

## OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 11

Special Issue: 2

Month: March

Year: 2024

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

Impact Factor: 3.025

Received: 15.02.2024

Accepted: 15.03.2024

Published: 30.03.2024

## Citation:

Sharma, Akash, and P. Brinda. "Deconstructing Villain: Exploring the Complexity of Ravana in Anand Neelakantan's *Asura*." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 11, no. S2, 2024, pp. 128–30.

## DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v11iS2-March.7529>

# Deconstructing Villain: Exploring the Complexity of Ravana in Anand Neelakantan's *Asura*

**Akash Sharma**

*II MA English, Department of English  
PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore*

**Dr. P. Brinda**

*Associate Professor & Head, Department of English  
PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore*

**Abstract**

*This abstract delves into the intricacies of Ravana's character in Anand Neelakantan's novel "Asura," challenging conventional perceptions of villain. It is not the destruction but of reconstruction of the villain. Through a comprehensive analysis of Ravana's psyche, motivations, and interactions, this study unveils the layers of complexity that define him beyond mere antagonism. Neelakantan's narrative offers a nuanced portrayal of Ravana, portraying him as a product of his circumstances and inner turmoil rather than a stereotypical villain. Derrida's concept of deconstruction can be applied to Anand Neelakantan's Ravana. By examining Ravana's relationships, cultural backdrop, and moral dilemmas, this abstract illuminates the moral ambiguity surrounding his actions, prompting readers to reassess their understanding of this iconic figure in Indian mythology.*

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, Reconstruction, Villain, Complexity.

In Anand Neelakantan's retelling of the Ramayana, "Asura," the character of Ravana emerges as a central focus, inviting readers to reconsider their perceptions of villainy and morality. Traditionally depicted as the epitome of evil in Indian mythology, Ravana's portrayal in "Asura" challenges this simplistic characterization, presenting him as a complex and multifaceted figure. This introduction sets the stage for an exploration into the intricacies of Ravana's character, aiming to unravel the layers of complexity that define him in Neelakantan's narrative. By examining Ravana's motivations, inner conflicts, and relationships, this study seeks to uncover the nuances of his persona and the moral ambiguity that surrounds his actions. Through a critical analysis of "Asura," we delve into the depths of Ravana's psyche, seeking to understand the factors that shape his identity beyond the confines of traditional hero-villain dichotomy.

Anand Neelakantan's "Asura" offers a provocative reimagining of the Ramayana, presenting readers with a narrative that challenges established notions of heroism and villainy. At the heart of this retelling lies the enigmatic figure of Ravana, traditionally depicted as the archetypal villain, whose actions are often viewed through a lens of unequivocal malevolence. However, Neelakantan's portrayal of Ravana transcends these conventional boundaries, imbuing the

character with a depth and complexity that demand closer examination. In Asura Ravana emerges not as a caricature of evil, but as a fully realized individual grappling with his own inner demons, desires, and moral dilemmas. Through the lens of Neelakantan's narrative, Ravana becomes a tragic figure, shaped by his circumstances and driven by his ambitions, yet also burdened by the weight of his choices and the consequences they entail.

This research serves as a prelude to a deeper exploration into the layers of complexity that defines Ravana's character in "Asura." By delving into his motivations, relationships, and personal journey, we aim to unravel the moral ambiguity surrounding his actions and shed light on the underlying themes of redemption, power, and identity that permeate Neelakantan's narrative. Through a critical analysis of Ravana's portrayal, we seek to challenge preconceived notions of villainy and invite readers to reconsider their understanding of this iconic figure in Indian mythology. The character of Ravana has been much of its own expressing the emotions, and has explained his own forms of fear and all other forms of behavior that he faced from the society around him.

The quote from the Chapter 5 Dasamukha, The Ten-Faced says a beautiful line that he learnt from his education:

"Anger is the lowest emotion. It clouds the intellect and can make you do foolish things. You become blind to reason and react only with your body, without thinking. This leads to failure in every sphere. Uproot this evil from your system"

The form of education he has received was of vedic manner and we can see from his own narration that he have received an education of a good manner where he can gather the best of that. But still from his doings and portraying towards others how they were treated from him was showing his whole form of Ego, and ambitiousness.

From the Ramayana there has been the situation that, Ravana to know about his death predictions or demise forecast he captured Shani and kept him under his feet for an eternity, just because Shani didn't reveal the next avatar of Lord Vishnu who was about to take birth as Sri Rama in Ayodhya. So from this incident we can see that how much he was ambitious towards his goals and his plans. He never was worried about the consequences even if it was Shanidev. His characteristics were of arrogance and had too much of self-esteem, which made him to lose his kingdom, his family, and his people.

Even though Ravana was a person who obviously had too much complex of what's going to happen after his death. The Chapter 1 gives the detailed information of him when he was on his deathbed and was thinking towards what will happen after death, even he wanted to be alive and didn't wanted to die, but he is also having the fear that if he is alive how he will become, were he says that, he will be thrown out on roadside and be like a ragged beggar with broken limbs or else if he is dead he was worried of what will happen to his wife Mandodhari.

These all above functions talks about the process of the mindset of him being into the situation and we can see the innocence that comes out of him whenever he found out he being in a dangerous situation or when he saw that everything is now end. His character also shows about the touch and his closeness towards his mother too, here he becomes the elder son where he also has his emotional touch towards his mother. One statement of narration of him from Chapter 2 "The Seed":

"My mother's tears burned a hole in my soul. She wanted us to go out and conquer the world, yet she wanted us nearby as well. Perhaps, she saw the fire raging in my eyes and decided not to uldided nostop us. When I looked back, I saw my mother, a hunched-back figure in tattered clothes, hugging my ugly sister. She was the most beautiful baby for us, but when I saw her with the sense of fairness my mother had instilled in us, I had to reluctantly agree with my father's belief that my sister was the ugliest creature he had ever seen. I hated him for that statement. I hated him even more for the fact that it was true."

He had his defensive thoughts towards his mother and his sister, who makes him a good son, first, even though if something is wrong against his mother or his brothers or sister.

This research article talks about the deconstructing his character from the other side or from the villain perspective. We find out the other side of him being innocent during his childhood and facing certain discrimination from his father who was a Maharishi. Ravana is brought up without a father figure so he at a young age has taken the responsibility of protecting his family and also the duties as an elder brother. He as a king has taken it as his mission to safeguard his people from the outside enemies. His people adored and respected him as an individual for his aesthetic sense and for his bravery.

Ravana being the Asura was an ardent worshipper of Lord Shiva. His devotion, dedication to God earned him the boon of immortality. He is a learned scholar well knowledgeable in vedic shastras and culture. He was a great musician and also the person with knowledge of politics and administration and all the various diplomacy with his cabinets and the forms of the ministries that he had. The harmony within his family remained intact until he abducted Mata Sita. It was then that his younger brother, Vibhishan, opposed him, recognizing his actions as contrary to Dharma. This instance serves to deconstruct the villainous character.

Certainly, in Asura by Anand Neelakantan, Ravana's musical prowess and devotion to Lord Shiva has been shown as the integral parts of his character. Ravana is portrayed as not only a formidable warrior and ruler but also as a highly cultured and talented individual that makes him much unique and that too gives an understand of his character in a different way and gives the character an process of a various forms than a villain. His proficiency in music is often highlighted, showcasing his deep understanding and skill in this art form.

Moreover, Ravana's devotion to Lord Shiva is a central theme throughout the book. His reverence for Shiva shapes many of his actions and decisions. His devotion towards Lord Shiva is famous and he getting the immortal boon is a big blessing that the whole world knows his dedication of prayers towards Lord Shiva made him more powerful king. Ravana's devotion is depicted as genuine and profound, adding depth to his character and providing insight into his motivations and beliefs.

Overall, Ravana's musical knowledge and devotion to Lord Shiva contribute to his multifaceted character in Asura, highlighting his complexity beyond just being a villainous figure. His prayer towards the almighty was always with Veena and had his devotion towards it and all the big gods. He have always been into the verge of taking revenge from devas and made his mission or goal to wipe out the Deva's rule from Lanka and put Asura rule, though his father was a Deva kul he didn't care and had always his motives to defeat devas and make Asura's win.

## References

1. Neelakantan, Anand. Asura: Tale of the Vanquished. Leadstart, 2012
2. <https://manipalblog.com/book-review-asura-tale-of-vanquished-anand-neelakantan/>
3. [https://www.academia.edu/73158346/The\\_Becoming\\_of\\_Ravana\\_in\\_A\\_Neelakantan\\_s\\_Asura\\_Tale\\_of\\_the\\_Vanquished\\_2012\\_](https://www.academia.edu/73158346/The_Becoming_of_Ravana_in_A_Neelakantan_s_Asura_Tale_of_the_Vanquished_2012_)
4. <https://vedicfeed.com/ravana-king-of-lanka/>
5. <https://www.timesnownews.com/spiritual/religion/article/ravana-s-character-in-ramayana-explained-facts-and-quotes/572718>.