

INDIAN SOCIETY: PROGRESSING OR REGRESSING?

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ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of Indian society, a disconcerting trend has emerged, highlighting the glorification of controversial mythological figures on social media platforms. This paper critically examines the increasing idolization of Ravana—an antagonist from the epic Ramayana—and questions whether such shifts in perception signify societal progress or regression. The analysis delves into the influence of digital platforms in shaping public opinion, especially among the youth, and the dangerous precedent of adopting dramatized media representations as historical truths. Through reflective commentary and cultural introspection, the author evaluates how reinterpretations of ancient narratives are influencing moral frameworks, societal values, and the foundational ethos of Indian civilization. Ultimately, the paper raises an urgent question: Are we moving forward as a society, or are we unknowingly unravelling the very principles that define ethical progress?.

Keywords: Indian society, Ravana glorification, social media influence, youth perception, Ramayana, cultural regression, digital narratives, moral values, leadership ethics

1. INTRODUCTION

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“If you want to destroy a nation or a culture, make the youth idolize the people who were once condemned.” For the past few months, I have observed a new trend on social media, I was quite surprised and taken aback. People out there are idolizing people like Ravana. To be more precise, the exact lines used by people are “Ravana was right and more powerful”. I was quite astonished when I first came across a post like this, what further added to my astonishment was the number of likes the post had. There was a comment which I specifically remember because of its absurd nature- ‘Ravana was a scholar and a king, by burning him every year we insult his knowledge and disregarding his skills as an administrator.

1. The Rise of Ravana Glorification on Social Media

Now, I am aware what most of the people think- that social media is for fun and people do not actually mean what they say or write or post, up until few years ago, I believed this to be true, but now I do not, as social media is no longer a small platform for small, fun and silly activities. Technology has developed and grown over the years and so did social media, nowadays it is a platform for people who wish to say something, but now it is a platform for reaching out to the masses specially the younger generation to catch their attention. Today it has evolved into an extended form of the media, the very media which forms pillar of democracy in our country and the other very important reason- today every person has access to social media and are using it to express their opinions, or to support a campaign, etc. What I mean by this point is that we can no longer take things which are written or

posted on social media lightly. So here I am writing about a trend which in my opinion is becoming a very important issue now a days.

Coming back to the topic, I was quite appalled at the foolishness of these posts, and comments about Ravana praising him, the more I read such posts, the more my algorithm suggested to me (we are well aware of insta algorithm) and the more I read them, the more I got dismayed, and it were not just the posts which astonished me, it was also the number of likes these posts and comments had and it made me wonder- ‘Where are we heading as a society ?’

While I was giving this a thought I recalled a specific incident from few years ago, one such preposterous post gained popularity, remember it quite clearly, the post was made by a woman saying how she would choose Ravana as her husband because he was such a gentleman, as even after abducting sita (mind the irony in the sentence) he never laid hands on her, and this post sparked a controversy, at that time I did not pay much attention to it, thinking it was a silly post, but now, it is not a silly post anymore, many people out there actually agree with her stance, which in my eyes is quite concerning, and thus I thought of expressing my opinion on the topic.

2.THE TRUTH: A SOCIETY AT THE CROSSROADS

I will address both the stances i.e. Ravana being a gentleman and how by burning him every year is disregarding to his knowledge and him, separately.

Let’s first look at the stance of “Ravana was a gentleman and was a man of principles.” I recognized a pattern, people who rely more on social media and television shows for knowledge agree more with the idea of not burning his statue as this is a disregard to him, and the people who actually read the holy text of Ramayana to acquire knowledge sided more with the ongoing tradition of burning his statue every year on Vijay Dashmi.

It made me realize how people prefer television shows for knowledge as it gives more fun, enjoyment, drama, glamour with flashy costumes, engrossing soundtracks instead of actually reading the texts to gain knowledge. Now, I am not implying the idea that such television shows should be banned or the production houses should stop producing them, TV shows are a form of escapism, escaping for a few minutes, from reality, challenging life, tough job, daily struggle, and I would be a hypocrite to say that I do not enjoy these shows, their catchy advertisements, engrossing sound tracks and choice of actors makes us all watch these shows, even if it is for a single episode, I enjoy these shows too. But the problem arises when people instead of watching these shows as an entertainment piece start taking them seriously and start presuming the show scripts as real knowledge and do not bother to gain actual knowledge.

Let me give an example- in television shows Ravana was shown as a man of principles as he even after abducting Mother sita, he never laid hands on her, and this tricked the minds of not only the kids but also the adults (who never read the text in first place) into thinking that Ravana was actually a man of principles. Now, if he was such a virtuous man, why would he have laid eyes on another woman despite being married, and so much so as to abduct her by bluffing her and compel her to leave her husband and marry him?

That is because he was neither a gentleman nor a man of principles or a virtuous man. He was a fiend man with ill intentions and a corrupt soul. As for the most asked question- why did he not force sita physically to marry him? If he was such an evil person -it was because he was **cursed** by Nalakuvara (he was the step-son of Ravana, son of his half-brother, Kubera) when Ravana forcibly violated the modesty of his wife Rambha, the curse stipulated that if Ravana ever touched a woman without her consent, his head would splinter into thousand pieces. (There are other versions of the story, according to one version he was cursed by Brahama when he attempted to

humiliate his daughter, I have mentioned the one I know about) what I am trying to explain by this point is that, he never forced sita not because he was a man of principles but because he had a life threatening curse on him, he was a vile person and it were not his morals that made him stay in limit.

Now, let us look at the second stance-“Burning him every year is an insult and disregard to his knowledge and skills”, it is indeed true that he was a great warrior and excellent administrator and a scholar, then why do we burn his statue ever year? Why do we disregard such an eminent scholar? As a child I remember asking this question to my mother and grandmother and they would tell me because it signifies the triumph of good over evil, and when I asked my mother why do we only burn him, why not other demons mentioned in the epic, she answered with only one sentence- “Because he was a King.” As a child I was not able to understand her and she told me once I grow up will understand and she was right, now I do understand. You see there is much more to the reason of burning of Ravana’s statue ever year other than the general notion of victory of good over evil.

We burn his statue every year, **BECAUSE** he was **king, a scholar, an educated person**, because despite being such an educated person, a king of a powerful kingdom, a warrior he abducted a woman and did many vile deeds, allow me to explain it more efficiently- there are lot of religious texts and two epics in our religion-Shree Durga Saptasadi or Mahabharata, we encounter many demons and vile people like Mahishasura and Duryodhana and they also did many horrible and heinous acts, then why do we burn the statue of only Ravana, every year ? Because he was a king, a warrior, an administrator, he was someone his subjects looked up to, followed his orders, in fact the whole kingdom of Lanka did, if we try to relate it to modern times- who is the representative of the people- a leader, and in ancient times a king. They are the personalities that the general mass looks up to, especially the young minds, they are someone they aspire to be.

This is the reason why only Ravana’s statue is burnt- because he held a position of power, power to influence the general masses and even his ministers, he was educated, a scholar, a warrior, if such people come down to doing such offences, how will a society prosper? Will the young generation have any future, they will not and that is why a king is such an important position and only the best, principled and virtuous prince was made the king. Even if we look at the modern times, especially India- there is an act- Representation of Peoples Act, 1951. Section 8 of this act provides disqualifications on conviction for certain offences, an individual punished with jail term of more than two years, cannot contest an election for the next six years (this is debatable topic). Why are such laws in motion, because a leader and a king not only represent their country and it’s people but also **make** them, form a future, a vile leader can cause major harm to the society.

“By burning Ravana’s statue, motive is not to disregard a scholar, but it is to condemn and beware of ‘scholars’ like him and a reminder to not be like him but to be a scholar and become an asset to the country and society.” When I look around today, where one side of the media talks about women empowerment and the other side where the heinous crimes being committed in the society are not even talked about, and even today people defend the criminals and blame the victim instead, and I wonder whether they are the same people who are out there on social media praising Ravana, it makes me wonder- “Is the Indian society progressing or regressing?”

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