

The Influence of Indian Epics on John Milton

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Abstract

The study of Indian culture and traditions reveals that certainly there were people around the world who have inspired by the writings and ancient scripts of India. The epic is traditionally ascribed to Vyasa, who is also a major character in the epic. The first section of the Mahabharata states that it was Ganesha who, at the request of Vyasa, wrote down the text to Vyasa's dictation. Ganesha is said to have agreed to write it only on condition that Vyasa never pause in his recitation. Vyasa agreed, provided Ganesha took the time to understand what was said before writing it down as an Epic.

The Mahabharata (Sanskrit Mahābhārata, is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the other being the Ramayana. The epic is part of itihasa (history). Besides its epic narrative of the Kurukshetra War and the fates of the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the Mahabharata contains much philosophical and devotional material, such as a discussion of the four "goals of life" or purusharthas (12.161). The latter are enumerated as dharma (right action), artha (purpose), kama (pleasure), and moksha (liberation). Among the principal works and stories that are a part of the Mahabharata are the Bhagavad Gita.

Introduction

Similarly in English Literature, witness John Milton as an Epic writer. John Milton was born on 9 December 1608. He was passed away on 8 November 1674. He was an English poet, , and a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England. He is best known for his epic poem Paradise Lost and Paradise Regain.

John Milton was a scholarly man of letters, a writer, and an official serving under Oliver Cromwell. He wrote at a time of religious flux and political upheaval in England, and his poetry and prose reflect deep convictions and deal with contemporary issues, such as his treatise condemning licensing, Areopagitica. He wrote in Latin and Italian as well as in English, and had an international reputation during his lifetime. An epic poem in dactylic hexameters, traditionally attributed to Homer. The Trojan War, the ten-year siege of the city of Troy (Ilium) by a coalition of Greek states, it tells of the battles and events during the weeks of a quarrel between King Agamemnon and the warrior Achilles. Although the story covers only a few weeks in the final year of the war, the *Iliad* mentions or alludes to many of the Greek legends about the siege, the earlier events, such as the gathering of warriors for the siege, the cause of the war and similar, tending to appear near the beginning, and the events prophesied for the future, such as Achilles' looming death and the sack of Troy, prefigured and alluded to more and more vividly approaching the end of the poem, making the poem tell a more or less complete tale of the Trojan War.

The Epic Paradise Lost

John Milton's magnum opus, the blank-verse epic poem *Paradise Lost*, was composed by the blind and impoverished Milton from 1658 to 1664 through dictation given to a series of aides by his own daughters in writing the epic poems. It reflects his personal despair at the failure of the Revolution, yet affirms an ultimate optimism in human potential. Milton encoded many references to his unyielding support for the "Good Old Cause" by writing the reality of life. Like many [Renaissance](#) artists before him, Milton attempted to integrate Christian theology with classical modes. In his early poems, the poet narrator expresses a tension between vice and virtue, the latter invariably related to [Protestantism](#). In *Comus* Milton may make ironic use of the [Caroline](#) court [masque](#) by elevating notions of purity and virtue over the conventions of court revelry and superstition.

John Milton called in the [Aeropagitica](#) for "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties" (applied however, only to the conflicting Protestant sects, and not to atheists, Jews, Muslims or even Catholics). "Milton argued for [disestablishment](#) as the only effective way of achieving broad [toleration](#). Rather than force a man's conscience, government should recognize the persuasive force of the gospel.

The Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 began a new phase in Milton's work. In *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* Milton mourns the end of the godly Commonwealth. The Garden of Eden may allegorically reflect Milton's view of England's recent Fall from Grace, while Samson's blindness and captivity – mirroring Milton's own lost sight – may be a metaphor for England's blind acceptance of Charles II as king. Illustrated by *Paradise Lost* is mortalism, the belief that the soul lies dormant after the body dies.

Despite the Restoration of the monarchy Milton did not lose his personal faith; *Samson* shows how the loss of national salvation did not necessarily preclude the salvation of the individual, while *Paradise Regained* expresses Milton's continuing belief in the promise of Christian salvation through Jesus Christ. Though he may have maintained his personal faith in spite of the defeats suffered by his cause, the *Dictionary of National Biography* recounts how he had been alienated from the Church of England by Archbishop William Laud, and then moved similarly from the Dissenters by their denunciation of religious tolerance in England. Milton had come to stand apart from all sects, though apparently finding the Quakers most congenial. He never went to any religious services in his later years. When a servant brought back accounts of sermons from nonconformist meetings, Milton became so sarcastic that the man at last gave up his place.

John Milton's famous writings:

- 1631: *L'Allegro*; 1631: *Il Penseroso*; 1634: *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*, 1634 commonly known as *Comus* (a masque); 1638: *Lycidas*; 1667: *Paradise Lost*; 1671: *Paradise Regained*; 1671: *Samson Agonistes*;
[Adam](#), [Eve](#), [Cain](#), their first son, [Abel](#), their second son, [Adah](#), Cain's sister and wife
- [Zillah](#), Abel's sister and wife, [Lucifer](#),
- [Angel of the Lord](#).

Overview:

The play commences with Cain refusing to participate in his family's prayer of thanksgiving to God. Cain tells his father he has nothing to thank God for because he is fated to die. As Cain explains in an early soliloquy, he regards his mortality as an unjust punishment for [Adam and Eve's](#) transgression in the [Garden of Eden](#), an event detailed in the [Book of Genesis](#). Cain's anxiety over his mortality is heightened by the fact that he does not know what death is. At one point in Act I, he recalls keeping watch at night for the arrival of death, which he imagines to be an anthropomorphic entity. The character who supplies Cain with

knowledge of death is Lucifer. In Act II, Lucifer leads Cain on a voyage to "The Abyss of Space" and shows him a catastrophic vision of the Earth's natural history, complete with spirits of extinct life forms like the mammoth. Cain returns to Earth in Act III, depressed by this vision of universal death. At the climax of the play, Cain murders Abel. The play concludes with Cain's banishment.

Impact of literary influences on John Milton:

Perhaps the most important literary influence on Cain was John Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost, which tells of the creation and fall of mankind. For Byron as for many Romantic poets, the hero of Paradise Lost was Satan, and Cain is modeled in part on Milton's defiant protagonist. Furthermore, Cain's vision of the Earth's natural history in Act II is a parody of Adam's consolatory vision of the history of man (culminating in the coming and sacrifice of Christ) presented by the Archangel Michael in Books XI and XII of Milton's epic. In the "Preface" to Cain, Byron attempts to downplay the influence of poems "upon similar topics," but the way he refers to Paradise Lost suggests its formative influence: "Since I was twenty, I have never read Milton; but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference."

The influence from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana can be seen vividly in the writings of the Renaissance period writers, a brother who becomes enemy of his own blood-brethren in order to gain the supremacy over other. The grudge between the brothers Pandavas and the Kauravas, Similarly in between the sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel.

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