

## **PARADISE LOST-AN EPIC OF VICTORY OF PASSION OVER REASON AND ITS TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES**

**Dr. Syeda Jameelunnisa**  
Lecturer in English  
Dr. Rafiq Zakaria College for Women  
Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India.

**Meaning of an epic:-** It is a long narrative poem, its subject is solemn and grand. According to Webster's Dictionary. "it is a long a narrative poem in elevated style recounting deeds of a legendary or historical hero."

It has a unity of theme and treatment. These are nothing in it that is superfluous every episode and incident leads to the central theme "The Fall of Man and the Loss of Paradise." There is supernatural intervention in plenty. It is the immortal classics of the world.

Its characters are mostly superhuman God, His angels and Satan and his followers. There are only two human characters Adam and Eve. Time represented is Eternity. It concerns itself, with the fortunes not of a city or an empire but of the whole human race. The scene of action is universal space. Like other epics poet plunge at once into the middle of his story instead of beginning. Thus book I opens with an account of Fallen Angels-Satan and his followers in Hell and the Fall of Man.

**Purpose of Writing PL:-** Milton purpose in writing the epic was to justify the ways of God to man. Man sinned consciously and knowingly. Therefore the punishment was inflicted on man.

**Subject: -** He preferred Biblical subject to write the epic. The theme being "Fall of Man." In PL he has set forth the revolt of Satan against 'God.' The was in heaven the fall of the rebel Angels. The creation of the world and man the temptation of Eve and

Adam and their expulsion from Eden, while his central purpose to show how man's first disobedience brought sin and death in its train, it is characteristic of him that he does not close on the note of evil triumphant but prophetically introduces the divine work of redemption.

**Influences on PL:-** Paradise lost is the product of four great influences 'The Bible, 'The Classics Italian poets and English literature PL is a classical epic having all the common features of the epic of Homer and Virgil.

**Style of Paradise Lost:-** Its style and verification is lofty and sublime. This epic is written in blank verse and Milton's handling of his meter is superb. Blank verse is unrhymed Iambic penta metre each line consists of 5 feet and 10 syllable. The accent being on the second syllable. It was too long hence the poet introduced endless variation in metre in order to give music flexibility and variety. Milton's lines does not stop short at the end of each line, but over flows the second and their to the next and so on. Clever manipulation of pauses is another source of variety in Milton's Versification example of Blank verse.

"What though the field be lost?

All is not lost-the unconquerable will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate

And courage never to submit or yield!

And what else not to be overcome?"

Milton's epic has the unity of classical epic. No detail and no episode seems superfluous, every detail, every scene in it is a part of the central action. One scene or episode is telescoped into the other and each looks both backward and forward. There is a curious parallelism between the fall of Satan and the fall of Man.

Grandeur and sublimity are the key-notes of an epic and paradise lost is more grand and sublime than any other epic. This grandeur arises from moral nature of his

theme from cosmic vastness of his stage from the remoteness and immensity of his characters and greatness and loftiness of his style.

His sublimity is contributed to Abundant and frequent allusions to classical myth and literature to Biblical mythology to contemporary literatures, frequent Latinism and inversions and frequent use of Homeric or epic similes.

Homeric epic or long tailed similes are called so because in them not one but a number of qualities are compared and the comparison its elaborated and spread over a number of lines. They impart variety to the narrative and also give it dignity and stature.

Fist Book proposes first in brief the whole subject – Man’s disobedience and the loss there upon of paradise, where in he was placed them touches the prime cause of his fall – the serpent or rather Satan in the serpent who revolting from God and drawing to his side many Angels, was by the command of God, driven out of Heaven, with all his crew into the deep. Which action passed over the poem hastens into the midst of things presenting Satan with his Angels now fallen into Hell – described here not in the centre (for heaven and earth may be supposed as yet not made certainly not yet accused). But in the place of utter darkness fittest called Chaos. Here Satan and his Angels lying on the burning lake thunderstruck and astonished after a certain space recovers as from confusion calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him they confer of their miserable fall Satan awakens all his legions who lay till them in the same manner confounded. They rise their numbers, array of battle their chief leaders named according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining heaven but tells them lastly of a new world and new kind of creature to be created according to an ancient prophecy or report in heaven for that Angels were long before this visible creation was the opinion of many ancient fathers. To find out the truth of this prophecy and what to determine there on he refers to a full council what his associates hence

attempt pandemonium the palace of Satan rises suddenly built out the Deep, the infernal peers there sit in council.

In paradise lost there are action thrills and sensations there is enough of movement action and war for e.g. there is the war in heaven resulting in the over throw of Satan and his followers. The real action of the epic consists of the war between Good and Evil the ultimate triumph of the Good and the defeat of Evil. The action constantly shifts from Good to Evil and evil to good from Hell to heaven and vice-versa.

#### **Homeric or Epic Simile:-**

Simile is a figure of speech used for comparison between the two unlike objects directly. In the present epic Milton has directly compared Eve, Adam, Satan to different things. In fact the use of Homeric similes is an important features of the epic. They are called Homeric because the Greek epic poet Homer was the first to use them. After him many epic poet followed his example. They differ from an ordinary simile in as much as the epic, poets go much beyond the point of comparison between the two similar objects compare the simile is also called long tailed. In it the attention is soon, shifted from the object of comparison to that with which it is compared Epic poets generally use, such similes to decorate their diction to provide charm of variety and to lengthen out the poem.

Milton's similes are more frequent and abundant than is the case even with Homer or Virgil in Book I in about 50 lines we have number of similes.

"Thick as autumnal leaves that Straw the books.

In Valtombrosa, Where the Etrusian shades

High Over-arched embower or Scattered Sedge

Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed

Hath Vexed the Red-sea Coast, whose waves O'orthrow

Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry,  
While with perfidious hatred. They pursued  
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld  
From the safe shore their floating carcasses  
And broken chariot – wheels.”

Here the comparison is a close one the leaves resemble the fallen angels because they are infinitely numerous have lost their former splendor and are floating helplessly on the surface of the water.

Milton's Simile are also more elaborate and learned almost all his figures and comparisons illustrates concrete objects by concrete objects and occurrences in time by other occurrences later in time.

1. **Eve Majesty:-** Milton uses several comparison to depict Eve's majesty, glory etc. when she departs from Adam to work separately as she walked she looked like a wood Nymph (Greek Bride) a Nymph in the train of Delia or rather like Diana herself. She even excelled Diana (Roman Goddess in her gait as well as in her majestic deport. But she differ from Diana in the fact that she was not armed with a bow and arrows but only with garden tools. Thus furnished with agricultural implements only she looked very much like pales in Roman mythology a rural deity. The Roman Goddess of fruit trees.
2. **Adam:-** Adam is compared to Samson and Eve to Delilah Samson is strong like the Greek hero Hercules owed his invincibility to the power that resided in his hair. The Philistine Dalilah to whom he was married persuaded him to tell her the secret of his strength and then she cut off his hair during his sleep. When Samson woke up he found that he had lost his strength. Adam and Eve after eating the fruit and committing original. Sin woke up to lose all their virtue and glory before their fall they were just a degree lower than the angers in the scale of life but now they were sinful creatures

subject to cases was a woman. Both Adam and Samson suffered because they were both so 'fondly overcome with female charm.'

3. **Satan**:- The beauty of serpent into which Satan has entered is compared to the famous snakes in mythology. Before the fall that is before the snake had been cursed he did not crawl on his belly but moved erect on his curled tail. His head was held high, his eyes shone like carbuncles and his shining neck was greenish golden. He had pleasing lovely form none of the Snakes reputed in history and mythology was louder than this snake. He also becomes an archetypal snake one who includes within himself all snakes. Here will or the wisp simile is also used. This means the light and regarded by some as supernatural phenomenon it is nothing but burning of gases that comes out of marshes. The respect as guide to Eve is compared with it.

**Conclusion:** - Milton's similes have been criticized on various counts. It is said that Milton forgets the subjects of comparison and is lost in elaborate description of the object. But still we can say that his similes are functional. They are integral part of his technique of communication. They impart variety, vastness and amplitude to the epic and elevation and dignity to his style. Hanford says, Milton has two styles in PL

1. Highly figurative
2. Pictorial style of book I and plain style of other books.

#### **Theme of PL**

His theme is Biblical. He had full faith in the truth of Biblical story of the creation and the fall of man. As Tillyard tells us for him the fall was the most significant event in the history of world and the myth of the Fall of Man and Christian doctrine of the original sin has been used by Milton to justify the ways of God to Man.

The central theme is stated in the very opening lines of the poem

“Of Man’s first disobedience and the fruit,  
Of the forbidden tree, whose mortal taste,  
Brought death into the world and all out woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater man,  
Restore us and regain the blissful seat.”

Addison wrote that the moral of the epic is universal in as much as it teaches us that, “The obedience to the will of God makes men happy and that disobedience makes them miserable.” Adam and Eve continue in paradise so long as they obey his command as soon as they disobey they lose it.

**The Causes of Fall:** The question is what was the root cause of the fall. Why did Adam and Eve disobey God. Although they were contented in the heaven. Milton says that “Eve could be easily seduced because of her triviality of mind. First she is susceptible to flattery. Secondly she is unwary and thirdly she hopes that God will not be angry at such a small trespass and fourthly she imagines that her disobedience would remain hidden from God.

Hence she fall an easy prey to seduction of Satan. Her greed comes next.

“Meanwhile the hour of Noon drew on and wak’d.

An eager appetite, raised by the smell.”

So Savorie, of that fruit, which with desire. Inclinable now grown to touch or taste solicited her longing eye.

Once Eve has eaten, her judgment is thoroughly upset it is the fruit itself that is passion rather than the motives which lead to her eating it.

### **Adam's fall:**

Satan in the guise of a serpent seduces Eve and Eve seduces Adam. He falls because of his instinct for comradeship.

"How can I live without tree how forgoes.

The sweet converse and love so dearly joy n'd

To live again in these wild woods forlorn? This shows that Adam cannot face solitariness.

Fall of Adam results from the victory of passion over reason and judgment. Obedience to God's command means following the voice of reason obedience to passion means yielding to the reductions of Satan.

### **The Doctrine of Free will**

Man could fall only because of his free will that means he was free to choose his own course, which is necessary for any action morally significant. Part of sin of Adam and Eve is that they fail to realize the full issue and to make full use of the will-power that is the great weapon for good in their natures. Adam has been warned by his Angel friend to make use of this will power properly. He was quite free to reject the temptation and act according to his better judgment and not to be Swayed by panior. He was fore warned by the coming danger. God withdraws himself and leaves Adam free to exercise his own judgment and reason. Thus temptation is a test of Adam faith in God and his love of Him and he fails in the test and suffers the Fall.

Fall of Satan:- Closely Woven with the Story of the Fall of Man is the story of the Fall of Satan and his followers. The theme of the epic is the victory of passion over reason and its terrible consequences. Satan falls because he too allowed his reason to be dominated by passion. He is proud and is carried away by inordinate ambition and lust for power. He claims absolute equality foolishly imagines that he is self created regards God's rule as tyrannous, rebels against him and is consequently over thrown and hurled into bell.

**Conclusion:**

PL is a complex work of art and number of theme Woven together make up its texture. There is for e.g. the theme of freedom and independence.

Another underlying theme of the poem is the frailty woman and infinite harm she can cause to man. It is through her charm and evil fascination that the first man loses paradise and suffering and death becomes his lot.

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