asks him to chop off his thumb as gurudakshina. What is not usually related is why Drona made the horrific request. He had promised Kunti he would make Arjuna the best archer in the land. However, Ekalavya, a poor Nishada (low caste), stood in his way. The Kurus held Drona's livelihood and his son's future in their hands. These considerations drove Drona to steal Ekalavya's gift and bestow it on Arjuna, a Kshatriya prince.

Anand Neelakantan beautifully portrays the Dharma along with the mindset, lifestyle, and caste domination of the Mahabharata time, dexterously interweaving a series of pre-battle events and confrontations that eventually coalesce in unfolding the dramatic tragedy.

Conventional narrations of the Mahabharata overlook facts he has skilfully incorporated into the narrative: Arjuna was not the first or only one to hit fish's eye at the Swami Mahavidyalaya in Draupadi – it was Karna, King of Anga; Krishna fostered hatred towards Suyodhana and love for Arjuna, in his sister Shubadhra's heart, so that she rejected one to marry the other; based on Vedic law, a woman could marry four men, beyond that she was considered a prostitute. However, to prevent strife between the Pandavas, Kunti disregarded this law, and Draupadi was compelled to become the common wife of the five brothers.

The book depicts Suyodhana questioning the norms that uplifted a few and banished the rest to poverty so that they could survive on the whims and fancies of the superior castes. In a rare and clear-eyed portrayal, the book shows him as a man of unwavering convictions. Even when Arjuna steals his first love, Shubadhra, he does not retaliate, realizing it to be her wish and not his cousin's. Suyodhana is depicted as a man who believes that merit and not caste should be the basis of education, reward, and recognition. He stands alone in an age of conventional behavior. At a supreme moment in the book, during the graduation ceremony,

when Arjuna refuses to dual Karna because of his caste, it is Suyodhana who breaks every norm and faces the ire of both the nobles and priests to elevate Karna to become King of Anga and Arjuna's equal. Shakuni, Prince of Gandhara, the mastermind behind the family feud, is portrayed with the nuances usually missing from conventional narrations.

Vividly, we see how his burning desire to wreak revenge on India, just as Bhishma destroyed his own country of Gandhara and abducted his sister, Princess Gandhari, to become the wife of blind Prince Dhritarashtra of Hastinapura, drives every move he makes. Astute and intelligent, he suggests that Suyodhana challenge Yudhishtira, a gambling addict, to a game of dice. Playing with loaded dice made from his father's bones, Shakuni wins for the Kauravas, many times over, until the Pandavas lose everything – land, property, caste, and even their shared wife, Draupadi. The book ends with the command for Draupadi to be brought before the Kaurava Clan. Her fate lies in their hands.

The whole idea of the book is different and quite scintillating, as no one would have thought of writing from the perspective of Duryodhana (sadhana). This book will take you to the world of Mahabharata with the Duryodhana as the "hero" who always raises questions against the Orthodox and conservative caste system. From making low caste KARNA the king of Anga and making a Brahmin boy ASWATHAMA his best friend, he breached the code of DHARMA which depicts his valor against the Orthodox rituals—eating with low caste and is concerned about raising a society where instead of caste, talent, and hard work should be the criteria for the status of the person.

This book depicts another perspective of the dharma. Duryodhana, a central character in the Indian epic Mahabharata, is often portrayed as the antagonist due to his role in the Kurukshetra War and his rivalry with the Pandavas. However, like every character in the

Mahabharata, Duryodhana embodies complex traits, including principles or dharma that guide his actions. Here is an exploration of a few aspects of Duryodhana's dharma:

Duty towards his lineage: Duryodhana's foremost dharma lies in upholding the honor and legacy of his family, the Kuru dynasty. As the eldest son of King Dhritarashtra, he believes that he is the legitimate heir of Hastinapura. His sense of duty towards his lineage often clashes with the claims of the Pandavas, especially Yudhishtira, whom he views as a threat to his inheritance.

Protecting his rights: Duryodhana believes fervently in his right to rule and is ready to go to any lengths to keep his position. Despite knowing that the Pandavas have a legitimate claim to the throne, he refuses to share power with them, fearing it would diminish his authority. His commitment to protecting his rights drives much of his actions, including his refusal to return even a single village to the Pandavas, as suggested by Lord Krishna during negotiations.

Sense of camaraderie and loyalty: Despite his flaws, Duryodhana is not devoid of positive qualities. He values loyalty and friendship, particularly towards his close associates like Karna and Shakuni. His bond with Karna, in particular, is unwavering, and he stands by him even when others question Karna's origins or abilities. This loyalty also extends to his brothers and allies, whom he treats with respect and admiration.

Desire for recognition and validation: Duryodhana's actions are often fueled by his desire for recognition and validation from his family, peers, and society at large. Growing up in the shadow of his cousins, the Pandavas, he constantly seeks approval from his father, King Dhritarashtra, and attempts to prove himself worthy of the throne. His quest for validation

drives him to engage in acts of aggression and deceit, believing that power and conquest will earn him the respect he craves.

Code of honor and fairness: Despite being portrayed as the villain of the epic, Duryodhana adheres to his code of honor and fairness, albeit skewed. He expects others to play by the rules he sets, even if those rules are unfair or biased in his favor. He feels justified in his actions as long as they align with his understanding of right and justice, even if it means resorting to manipulation or treachery.

Duryodhana's dharma in the Mahabharata is multi-faceted and nuanced. While he is often depicted as a symbol of greed and arrogance, his character also embodies principles of loyalty, duty, and a desire for recognition. His actions, driven by a complex interplay of these values, contribute to the epic's exploration of morality, power, and the consequences of one's choice. In Anand Neelakantan's retelling of "Roll of the Dice," Duryodhana's dharma is presented differently than traditional interpretations of the Mahabharata. Neelakantan's narrative often explores the perspectives of characters typically portrayed as antagonists, providing them with depth and complexity. Here is a glimpse into Duryodhana's dharma as depicted in "Roll of the Dice":

Sense of injustice and resentment: Neelakantan delves into Duryodhana's psyche, portraying him as a character deeply affected by perceived injustices. From his birth, Duryodhana is made to feel inferior due to his blind father's preference for his cousins, the Pandavas. This sense of injustice fuels Duryodhana's resentment towards his cousins and drives his actions throughout the narrative.

Desire for equality and recognition: Unlike traditional portrayals where Duryodhana is often depicted as power-hungry and envious, Neelakantan highlights his desire for equality and recognition. Duryodhana resents the societal norms that favor the Pandavas simply because of their birthright. He believes in meritocracy and feels that he deserves equal respect and opportunities as the eldest Kaurava prince.

Protecting his family's honor: Similar to the traditional interpretation, Duryodhana's dharma in "Roll of the Dice" revolves around protecting the honor and legacy of his family. He sees himself as the rightful heir to the throne of Hastinapura and is determined to maintain the integrity of the Kuru dynasty. His actions, including his refusal to share the kingdom with the Pandavas, stem from his sense of duty towards his lineage.

Defiance against fate and destiny: Neelakantan portrays Duryodhana as a character who defies the notion of fate and destiny. Unlike the Pandavas, who often rely on divine intervention and prophecies, Duryodhana believes in shaping his destiny through his actions. He refuses to accept the predetermined narrative that casts him as the villain and strives to prove himself as a worthy ruler on his terms.

Complex moral ambiguity: Throughout "Roll of the Dice," Neelakantan presents Duryodhana as a morally ambiguous character whose actions are driven by a mix of noble intentions and personal grievances. While he is capable of acts of kindness and loyalty towards his friends and allies, he also resorts to manipulation and deceit to achieve his goals. This moral complexity adds depth to Duryodhana's character and challenges readers to reconsider their preconceived notions about him.

Neelakantan's portrayal of Duryodhana's dharma in "Roll of the Dice" offers a nuanced perspective that humanizes the character and explores the complexities of morality, justice, and personal agency. Duryodhana's sense of injustice and resentment in the Mahabharata is driven by several factors, shaping his understanding of dharma, Parental Favoritism: Duryodhana feels sidelined by his blind father, King Dhritarashtra, who favors his cousins, the Pandavas, over him. This favoritism creates a deep-seated resentment in Duryodhana, fueling his sense of injustice.

Birthright Denied: Despite being the eldest Kaurava prince, Duryodhana constantly faces the threat of having his birthright usurped by the Pandavas. He believes he is entitled to the throne of Hastinapura and resents any challenge to his rightful claim.

Social Discrimination: Duryodhana perceives societal bias against him due to his lineage and physical disability (being blind). He feels marginalized and unfairly judged by others, which further fuels his sense of injustice and his desire for equality and recognition.

Unfair Treatment: Duryodhana feels unfairly treated by his family and the Pandavas throughout the epic. He interprets their actions as conspiracies against him, leading him to harbor deep-seated resentment and a desire for retribution.

Quest for Justice: Duryodhana's sense of injustice motivates him to seek justice on his terms, even if it means resorting to manipulation, deceit, and violence. He believes he must restore balance and right the perceived wrongs committed against him, driving much of his actions in the epic.

Duryodhana's desire for equality and recognition in the Mahabharata is driven by his interpretation of dharma, albeit a skewed one, Meritocracy over Birthright: Duryodhana

believes in meritocracy, where one's worth is determined by abilities and actions rather than birthright. He resents the societal norms that favor the Pandavas solely based on their royal lineage, feeling that he deserves equal recognition and opportunities as the eldest Kaurava prince.

Sense of Injustice: Growing up in the shadow of his cousins, the Pandavas, Duryodhana feels a deep sense of injustice regarding the preferential treatment they receive from society and their father, King Dhritarashtra. This fuels his desire to challenge the status quo and assert his claim to power and recognition.

Striving for Respect: Duryodhana's desire for equality and recognition is rooted in his quest for respect and validation. He seeks acknowledgment for his abilities and leadership qualities, resenting any perceived slight or disrespect shown towards him by his family, peers, or rivals.

Assertion of Authority: Duryodhana's actions, such as his unwillingness to allow the Pandavas to share the kingdom or his insistence on proving his worth through feats of strength and valor, are driven by his desire to assert his authority and prove himself as a capable ruler deserving of respect and recognition.

Defiance of Fate: Unlike the Pandavas, who often rely on destiny and divine intervention, Duryodhana believes in shaping his destiny through his actions. He refuses to accept the predetermined narrative that casts him as the villain. Instead, he strives to carve out his path to power and recognition, even if it means defying societal norms and moral principles.

Duryodhana's desire for equality and recognition in the Mahabharata is intertwined with his interpretation of dharma and his quest to assert his worth and authority in the face of perceived injustices and societal biases.

Claim to the throne: Duryodhana sees himself as the legitimate successor to Hastinapura's throne, the eldest son of King Dhritarashtra. He defends his claim against the Pandavas, refusing to share power or concede any part of the kingdom to them.

Support for Karna: Duryodhana's loyalty to his friend Karna is another manifestation of his commitment to his family's honor. Despite Karna's low birth status and societal scorn, Duryodhana supports him wholeheartedly, valuing his abilities and friendship above social conventions.

Participation in the Kurukshetra War: Duryodhana's determination to protect his family's honor ultimately leads him to wage the Kurukshetra War against the Pandavas. He sees the war as a necessary means to defend his lineage and maintain his position of power, even though it leads to devastating consequences for both sides.

Duryodhana's defiance against fate and destiny in the Mahabharata is in the form of an assertion of free will: Duryodhana refuses to succumb to the idea of predestined outcomes dictated by fate or divine intervention. **Emphasis on personal agency:** He believes in shaping his destiny through actions rather than resigning himself to the whims of fate. **Struggle against predetermined roles:** Duryodhana challenges the notion that his role as the antagonist in the epic is preordained, asserting his right to define his path.

Quest for self-determination: Despite prophecies and omens foreseeing his downfall, Duryodhana strives to control his fate and prove himself as a worthy leader on his terms.

Refusal to accept defeat: Even in the face of adversity and divine interventions favoring his adversaries, Duryodhana remains steadfast in his defiance, determined to shape his destiny until the end.

Duryodhana's dharma in the Mahabharata is characterized by complex moral ambiguity.

Protecting his lineage: Duryodhana feels duty-bound to uphold the honor and legacy of his family, the Kuru dynasty, even if it means resorting to questionable means to secure his position.

Desire for equality: He resents the societal norms that favor the Pandavas due to their birthright and believes in meritocracy, striving for recognition and equality.

Loyalty and friendship: Despite his flaws, Duryodhana values loyalty and friendship, particularly towards his close associates like Karna and Shakuni, displaying shades of kindness and camaraderie amidst his ambition.

Manipulation and deceit: While he acts with a sense of duty and loyalty towards his family, Duryodhana also resorts to manipulation and deceit to achieve his goals, blurring the lines between right and wrong in his pursuit of power. Duryodhana's dharma is a complex interplay of conflicting values, where noble intentions are often intertwined with selfish ambitions and moral compromises.

Duryodhana's dharma in "Roll of the Dice" is a tapestry of conflicting values, encapsulated by his defiance against fate, his quest for equality, and his loyalty amidst ambition, epitomized in his own words: "I refuse to be defined by destiny. I shape my path, guided by the principles of equality and loyalty."

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The concept of Dharma is explored in the light through the characters Ravana and Duryodhana in the two greatest epics. Therefore, good action is necessary and central to Dharma. No one can exist even for a fraction of a second without karma, but karma should be based on moral values. The concept of Dharma for Ravana and Duryodhana is an instrument of war, but for the other characters, it is an ethical way of life.

Anand Neelakantan's character emerges as a complex figure whose actions and intentions clash with traditional dharma ideas. Ravana's portrayal transcends the simplistic dichotomy of good versus evil throughout the book, allowing readers to explore the depths of moral ambiguity and human nature's complexity.

Dharma in conflict: Ravana's journey demonstrates the difference between various Dharma interpretations. He embodies an alternative conception of justice as an asura that often conflicts with the devas' current values. His defiance of authority and dismissal of societal expectations rebel against the established order, grounded in his values of self-determination and autonomy.

The struggle for success: Ravana's hunger for control is the guiding factor in his conduct, but it is not limited to a desire for dominion over others. It is a quest for recognition and control, fueled by a deep-seated fear of injustice and marginalization. His rise to prominence is not without ambition but is also fueled by a genuine desire to fight injustice and assert his identity.

Complexity of character: Ravana's portrayal by Neelakantan transcends simple villainy, giving glimpses into his inner struggles and weaknesses. Ravana is depicted as a multifaceted being with great cruelty and unexpected acts of compassion despite his imposing stature. His interactions with other characters reveal layers of complexity, demonstrating his ability to express empathy and contemplation in the face of brutality.

The Dharma of Redemption: Ravana's story arc raises questions about the Dharma of redemption. Ravana's portrayal in "*Asura*" is a compelling account of Dharma and its manifestations in ancient India's moral landscape. Anand Neelakantan's character gives readers a nuanced view of righteousness, encouraging them to consider the intricacies of morality, power, and redemption.

Duryodhana, often depicted as the antagonist in the Mahabharata, is depicted with depth, encouraging readers to reconsider his actions and motivations through a critical lens.

Duryodhana's character embodies a multifaceted interpretation of Dharma that transcends traditional definitions of right and wrong. His unwavering dedication to his faith and a sense of duty towards his lineage and kingdom sets the tone for a nuanced exploration of moral ambiguity. Duryodhana's portrayal is characterized by his unwavering loyalty to his family and his determination to uphold the reputation of the Kuru dynasty.

Duryodhana is a man of integrity and dominance despite being born in a position of privilege and control, and he struggles with the weight of his responsibilities, attempting to assert his position of authority in the face of internal and external challenges. Duryodhana's adherence to his principles, however flawed they may seem, underscores his unwavering belief in his cause's righteousness. Even in the face of skepticism, his refusal to give in to

societal expectations or succumb to external influences highlights his steadfast dedication to his conception of Dharma.

In addition, Duryodhana's character acts as a foil to the common conceptions of heroism and virtue embodied by figures like Yudhishtira and Arjuna. Although the Pandavas are often portrayed as paragons of justice, Duryodhana's character compels readers to question the validity of such simplistic categorizations. Though his conduct is contentious, he is fueled by a sense of duty and honor that is just as compelling as a politician's.

It becomes apparent that Ravana and Duryodhana's perspectives on Dharma are both complex interpretations of morality and righteousness that contradict conventional assumptions. Ravana, the protagonist in the Ramayana, and Duryodhana, often depicted as the antagonist in the Mahabharata, present contradictory yet equally compelling dharma theories that encourage readers to investigate their nuances. Ravana, a formidable demon king, is depicted as a highly gifted and able king driven by ambition and desire. Though his conduct is often chastised as morally illegitimate, he is motivated by a sense of responsibility for his people and a desire to assert his authority and sovereignty.

Ravana's dharma interpretation is closely linked to his conception of his role as a king and a protector of his kingdom, causing him to make morally complex and ambiguous choices. Throughout the Mahabharata, Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava brothers, deals with questions of morality and justice. Despite skepticism and a sense of duty towards his lineage, his unwavering dedication to his beliefs and determination to assert his position compelled him to defend and oppose the Pandava's claims.

Duryodhana's conception of Dharma is rooted in his conception of familial and societal obligations, causing him to make often contentious and morally divisive decisions. Despite their distinct backgrounds and circumstances, Ravana and Duryodhana have a commonality in their defiance of traditional values and unwavering dedication to their interpretations of Dharma.

Their experiences highlight the intricacies of morality and the variety of viewpoints that influence individual conceptions of righteousness. It explores Ravana's struggle and his life as he became him and tries to create a connection between the social construct as it may have existed and evolved at the time, as well as the well-known instances described in the Ramayana legend as it is known today. We all consider Ravana one of the world's greatest villains. The novel gives a counterpoint to this. It shows us the hidden side of Ravana.

The Ramayana has been told countless times, including the enthralling tale of Rama, the divine incarnate who vanquished Ravana, the demonic demon of the dark, well-known to every Indian. Moreover, the story told by the victors continues to live in the pages of history, as always. The voice of the escaped remains muted. What if Ravana and his crew had a different story to tell? The Ravanayana tale has never been told. Asura is the epic tale of the defeated Asura people, a tale cherished by the oppressed outcasts of India for 3000 years. "I am a non-entity," Ravana says, "invisible, immobile, and negligible." I have experienced both the hero and the liar, Ravana, and Rama. or the liar and the liar.

Asura is the epic tale of the defeated Asura people, a tale that the persecuted outcasts of India have treasured for three millennia. No asura has attempted to tell the tale before. However, it is time for the dead and the defeated to speak. The ancient Asura empire was shattered into conflicting petty kingdoms, reeling under the devas' heel. The asuras look up to

a nascent hero, Ravana, in despair. Commoners like Bhadra follow Ravana, believing that a better world awaits them under Ravana. Ravana guides his people from victory to victory with a will of iron and a ferocious desire to succeed, carving out a vast empire from the devas. However, the poor asuras find nothing has changed for them even when Ravana succeeds spectacularly. Ravana changes the course of the history of the world in one act.

The Mahabharata is considered to be India's greatest epic. However, while Jaya tells the Pandava story from the viewpoint of Kurukshetra's winners, Ajaya is the story of the 'unconquerable' Kauravas, who were annihilated to the last man's death. A revolution is brewing at the heart of India's most powerful empire. Bhishma, the noble patriarch of Hastinapura, is battling to maintain the unity of his empire. The blind king Dhritarashtra and his foreign-born Queen Gandhari, sit on the throne. Kunti, the dowager-queen, stands in the throne's shadow, ablaze with a desire to see her firstborn become the Queen, as all regard her.

Moreover, in the wings, Parashurama, the enigmatic guru of the mighty southern confederate, bids his time to take over and carry his will from mountains to sea. Ekalavya, a young Nishida, longs to break free of caste boundaries and become a king. Karna, the son of a humble charioteer, goes to the south to study under the most revered guru of the day and become the country's most excellent archer. Balarama, the vivacious Yadavas leader, aspires to create the perfect city by the sea, see his people prosper, and be proud again. As he waits in the Indian jungles, where survival is the only Dharma, Takshaka, the Nagas guerilla leader, incites a revolt by the marginalized. As the Pandavas and the Kauravas confront a world of people and events, Jara, the beggar, and his blind dog Dharma walk the dusty streets of India.

The Dharma of Ravana is complex, as views on the subject vary significantly among individuals and groups. The antagonist of the Hindu epic, the Ramayana, Ravana, is a

character whose actions and motivations raise questions about the nature of Dharma, or righteousness, in Hindu philosophy. Ravana is depicted as a formidable and complex figure in the Ramayana. On the one hand, he is depicted as a mighty and learned king with a wealth of experience and skill. He is a devotee of Lord Shiva, and his devotion is often portrayed in various epic retellings.

Ravana's behaviors are also marked by arrogance, lust, and a disregard for moral boundaries. From a cultural standpoint, Ravana is often regarded as the embodiment of Dharma or unrighteousness. His abduction of Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, is considered a sin and a dharma infringement. His other acts, such as his treatment of his subjects and his defiance of divine beings, further reinforce this view. However, some interpretations provide a more nuanced account of Ravana's character and motivations.

According to some people, Ravana's actions were motivated by a sense of duty and ambition rather than pure malevolence. They point to his adherence to his values and willingness to face the consequences of his conduct as proof of his devotion to his sense of Dharma.

Ravana's character has been reimagined and reinterpreted in various cultural contexts. He is regarded as a symbol of strength and endurance in some cultures, while in others, he is regarded as a symbol of endurance and resilience.

Ravana: Known for his brilliance and power, Ravana from the Hindu epic Ramayana is often seen as a complex character. While he was a great scholar and ruler, his actions were driven by his ego and desire for power. Despite his knowledge of Dharma, he chose to ignore it to pursue his ambitions, ultimately leading to his downfall. Ravana's story is a cautionary tale about the consequences of unchecked pride and ambition.

Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, is depicted as someone who consistently chooses the path of Dharma (unrighteousness). Despite numerous opportunities for reconciliation and peace, he let his jealousy and desire for power cloud his judgment.

Duryodhana's refusal to uphold Dharma led to the devastating Kurukshetra War, which resulted in immense loss and suffering for both sides. His narrative reminds us of the significance of ethical conduct and the consequences of selfish actions.

These characters illustrate the consequences of disregarding Dharma and the importance of upholding righteousness in both personal and societal contexts. Throughout the Ramayana, Ravana is portrayed as a formidable and complex figure. On the one hand, he is depicted as a powerful and learned king, possessing excellent knowledge and prowess. He is a devotee of Lord Shiva, and his devotion is often highlighted in various epic retellings.

However, Ravana's actions are also marked by arrogance, lust, and a disregard for moral boundaries.

From a traditional perspective, Ravana is often seen as the embodiment of Dharma or unrighteousness. His abduction of Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, is considered a heinous act and a violation of Dharma. Additionally, his other actions, such as his treatment of his subjects and his defiance of divine beings, further reinforce this view.

However, some interpretations offer a more nuanced understanding of Ravana's character and motivations. Some scholars argue that Ravana's actions were driven by a sense of duty and destiny rather than pure malevolence. They point to his adherence to his values and his readiness to accept responsibility for his actions as evidence of his commitment to his sense of Dharma.

Furthermore, Ravana's character has been reimagined and reinterpreted in various cultural contexts. In some traditions, he is revered as a symbol of strength and resilience; in others, he is vilified as a symbol of evil. Individuals and communities engage with the complexities of these contrasting viewpoints, demonstrating the various ways in which morality and ethics.

Ultimately, the question of Ravana's Dharma defies easy answers. His character serves as a reminder of the inherent complexities of human nature and the challenges of navigating moral dilemmas. Whether seen as a villainous figure or a tragic hero, Ravana continues to provoke thought and debate, inviting us to reflect on the nature of good and evil, righteousness and wrongdoing.

Ravana, the formidable antagonist of the Ramayana, embodies the clash between knowledge and ego. As a learned scholar and a capable ruler, he possessed a deep understanding of Dharma. However, his downfall stemmed from his inability to align his actions with righteous conduct. Driven by his unchecked pride and insatiable desires, Ravana's pursuit of power led him to commit grave injustices, including the abduction of Sita. Despite his knowledge of Dharma, Ravana's ego closed his eyes to the consequences of his actions, ultimately resulting in his demise. His narrative warns about the perils of succumbing to ego and the importance of humility in upholding Dharma.

Unlike Ravana, Duryodhana's adherence to Dharma was not due to ignorance but rather a deliberate choice driven by jealousy and greed. Despite numerous opportunities for reconciliation with the Pandavas, Duryodhana's pride and desire for power led him to orchestrate deceitful schemes and engage in unethical conduct. His refusal to uphold Dharma plunged his family into a devastating war but also brought about his downfall. Duryodhana's

story highlights the consequences of prioritizing personal gain over moral integrity and the inevitable repercussions of such action.

Exploring Ravana and Duryodhana's interpretations of Dharma underscores the importance of introspection, humility, and ethical conduct in navigating life's complexities. Their narratives serve as timeless reminders of the enduring struggle between righteousness and self-interest and the profound impact of individual choices on personal destiny and societal harmony.

In Asura, a crucial incident is Ravana's abduction of Sita. Various characters scrutinize this action of Ravana. They all meditate on the rightness or wrongness of this action, which ultimately comes under the concept of Dharma. That is why it is a core concept used in the novel. Ravana imprisons Sita in Ashoka Grove. She was treated inhumanely by the rakshasas under the guidance of Mandodhari, the wife of Ravana and Queen of Lanka. Ravana became successful in imprinting his biased version of Sita's behavior in the mind of Mandodhari, which forces her to treat Sita inhumanely in imprisonment. Vibhisena, brother of Ravana and Brother-in-law of Mandodhari, opposes the treatment he thinks is not per the dharma code. Mandodhari convinced him of the rightness of her act, but Vibhisena asked her to act according to Dharma.

According to him, "What is right is right, wrong is wrong. Nothing can alter that basic truth."

(ATV 207) His emphasis is on the right act, i.e., Dharma. To tease anyone in this world is itself a wrong act. This is what he thinks is true. Truth is the foundation of Dharma.

Vibhishana wants Mandodhari to act according to Dharma as he respects her as a woman of Dharma. (ATV 206) Mandodhari has precise knowledge of Dharma, which is why she said, "What else is the goal of dharma after all? To support the truth." (ATV 209) Here,

Mandodhari wants to inform Vibhisena regarding Sita's intentions, which he is unknown.

Mandodhari appoints his Sikhis to get Sita's truth from his lips. Ravana has put his version of Sita's story to Mandodhari, and she trusts him. Vibhishana wants to clarify the picture created by Ravana in Mandodhari's mind regarding Sita as he has visited Sita and witnessed atrocities done to her. Vibhisena becomes furious because he thinks it is an act of inhumanity to treat an unarmed and defenseless woman in such a terrible way.

In the novel, the concept revolves around the treatment given to Sita. It is projected as legal by Mandodhari as she thinks Sita threatens her position. Vibhisena opposes it because he thinks that she is a prisoner and unarmed. In such cases, Sita should be given human treatment. Ravana has a different opinion. He wants to convince Sita by torturing her psychologically. Supanakha supports Ravana's view and plays a vital role in that direction.

The entry of Hanuman in Lanka changed the scenario of Lanka. Ravana is considered a mighty lord of rakshasas, but none of his brave warriors can fight with Hanuman. It suggests that Hanuman is the embodiment of Dharma. He believes that whatever Rama does is based on Dharma.

According to Him, Rama, as well as Sita, is a paragon of Dharma. When he saw the pitiful condition of Sita in Ashoka grove, he became furious and challenged everyone, whoever it may be. His faith in Dharma makes him mighty enough to fight anyone in Lanka. He wants to convey to unconquerable Lanka and his Lord that only Vanar, like Hanuman, can make you down. Then what will happen when such millions of Varanasi come to Lanka with Rama? When Hanuman reached Ashoka Grove and observed Sita's pitiful condition, he asked Sita to come with him to reach Rama as early as possible. However, Sita denies it and says

that for the sake of Dharma and honor of Rama, she has to stay in Lanka till Rama comes to Lanka and wages war against Ravana.

Sita is a prisoner, yet she is hopeful that someone will consider her plea regarding the inhuman treatment given to her. She believes in the thoughts of King Janaka, her father, who always imparts to her that all the beings. However, it may be rakshasa, devas, human, animate, or inanimate the Supreme being creates everyone.

Ravana is an intellectual king. He is a master in interpreting the facts with different perspectives. He can make others believe in his version of truth. This novel has a long debate between Vibhisena and Mandodhari on truth and Dharma. This discussion happened due to the issue of Sita's abduction and imprisonment. The treatment given to Sita is the center point of their discussion. Vibhisena said that it is wrong to oppress a prisoner, particularly a woman who is abducted without her will. Mandodhari called this act a dharma, but he asks, "How can mortal interpretation of dharma be different from our own?" (ATV 207) Yet she argued on the truth and Dharma. She replies, "Yet truth itself is always debatable. Do you know – of course you know, how could I forget that you are more learned even than I, but still, excuse me as I remind you of these trivial details--You know that the very word we use for truth, Artha, means wealth? Because the ancients believed that truth was wealth, and knowledge was the greatest possession of all. However, with every passing age, we grow more impoverished, for while we accumulate the physical trappings of superficial wealth, we lose the ultimate source of wealth itself, truth.

Moreover, we looted that great storehouse without respect or regard for its value. So, think carefully, brother of my husband. This truth you speak of. How did you come by this truth? Did you perceive the events in question yourself, or were you told what happened by

another party?" (ATV 207) This long speech of Mandodhari focuses on many aspects of truth. It changes aspects, changing meaning with time.

It also shows Mandodhari's understanding of the concept of truth. She thinks of it as an absolute wealth of being. At the same time, she talks about another aspect of truth: it is defined by various perspectives. In the case of Sita, she thinks that Vibhisena relies on the truth presented to him by Sita, but she is not aware that Sita has yet to speak a single syllable of the word to Vibhisena. So Vibhisena replied to her, despite the debate on the truth, that she should stop her sakhis from torturing Sita. Because again, he presents his view that it is a crime of Dharma to torture a being.

Further, Mandodhari applies her version of interpreting truth, which Ravana boosts in her mind. She explains clearly, "This is war. The mortals are at war with us. Do not mistake it for anything less." (ATV 208). She leads her argument in the name of war. Moreover, she proves her point, "That woman betrayed her spouse and seduced mine. She thought to become queen of Lanka and replace me." (ATV 208). The alternate version of truth presented by Mandodhari also shows her fear of replacing her position of Queen, which is false, but she thinks it is accurate. Her explanation is none other than her fear.

She continues, "Alternately, if her husband, the conniving mortal that he is, wins the coming war, then she will no doubt turn back to him, batting those big doe eyes and say she did all this for him to aid him in his campaign. Moreover, he would probably believe her." (208) So, as designed by Ravana and presented by Mandodhari, all the truth shows that any event can be interpreted through various perspectives. It can sometimes deceive intellectual people as well, as is observed here. From the discussion on truth, Mandodhari proves her ultimate mastery over logic and philosophy, but she is still fooled by Ravana, of

which she is unknown. It also shows us that fear can eclipse the truth and can darken the natural face of truth.

Ravana is portrayed as a complex character with both virtues and flaws. While he is primarily known for his abduction of Sita and his subsequent battle with Lord Rama, there are several instances in the epic where Ravana exhibits qualities that could be considered virtuous or adhering to Dharma (righteousness). Here is an exploration of some aspects of Ravana's Dharma in the Ramayana:

Scholarship and Knowledge: Ravana was a highly knowledgeable and accomplished scholar. He was well-versed in the Vedas, scriptures, and various arts. His devotion to learning and mastery of different disciplines demonstrated his commitment to intellectual pursuits, which were highly regarded in ancient Indian society.

Bravery and Leadership: Ravana was a fearless warrior and a capable leader. He was strong and courageous, leading his army with confidence and determination. His leadership qualities were evident in his ability to rally his forces and maintain order in his kingdom.

Devotion to Shiva: Despite his villainous actions, Ravana was a devout follower of Lord Shiva. He performed intense penance and obtained boons from Shiva, which enhanced his powers. His devotion to Shiva showcased his spiritual side and his belief in higher principles.

Protecting His Kingdom: As the king of Lanka, Ravana took responsibility for seriously protecting his kingdom and its people. He implemented policies to ensure the prosperity and security of his subjects, demonstrating his commitment to his duty as a ruler.

Respect for Women: Contrary to his abduction of Sita, there are instances where Ravana showed respect for women. For example, he respected the sage Vishrava's decision to marry a demoness and accepted his half-demon offspring, Kubera, as his brother. However, these instances are overshadowed by his abduction of Sita.

Mercy and Compassion: There are accounts in some versions of the Ramayana where Ravana displays mercy and compassion, particularly towards his enemies. In one instance, he spares the life of Hanuman after the latter set Lanka on fire. This act could be interpreted as Ravana's capacity for forgiveness and leniency.

Commitment to his Word: Ravana was known for keeping his promises and fulfilling his commitments. He was bound by his word, even when it was detrimental to him personally. This aspect of his character reflects his adherence to the principles of honesty and integrity.

However, it is essential to note that despite these virtues, Ravana's actions ultimately led to his downfall. His ego, greed, and arrogance clouded his judgment, causing him to do horrible deeds like the abduction of Sita and the confrontation with Lord Rama. While there are elements of Dharma in Ravana's character, they are often overshadowed by his negative traits and actions.

Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, is depicted as a proud and ambitious prince who believes in the righteousness of his cause. His understanding of Dharma is deeply influenced by his desire to secure his rightful place as the heir to the throne of Hastinapura, which he sees as his birthright. However, his interpretation of Dharma is often clouded by his ego, jealousy, and the influence of his advisors, particularly Shakuni. One aspect of Duryodhana's Dharma is his duty as a prince to uphold the interests of his kingdom and

family. He sees himself as a capable leader who must assert his authority to maintain the unity and prosperity of the Kuru dynasty.

Furthermore, Duryodhana's Dharma is shaped by his loyalty to his allies and supporters, particularly his relationship with Karna. Despite Karna's low birth, Duryodhana treats him as an equal and relies on his unwavering loyalty and military prowess. This alliance highlights Duryodhana's willingness to overlook social norms to pursue his goals.

However, Duryodhana's adherence to his version of Dharma brings him to a morally dubious place and eventual downfall. His refusal to acknowledge the Pandavas' rightful claim to the kingdom and his mistreatment of them resulted in tragic events, including the exile of the Pandavas and the Kurukshetra War.

Throughout the epic, Duryodhana faces ethical dilemmas that test his understanding of Dharma. His decision to wage war against the Pandavas despite knowing the consequences reflects his stubbornness and arrogance. Even when Krishna offers a peaceful resolution, Duryodhana remains steadfast in believing victory is attainable through force. Moreover, Duryodhana's Dharma is challenged by his interactions with characters like Vidura and Yudhishtira, who serve as moral guides and advisors. Despite their warnings and appeals to reason, Duryodhana remains committed to his course of action, unwilling to compromise or admit his mistakes.

Ultimately, Duryodhana's adherence to his version of Dharma leads to his tragic downfall. His death on the battlefield symbolizes the consequences of unchecked ambition and the distortion of moral principles for personal gain. Despite his flaws, Duryodhana

remains a complex and compelling character whose actions raise profound questions about the nature of duty, righteousness, and the human condition.

Ravana, for example, is often depicted as a powerful and intelligent king who succumbs to his arrogance and desires, leading to his downfall. Despite his knowledge of Dharma, he allows his ego and lust for power to overshadow his moral obligations, ultimately leading to his defeat at the hands of Lord Rama. His story is a cautionary tale about the consequences of unchecked ambition and the importance of adhering to Dharma.

Similarly, Duryodhana is portrayed as a character consumed by jealousy, greed, and a desire for power in the Mahabharata. Despite being aware of what is right, he allows his desires and ambitions to dictate his actions, leading to the great war of Kurukshetra and his demise. His story highlights the consequences of ignoring one's moral responsibilities and the destructive nature of ego and envy.

In examining the positive aspects of the Dharma of Ravana and Duryodhana, it is essential to think about the historical and cultural setting in which the characters are situated. Hindu mythology is rich with symbolism and moral lessons, and its characters often embody complex virtues and vices that reflect the human condition. By reevaluating these characters through a more thorough lens, one might learn more about the multifaceted nature of Dharma and its interpretation.

Similarly, Duryodhana's adherence to his principles, however flawed they may be, underscores the importance of loyalty and honor in the face of adversity. His terrible destiny warns about the repercussions of hubris and the destructive power of jealousy and resentment. While Ravana and Duryodhana are often portrayed as villains in Hindu mythology, a closer

examination reveals nuances in their characters that offer insights into the complexities of human nature. By exploring the positive aspects of their Dharma, one might have a more profound understanding of the moral ambiguity inherent in ancient epics. Principles of Dharma (duty or righteousness). Here are why the people in a few parts of India consider Ravana's Dharma highly.

Intellectual prowess: Ravana was a highly learned and intelligent being. He mastered various arts, including music, warfare, and governance. His intellectual abilities allowed him to effectively rule the kingdom of Lanka and maintain a prosperous society.

Devotion to Shiva: Ravana was a devout follower of Lord Shiva despite his flaws. Shiva granted him many boons due to his intense penance and devotion. Ravana's dedication to his faith and respect for divine beings demonstrate his commitment to Dharma.

Courage and valor: Ravana was known for his bravery and fearlessness in battle. He fought numerous wars and defeated many powerful opponents. Even in the face of inevitable defeat, some interpretations see his courage as an admirable quality.

Protection of his kingdom: Ravana was fiercely protective of his kingdom and his subjects. He took extraordinary measures to ensure the safety and prosperity of Lanka, even if it meant going against powerful adversaries like Rama.

Respect for his word: In some versions of the Ramayana, Ravana is depicted as a man of his word. He honored his promises and agreements, even when they were disadvantageous to him personally. This adherence to truthfulness and integrity is considered a fundamental aspect of Dharma.

Complex motivations: Some interpretations suggest that Ravana's actions were driven by more than just greed or lust. He had complex motivations rooted in his sense of duty as a ruler, his desire for recognition, and his belief in his righteousness. This intricacy gives his persona depth and challenges simplistic notions of good and evil.

Symbol of defiance against oppression: For some, Ravana represents a symbol of defiance against oppression and tyranny. His refusal to bow down to authority, even from divine figures like Rama, is a testament to his character strength and commitment to the principles he believed in.

Redemption through his downfall: Ravana's ultimate defeat and death at the hands of Rama are often viewed as a form of redemption. His demise warns about the adverse effects of arrogance and the value of humility before divine will.

While Ravana's character is often portrayed negatively in mainstream retellings of the Ramayana, some interpretations highlight his positive attributes and adherence to certain dharma principles. These perspectives offer a more nuanced understanding of his character and place in Hindu mythology.

Duryodhana's adherence to his interpretation of Dharma, which prioritized loyalty to his family and ambition for power, is often cited as a reason for considering his Dharma highly. In his eyes, he was upholding his duty as a Kshatriya and as the heir to the throne of Hastinapur. Despite facing formidable opposition, some see his unwavering commitment to his cause commendable.

Furthermore, Duryodhana's loyalty and camaraderie towards his allies and followers are highlighted throughout the epic. He treated his close associates, like Karna and Shakuni,

with unwavering loyalty, standing by them even when their actions were morally questionable. This loyalty, often seen as a virtue in traditional Indian society, adds depth to his character and garners respect from those who value such qualities.

Additionally, some admire Duryodhana's resilience in the face of adversity. Despite being constantly thwarted by his cousins, the Pandavas, he refused to back down from his ambitions. Despite overwhelming odds, his determination to pursue his goals is a sign of strength and conviction.

Moreover, Duryodhana's adherence to the principles of Kshatriya dharma, prioritizing honor, valor, and assertiveness, resonates with specific interpretations of Hindu ethics. Some view his refusal to compromise on his principles, even when it led to conflict and tragedy, as a demonstration of moral integrity.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that Duryodhana's actions were not without moral ambiguity. His jealousy, arrogance, and vindictiveness often clouded his judgment, leading him to make decisions that ultimately led to his downfall. His role in instigating the infamous game of dice, which resulted in the Pandavas losing their kingdom and being exiled, is a prime example of his questionable moral character.

Furthermore, Duryodhana's disregard for fairness and justice, as evidenced by his treatment of the Pandavas and Draupadi, undermines his claims of righteousness. His willingness to resort to deceit and treachery to achieve his ends contradicts the ideals of Dharma as espoused in Hindu philosophy.

Duryodhana's actions, such as his role in the classic dice game in which the Pandavas are defeated in their kingdom, are seen as deceitful and unjust. He is also held responsible for

numerous acts of treachery and violence during the war despite being advised by wise counsel, including his well-wisher, Vidura. Duryodhana's ego and arrogance close his eyes to the path of righteousness.

In contemporary India, the interpretations of Ravana and Duryodhana's characters vary among different communities and individuals. While some view them primarily as villains whose actions serve as cautionary tales, others delve deeper into their complexities, considering the societal and psychological factors that influenced their decisions.

Overall, the characters of Ravana and Duryodhana continue to depict the nature of Dharma, morality, and the consequences of one's choices in Hindu society. Their stories serve as reminders of the eternal struggle between good and evil and the importance of upholding righteousness in the face of temptation and adversity. There is a saying in Ramayana, "dharma rakshati rakshitah". It means if we protect the Dharma, it will protect us.

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