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## CRITISISM ON MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST* BOOK 1

AAKANKSHA HANS

Student, B.A (Hons) English, K.R. Mangalam University, Sohna Road, Gurugram

[trishaarora27@gmail.com](mailto:trishaarora27@gmail.com)

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AAKANKSHA HANS

### ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to study how Milton was criticised. It mainly focuses on the poet John Milton and a short depiction of *Paradise Lost*, one of the greatest epics. It comprises of *Paradise lost* book 1 which was published in 1667, and the reviews of various critics regarding the epic written by John Milton. The poem is written upon how Satan and his followers were thrown out of heaven and the downfall of humans when Adam and Eve break the rules of "the garden of Eden".

**KEYWORDS:** *Paradise Lost*, Milton, Criticism

### INTRODUCTION

John Milton was an English poet, a civil servant. He was born on December 9, 1608 and died on November 8, 1674. He was best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost* in 1667, which is written in a blank verse. The desire for freedom extended in his style: he introduced new words into the English language, and was also one of the modern writers to employ non-rhymed verse outside the theatre. Milton's travelled, wrote poetry mostly private, studied, and launched his career as pamphleteer.

He was also a secretary for the foreign Tongues in the Council of states and had written many political tracts opposing the monarchy. One of them was *Eikonoklastes* (1649). After Charles 2 was crowned Milton was dismissed from the government service and was imprisoned. He composed many mature works like *Paradise lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in 1640s, all these were completed and revised much later and were not published until after Restoration.

His poetry was slow to see, in any event under his name. One of his first published poems was on Shakespeare in the year 1630. The

mysterious release of the *Comus* was distributed in the year 1637.

### *Paradise Lost*

The greatest epic poems of blank verse written by 17<sup>th</sup> century English poet John Milton (1608-1674). In 1667 its first version was published, which consisted of ten thousand lines of verse. Other edition arranged into twelve books came in 1674. It is one of the major works of Milton considered by the critics, due to which his reputation solidify as one of the greatest poets in his time. The poem comprises of the bible story of a fall of men: a temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and about how they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. His purpose started in the book 1 to justify the ways of god to men.

### *Paradise Lost* Book 1

It begins with a prologue where Milton performs traditional epic tasks to invoke Muse. Following the prologue Milton begins the epic describing Satan and other rebellious Angels, chained on a lack of fire. As epics generally commences from the middle, Satan also known as

Lucifer with his compatriots started a war against God. They were defeated and thrown from Heaven to the fires of Hell.

Over the lake, Satan has been described as gigantic or a titan, next to whom lies Beelzebub- his second command. He comments on the look of Beelzebub which has transformed into worse due to the punishment of the god. Still he continues his intention to struggle against god, saying "better to reign in hell than serve in Heaven" (cliffsnotes).

Satan is able to free himself from the chains and he flies to a barren plain, followed by Beelzebub. He calls all the fallen angels motivates him and when they come to their leader Milton lists the major Devils like: Moloch, baalem, Astarte, dagon and many more. The fallen angels think they have escaped from the chains by using their power but Milton makes it clear that God alone has allowed them to do so. The army made by Satan was large and impressive. He addresses them that they still have the power to oppose God. At the last they find minerals in mountains of Hell and quickly begin to construct a city. That symbolised the capital of Hell, pandemonium. In the Pandemonium all the devils assemble for the great councils.

### **What is criticism?**

Criticism is basically the practice of judging the merits and demerits of something. It can occur in any area of human life. Criticism can have many forms: how people criticize, can vary. In some forms it can be highly specialized and technical; it may often require professional knowledge to appreciate criticism. To criticise, it is not necessary to always find faults, but often mean a simple expression of object against prejudice, doesn't matter positive or negative.(en.m.wikipedia.org). It is also the study, evaluation and the interpretation of literary works, films. The main purpose is to understand the possible meanings.

### **Criticism on Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book1**

Other poets corroborated by Satan's powerfully rhetoric, which have enjoyed some currency from few readers. The Romantics admiration has always echoed with their interpretations. In the early twenties which saw the

English Literature as a degree subject: Milton, in few ways is the country's first classic poet, and might have been the central. However, there was a growing antipathy towards Milton's presence. Eliot objected to Milton as being a man, a poet, an inspiration. Harold Bloom wrote a few years later that Milton proposed mystery of language as a response to everyone's explanation. Major objections on Milton's style and his site in the canon were not sustained. But later, new interaction of old disputes over the *Paradise lost*. The poem was considered as a great work, but the reasons were contested. Samuel Johnson was the one who wrote "A study of Milton's 'Paradise Lost'," (jameadows) he said Milton's work as genius, as he unites "pleasure with truth".

None of the poems in English language has earned extremes to praise as *Paradise lost*. It is well received by publishers of first edition 1667. The poem by seventeenth century was considered in Europe and England as the greatest epics and major works of literature which are generally admired for boldness and originality. Appreciation of the poems, epics continued in even eighteenth century. Many critics and Milton's personal intrusions into the poem, there is excessive display of learning. Samuel Johnson in 1781, asserted that the poem lacks human interest and that the poem read for "duty rather than pleasure". (jameadows), but the poem was considered as extraordinary imaginative. Blake has admired Satan's energy and his spirit to rebel against God. Some of the critics have also said that Satan on the other hand is a true hero of the epic: he uses most memorable lines; his character is fully developed and interesting. His energy and spirit of rebellion have been given a great admiration. As *Paradise Lost* is a Biblical epic it is an interpretation of scripture, hence where God is the central figure.

The Romantic critics in the nineteenth century considered about the relationship of Milton's life, mind, and his art. Poets like P.B Shelley extending Blake's notion as Satan a glorious rebel. Later it turned out to be a great regard, many considered Milton's flawless rhythm and diction. A critical opinion of the poets in twentieth century was extensive. Milton's humanism and intellectual heritage informed his work. Many admired his

knowledge about nature that is being reflected in the poem. In the year 1930, the poem was criticised by many prominent thinkers like: T.S Eliot, Ezra Pound. Others defended Milton, predicting criticism against Milton's style which would disappear with the modernist poetic movement. The critics of each generation found and continued many subjects worthy of debate a testament to mystery and complexity and an indication of profound importance to the world of literature.

### CONCLUSION

The epic is praised for its imagination and Milton's knowledge which is expressed in *Paradise lost*. Milton shows the subject: 'man's first disobedience' and the sorrowful consequences. *Paradise lost* is written on the concept from the Bible. It comprises of various symbolisms and mysteries. According to what all is discussed above comprises criticism which are put on Milton's *paradise lost*. While the epic was written many critics were against Milton's thoughts but a few were in favour too. In the later years Milton's *paradise lost* was appealing to the people and was liked by many critics. The characters were admired by poets like Blake. His knowledge was also admired as he had excessive interpretation of nature.

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