



THE CONTEXT

Quarterly e-journal of English Studies

International, Indexed & Peer Reviewed / Refereed Journal

Publication details and instructions for authors:

www.thecontext.in

This is an Open Access Journal[#]

This is a Peer Reviewed Research Paper. *

Dramatic Encounter Between Jesus Christ (The Saviour) and Satan (The Tempter) in John Milton's '*Paradise Regained*': A Miltonic and Biblical Context

Dr. Kamalakar Baburao Gaikwad

Head and Assistant Professor in English, Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir's Arts, Science & Commerce College, Surgana, Dist-Nashik

ABSTRACT

John Milton was a historian, a contemporary Catholic Protestant critic, a musician, pamphleteer, the greatest English poet and author. He is considered as one of the most excellent writers in the English language. John Milton's epic narrative poem '*Paradise Regained*' is an account of the narration of heaven and the description of Satan who tries to make the entire humankind to keep aloof from the glory of God. He always tries to deceive human beings and keep them in darkness. Initially he succeeds in luring both Adam and Eve in disobeying God and eating the fruit of Ignorance. Ultimately, they both were driven from Garden of Eden (Paradise) and thus they lost the paradise. Milton's *Paradise Regained* is the poem which celebrates the favour and grace of God for all human beings. Jesus, the son of God and saviour of humanity takes the initiative and conquers over the temptations brought by Satan and opened the doors of heaven for the believers. The present research attempts to acquaint the readers about the biblical concepts such as heaven, hell, paradise, redemption, dominance of good and evil, images of Christ and Satan, dramatic encounter between them regarding gaining of paradise and to keep away the people from heavenly pleasure and allow them to become inheritance of hell. Besides this, the present research portrays the dramatic encounter between Jesus Christ and Satan through the temptation of Jesus through the lens of Miltonic and Biblical perspectives.

Keywords: *Paradise, heaven, hell, temptation, virtue, evil, victory, encounter, Christ, Satan, Milton, Bible*

FULL PAPER

About John Milton: John Milton (1608-1674) was born in Bread Street, London in 1608. He was a historian, a contemporary Catholic Protestant critic, a musician, essayist, dramatist, lyricist, pamphleteer, the greatest English poet and author. He is considered as one of the most excellent writers in the English language. He firstly employed unrhymed verse outside of the theatre. During his life span, he achieved recognition and respect. He was esteemed by the reputed writers such as Thomas Hardy, William Wordsworth and William Blake. He worked as a civil servant and public officer for the commonwealth of England under the reign of Oliver Cromwell. He remained Secretary for overseas tongues. Milton graduated at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1629 and post graduated in 1632. He died due to gout in 1674 and buried in the cemetery of Saint Guiles Church, London. His major literary works are as follows.

1. *L'Allegro and L'Penseroso* (1632)
2. *Lycidas* (1637)
3. *Paradise Lost* (1667)
4. *Paradise Regained* (1671)
5. *Samson Agonistes* (1671)

Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of the research are as under.

- a. To explore the meanings of the Biblical and Miltonic concepts such as paradise, heaven, hell, dominance of good and evil etc.
- b. To portray the dramatic encounter between Jesus Christ and Satan through Miltonic and Biblical perspectives

Materials and Research Methodology: The main objective of this research is to scrutinize the insight and realization of the Miltonic and Biblical theologies through the vigilant psychotherapy of the concepts and dramatic encounter between Christ and Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Regained*. In order to prove the fact, the researcher has employed theoretical, analytical, referential, descriptive and qualitative approaches.

Literature Review: Literature review is the significant characteristic which analyses the former researcher's perceptions on the supposed topic. Here are some of the research articles which indeed offer the insight to the readers about the theoretical background of the study.

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/paradise>

Here the definition and concept of 'paradise' is clearly substantiated. The nature of paradise and the people who dwell in it and their relationship with God is mentioned. It also describes the glorification of God through his holy angels and his true worshippers.

2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven>

In this article, heaven is shown as the holiest place where the souls can achieve 'redemption' or 'moksha.' Our good actions and religious life can be measured and we are rewarded for our virtues.

3. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell>

The readers witness the concept of hell, its nature, the demons and disobedient people who always plans against the will of God. It is the dwelling place of demons and the souls of dead people.

Significance of the Research: The researcher has portrayed the significance of the research through the lens of Milton and Biblical context. John Milton's poem *Paradise Regained* is the story of the paradise (heaven) issued to the believers and an account of redemption with eternal hope. It also narrates the dramatic encounter between Christ and Satan. Here Satan tries to testify (tempt) Jesus Christ through several temptations. He tries to offer power and authority to Jesus. But he fails in his attempts. Thus, we witness the eternal dominance of God, the Almighty. Satanic or demonic powers fail in the name of Jesus.

Introduction:

The term 'paradise' is the most holy and heavenly place where God resides and gives the authority to his chosen people to be with him. In heaven, the believers witness the real joy, tranquility, optimism, contentment and pleasure. It is a terra firma of lavishness and interminable enjoyment. It is the place where all miseries of human beings come to end. Paradise is the origin of pleasure and state of blessedness. The people who believes on Jesus only considers this earth as temporary abode and wishes to enter into the kingdom of God (heaven) as their permanent abode. In paradise, there is praise and worship and all the angels sing the glory of God.

'Heaven' is the supernatural term where the holy angels, souls, saints, deities can dwell. It is the holiest place which claims divinity, goodness, faith, virtues, piety, good beliefs, divine will etc. It is the 'swarglok' where happiness of heaven can be experienced. It is believed that soul achieves moksha (salvation) in heaven. In reality, heaven is the realm of afterlife where our good actions in the previous life are rewarded for eternity. Our good actions are considered and accordingly we can enter into the heaven.

The concept 'hell' signifies the state of afterlife in which evil souls are punished. They are allocated for eternal pain, torture and suffering. It is the eternal destination or neutral place located under the surface of earth for the sinners. It is also called as the 'underworld' or 'the world of the dead.' It is the dwelling place of demons and the souls of dead people.

Dramatic Encounter Between Jesus Christ & Satan:

Paradise Regained was written by John Milton with the help of his friends and daughters at his residence Chalfont St. Giles in Buckinghamshire in 1671. It is

a succinct, thoughtful, puritan and concise epic of 2070 blank verse lines comprises with four books. It is a sequel to his earlier work *Paradise Lost* (1667) which deals with 10,565 blank verse lines with twelve books. It was based on the Gospel of Luke's version of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. In *Paradise Regained*, we observe Milton's lyrical mellowness, poetic execution and invocation to Muse.

It is a package of several themes. It deals with unique indulgence (transgression of naughtiness), faith and Christianity, conflict between good and evil, heaven and hell, salvation, enticement etc. It is a philosophical contemplation on the nature of spiritual triumph, resilience and the redemptive power of faith. It narrates the theme of fall of man. It is the story of Adam and Eve and their disobedience to God as they ate fruit of knowledge and ignorance. The paradise was lost due their sinful nature and non-capacity to resist the temptations by Satan in the Garden of Eden. The Satan was the protagonist of the story. On the contrary, *Paradise Regained* is an account of the hero, the saviour, Jesus Christ, who conquered Satan and regained the paradise. According to Christian belief, he sacrificed his life for the humanity on the cross. He did not yield to the temptations created by Satan in the wilderness. He proved himself as the victorious king. In reality, he regained the lost paradise and revived the joy and hope of paradise and heaven in human beings. He easily resisted demonic power and made the attempts of Satan futile. He explored the spiritual triumph through his actions. We can aptly say that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of Christian intrepidity. Thus, in *Paradise Regained*, we witness Jesus Christ of Nazareth, true redeemer of human beings as the protagonist and Satan, the tempter as the villain of the poem.

The poem opens with the forty days fasting of Jesus Christ in the wilderness. There he encounters with the tempter Satan who attempts to tempt him to turn away from his spiritual mission. It projects the thematic concerns such as Paradise, hell, temptation, virtue, evil, victory, encounter between Satan and Christ etc. It is the contradictory reflection of materialistic and devout supremacy. In the episode, temptation of Christ, the readers witness that Satan, the cheater, offers Jesus the dominance over the entire worldly things. In this situation, Jesus remains quite and peacefully, without losing his control and with the spirit of commitment, rebukes Satan thrice. Instead, he glorifies the heavenly father and kingdom of God. Milton investigates the notion that true victory lies in the resisting temptations and not in availing the worldly things. The triumph of the soul is the major concern for Jesus being a divine God. He strictly adheres to the spiritual standards set by God. Here Jesus sets an ideal example before the believers to build their inner strength and victory can be attained through only with virtue. The portrayal of Satan is very apt to his character. He is demonstrated as a cunning, persuasive adversary Satan is presented as a shrewd and influential challenger, attempting to abuse Christ's compassion and the corporeal confrontations he faces during his fasting. However, Jesus counteracts each enticement with steadfast determination, relying on his religious potency and obligation to God's willpower.

Paradise Lost is encompassed with its magnificence and sophisticated metaphors. It has ornate style and decorative in its verse form whereas *Paradise Regained* highlights unemotional and attentive tone and simple syntax. It is contemplative and reflective in nature. In fact, it is a theological meditation and thought provoking work which emphasizes on enduring power of faith and virtue in the face of worldly temptations. It narrates Milton's Christian convictions, his rhythmical craftsmanship and complex theological themes.

Milton delineates inner struggle of Jesus in wilderness. *Paradise Regained* is the combined package of four books which discuss the several temptation situations and unique challenges faced by Jesus. Through these temptations, we can visualize the celestial qualities of Jesus such as high caliber, uprightness and heavenly accomplishment. It also depicts the simplicity of Jesus and his teachings. The poem persuades the readers to recognize their religious studies, sacred and redemptive journey, the challenges faced and the basis of true conquest. Here Milton would like to explore human spirits and their capacity for triumph in the face of adversity. Jesus Christ is the son of God who serves as the mediator. He stands for the gaining of glory and the paradise which was lost earlier by the first man Adam and Eve.

Paradise Regained focuses on the notion of material and spiritual 'hunger' of Jesus. He rambles in the wasteland for the period of forty days. Now he feels weakened like a human being and is in search of food. He is starving with the same. Satan, the tempter is searching the opportunity to tempt Jesus in such adverse situation. He offers food to Jesus and brings several temptations. But Jesus courageously resists and confronts the plans of Satan and denies him. He emerges as victorious Lord and tramples the evil plans of Satan and defeats him. *The quotation related to these two poems encapsulates the profound power and resilience of the human mind.*

*'A human intelligence not to be altered by place or moment in time, the intellect is its own position and in itself can make a paradise of torture, a torment of ecstasy.'*⁴

Paradise Regained is divided into four books which depict the significant events and encounter between Satan and Jesus Christ. The researcher clarifies the facts through the lens of Miltonic and Biblical perspectives.

Book 1

Miltonic Projections:

- a. Baptism of Jesus in river Jordan
 - b. Satan attends this rite of Baptism
 - c. He calls the meeting of demons
 - d. Satan's plan to fool Jesus by tempting him
 - e. Jesus in wilderness and fast for forty days and forty nights
 - f. Satan appears in disguise of an old man and testifies Jesus
 - g. Satan fails in his attempt and night falls.
-

Considering above Miltonic perspectives, John, the Baptist, baptizes Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Satan witnesses the baptism of Jesus. Immediately he calls the meeting of fallen angels, i.e. demons to overthrow the power of Jesus. Satan was very confident that he will easily fool Jesus like first man Adam. During the course of action, heavenly father discusses with the angels that Satan is overconfident and the angels praise and worship God. After his baptism, Jesus, led by the Holy Ghost, goes to the desert and pursues holy meditations (fasts) for a period of forty days. His main objective was to ponder over his past and future happenings. He meanders in the wasteland unscathed. Then he begins to feel hunger. There Satan, in disguise of an old man in the desert asks Jesus if he is the son of God, turn these stones into bread. Jesus, with his inner strength, recognized the disguised old man and rebuked him for his lies. Bible says that Satan is the liar and father of lies. Satan becomes happy by hearing his true identity from Jesus and begs permission to stay. Here very firmly Jesus says to Satan that he can do whatever the Father in heaven allows.

Biblical Perspectives:

Baptism of Jesus:

The lives of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ are closely connected to one another. The Baptism of Jesus is the religious ceremony performed by John the Baptist at Bethany, river Jordan. This was the process of purification of Jesus with water. This is described in Bible in New Testament, in three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus went to Galilee in order to baptize and to complete the righteousness of God. When he approached to John, the Baptist, he showed reluctance and said to Jesus,

*'I need to be baptized by you and do you come to me?'*⁵(Matthew 3:14)

Here Jesus proclaims,

*'Let it be done to fulfil all the righteousness of God.'*⁶ (Matthew 3:15)

At the time of Baptism, Jesus was praying to God. While taking the baptism, Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove and a voice came from the heaven saying,

*'You are my adored son in whom I am contented.'*⁷ (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23)

In Bible, it is not mentioned that Satan attended the rite, baptism of Jesus. He calls the devils to attend the meeting and to plan how to defeat Jesus. It was the foolish plan of Satan to fool Jesus. Bible says that no one can make foolish to God or his son Jesus. Even Satan has no authority to testify Jesus. In the wilderness, Jesus met a person in disguise of an old man and testifies Jesus. Satan departs and night falls. These are the several imaginary perceptions of Milton with respect to Book one. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_Jesus)⁸

Temptation of Jesus Christ :

After baptism of Jesus, another biblical narrative appears on the screen, i.e. temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Here Jesus went into the Judean desert to observe fasting for forty days and nights. He would like to receive spiritual strength

from God. According to him, fasting was the best solution to resist the devil. In fact, devil is the prince of this world. He has the power to exploit the believers and righteous people. He wants to use this strategy upon Jesus. But his power proved futile. In wilderness, Jesus was tempted by Satan, the tempter after forty days. Satan tried to tempt Jesus thrice. Each time Jesus rebuked and defeated Satan with the word of God. This was the spiritual battle which Jesus won with the help of God. That is why Christians observe the feast of Lent in which they fast, pray and give alms to the poor. Then Satan departed and Jesus returned to Galilee to begin his ministry.

Book 2

Miltonic Perspectives:

- a. Simon and Andrew saw Jesus baptized and identifies that Jesus is the true saviour
- b. They lose Jesus and search him.
- c. Mary is also anxious for Jesus
- d. Satan returns to the fallen angels and warns them that tempting Jesus is very difficult task
- e. Belial advises Satan to set a honey trap against Jesus
- f. Jesus in wilderness, feels hungry, meets an old man who offers him money
- g. Jesus rebukes old man (Satan) and reminds about King David

Jesus disciples Simon and Andrew saw Jesus fulfilled the righteousness of God and baptized according to the will of God and realized that Jesus Christ indeed is the Messiah and saviour of human beings. Later, they lose him and search for him here and there with great anxiety. Jesus' mother Mary also got surprised by seeing Jesus is lost somewhere else. She remembers the same earlier happenings when Jesus was twelve years old. Satan comes back to the fallen angels. He cautions them about the herculean task of tempting Jesus than fall of first man, Adam. His advisor Belial advised him to set a honey trap but Satan tells him that it will not work on Jesus. During the course of time, Jesus, in the flesh, feels hungry and wishes that he also feed by ravens like the prophet Elijah. He kept on walking. There he met an old man. This old man (Satan) tries to tempt Jesus by offering money. This time very firmly Jesus resists Satan and reminds him that King David started his career as a shepherd. Later, God uplifted him and made a king on Israelites. It is in the hands of God to lift us from our poverty.

Biblical Perspectives:

In the Bible, it is not mentioned anywhere that Simon and Andrew were present for the baptism of Jesus. They identify Jesus as their redeemer. For a moment they lose Jesus and search him. Jesus' mother Mary was anxiously searching Jesus. Satan comes and shares the fact to his fallen angels that it was herculean task to defeat Jesus. It is also not mentioned in the Bible that Belial advises Satan to set a honey trap against Jesus. We cannot ignore the fact that Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert where

Satan tempted Jesus and provided several offers to him. There Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. After his fasting, in a flesh, he became hungry. Milton says that an old man met Jesus and offered him money. But Bible says that in his state of hungry, the tempter approached Jesus in wilderness and tempted him,

*'If you are the Son of supernatural being, command that these stones become loaves of bread.'*⁹ (Matthew 4:3)

Jesus replied,

*'It is written in the Bible that man shall not survive by bread on his own but by every utterance that proceeds out of the mouth of divinity.'*¹⁰ (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Miltonic Views:

Book 3

- a. Satan flatters Jesus for his wisdom
- b. Satan mocks Jesus about his lacking something with apt examples
- c. Satan takes Jesus on a mountain and shows the glory of this world
- d. He asks Jesus to support him.
- e. Jesus refuses the offer

Satan employs a tool of flattery and started praising Jesus about his wisdom and divine powers. Then he deliberately mocks Jesus that he has ample of wisdom but it is of no use. He says that Jesus is still lacking something. He cleverly says that Alexander the Great conquered half of the world at the age of thirty. Jesus in return asserts that triumph cannot be achieved only by violence. Satan provides him another example of Judas Maccabeus who obtained glory for God by fighting with the pagans. Here Jesus assuredly claims Satan that sufferings and trials are the appropriate means through which God the Almighty pleases with. Then Satan takes Christ to a high mountain and showed him the kingdom of the world. He suggests him that if Jesus will support him, he can definitely resist Rome successfully with the help of Parthians. Here Jesus denies the offer of Satan to free the ten tribes, leaving it to divine providence.

Biblical Perspectives:

The evidences Milton depicted in Book 3 do not match with Biblical philosophy. For example, he narrates: Satan flatters Jesus for his wisdom and Satan mocks Jesus about his lacking something with apt examples. Then Satan takes Jesus Jerusalem, the holy city and set him on a pinnacle of the temple and showed the glory of this universe. He asserts,

*'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down because it is written in the scripture that he shall give his angels charge concerning you and, in their hands, they shall tolerate you before you scurry your foot against a boulder.'*¹¹ (Psalm 91:11-12)

In Bible, it is never reiterated that Satan asks support to Jesus. Whatever offers Satan gave to Jesus, were denied thoroughly.

Miltonic Analysis:

Book 4

- a. Satan shows the city of Rome and ancient Greece to Jesus and assurance of offering the same
- b. Jesus denies this offer and rebukes him.
- c. Christ in the wilderness in the midst of tempest
- d. Satan takes Christ to Jerusalem and tells himself to throw himself off the pinnacle of the Jewish temple.
- e. Jesus threatens Satan
- f. Departure of Satan
- g. Angels serve Jesus and returns him to his mother Mary

Here the reader's witness that Satan, the tempter shows Jesus the city of Rome. He says that the kingdom of this world will be given to Jesus if he bows down the knee before him. Satan says,

*'All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'*¹² (Matthew 4:9)

Christ reprimands him for this profanity by giving the reference of Exodus Chapter 20: 5,

'You shall not bow down before a deity or any likeness or worship them.'

Then Jesus rebukes him,

*'Get out Satan. For it is written that you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'*¹³ (Deuteronomy 6:13)

Thus, Satan realizes that he is absolutely defeated by Jesus. Once again, without losing a hope, he tries to tempt Jesus by showing the glory of ancient Greece. Here also Christ rejects his offer. Satan gets irritated and angry upon Jesus and forces him to spend the entire night in the midst of tempest. The glorious king Jesus endures this trial. The frustrated Satan takes Jesus to Jerusalem and tells him to throw himself off the summit of the Jewish temple. In addition, Satan takes the reference of the biblical verse. Jesus rebukes him by not taking the test of God. Jesus strongly rebukes Satan,

*'It is written in the Bible that you shall not tempt the lord your God.'*¹⁴ (Deuteronomy 6:16)

Defeated Satan left Jesus and angels came and serve victorious Jesus and celebrate his victory over devil.

- **Scope and Limitations:**

The scope of the present study is to explore the biblical and Miltonic concepts such as paradise, heaven, hell, dominance of good and evil etc. These terms will be helpful to the readers to understand the perspectives of Milton and the Bible and can improve their spiritual standard by knowing the truth.

The present research is restricted only for the dramatic encounter between Jesus Christ and Satan through Miltonic and Biblical perspectives. The researcher has projected his views on good and evil things and how good actions and virtues can conquer demonic power.

- **Conclusion:**

Nowadays, the believers in Christianity need to have enduring faith in God. They should have belief in prayer and a prayer warrior. They should resist Satan with spiritual strength and can overcome the obstacles in their spiritual life. They should be true to themselves like a true believer and can be set an ideal example before others. In fact, the believers should be aloof from the spirit of disobedience. Being a devoted Christian, they need to believe in eternal providence and justification of God to men. In pedagogical context, Jesus Christ made provision for the humanity to reestablish the kingdom of God (paradise) and opened the way of eternal salvation. The human beings can comprehend the intensity of love of Jesus and how he resisted devil and became a victorious God. They should try to imitate the ways of Jesus and should express the sense of gratitude for God.

Finally, the paradise is regained by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and his victory over Satan. The same inheritance can be given to the believers if they live victorious life like Jesus. It is the right of the believers to exercise the authority of Jesus and to break the bondages of Satan. They should believe that heaven is their inheritance.

Bibliography:

1. Milton, John. *Paradise Regained* (1671).
2. Ibid, *Poetry Foundation*, 2018
3. Griswold, Rufus. *The Prose Works of John Milton*. 1847.
4. Draper. W.F. *The Religious Life and Opinions of John Milton*, Vol-17, p.38, 1860
5. Hill C. *Milton & English Revolution*, Faber & Faber, 1977, p. 155-157
6. Encyclopedia Britannica, *Paradise: Religion*, 2021
7. Bart, Eherman. *Heaven & Hell: A History of the Afterlife*, Simon & Schuster, 2020, p.104
8. Frye, *Return to Eden*, 135.

-
9. Northrop Frye, *The Return to Eden: Five Essays on Milton's Epics* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1965).
 10. Introduction to *Paradise Regained*, in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, ed. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, and Stephen M. Fallon (New York: Modern Library, 2007).
 11. Barbara Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained*, Providence: Brown UP, 1966.
 12. Susanne Woods, introduction to *Paradise Lost & Paradise Regained*, published by Signet Classics.
 13. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Regained
 14. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/paradise>
 15. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heaven>
 16. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell>

#Copyright permissions and liabilities are the sole responsibility of the author(s). The Context Journal and all Editorial members are NOT responsible for any copyright infringement.

**This journal subscribes to the principles of, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
www.publicationethics.org*