

# Satan, the Most Well-developed Character of Milton's *Paradise Lost*: A Critical Analysis

Rakib Uddin

## **Abstract:**

In spite of having so many unambiguous sketches of Satan in *The Bible* as well as other religious scriptures and the holy books, Milton draws a picture of Satan which actually erects him with honor and it makes a controversy among the readers as well as the critics. Milton quotes a mistake, pride, committed by Satan and he (Satan) is cursed. But it actually generates sympathy for him and also it shows the unjust decision of God. He also talks about the punishment of evil deeds of Satan as well as his followers. Milton knowingly supports Satan and draws his character like a hero and he develops the character of Satan being sympathized and devotes much concentration to make him the best creation. The purposes of the paper are to find out the structure as well as the image of the character of Satan drawn by John Milton in the great epic poem, *Paradise Lost*.

## **Key Words:**

Epic, hero, Satan, pride, image, defiance, paradise, decay and hell

## **Introduction:**

The epic starts after Satan and the insurgent angels were thrown out of paradise and archives man's first defiance and consequent descent from paradise. The character of Satan drawn by Milton has long been a concern of disagreement among the readers as well as the critics. In the epic, Satan is over and over again a shape, represented by Milton, with whom the readers as well as the critics can empathize. Satan is well thought-out in cooperation with the catastrophic anti-

hero. The epic, *Paradise Lost*, specifies first defiance of human being in addition to consequent descend from the charmed paradise. It is mainly distinguished for Milton's compassionate dealing or treatment of Satan, and certainly he is equally the anti-hero as well as antagonist of this poem. All the way through the semicircle of the epic, his (Satan's) exposition progressively metamorphoses from archangel to evil spirit and finally to snake. The author, Milton, presented a very dissimilar character of Satan than any other writer or artist which had been seen aforementioned to the time in both art and literature. The exhibitions given by John Milton in the epic lead the readers as well as critics develop an innovative representation of Satan which sometimes dignifies and sometime disgraces Milton's literary work, *Paradise Lost*. In case of drawing the appearance of Satan Milton states:

. . . for now the thought  
Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes  
That witness'd huge affliction and dismay  
Mixt with obdurate pride and stedfast hate.  
(*Paradise Lost*, Book I, p.54–58)

We also see the other graphic clue of Satan's appearance drawn by the author:

With Head up-lift above the wave, and eyes  
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides  
Prone on the Flood, extended long and large  
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,  
(*Paradise Lost*, book I, p.193–97)

According to Biblical records, Satan is the author of all evils, the master of disguise and man's worst enemy. Pride, disobedience and audacity are Satan's major characteristics which are depicted several times by John Milton in this great epic, *Paradise Lost*. In case of deceiving his followers he applies different strategies. The author let Satan speak regarding hierarchy, order, disobedience and revolt.

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n...  
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice  
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:  
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.

(*Paradise Lost*, book I,)

Satan, the epic hero in *Paradise Lost* drawn by the author, John Milton cannot be perceived examining only one or two ways, rather to understand the plurality of meaning it is necessary to go through several ways and therefore it may be said that to confine him to only one unambiguous definition would ruin its versatility. A complicated presence, frequently disagrees with him, as we see the author, John Milton, decorated the character of Satan both hero and villain, who rose against autocracy and autocrat, and he is also preacher of liberty and captive of his personal egocentrism. The author, John Milton gives the impression of his own to be intentionally depicting a number of different and from time to time mismatched the epic hero, Satan.

### **Objective:**

The purpose of the study is to find out the true picture of Satan drawn by the writer John Milton. The other objectives of the research are to show the same impression which were illustrated by

the other writers and critics and also to get the attitudes of the reader regarding the genre and the author.

### **Methodology:**

This is fundamentally a qualitative research and it is carried out by following text analysis system. The resources are acquired from both secondary and primary sources which are also qualitative. The primary source is the epic, *Paradise Lost*, written by John Milton. Pertinent websites, books and research articles are the secondary sources which are used to collect data. Those are profoundly inspected and presented through coherent explanation.

### **Literature Review:**

Edith Kaiter and Corina Sandiuc stated in their conference paper entitled Milton's Satan: Hero Or Anti-Hero?, "None of the other characters of *Paradise Lost* exhibits such non-transparent nature." John Carey specifies that Satan is an undecided figure. He calls attention to that "a more reasonable reaction is to recognize that the poem is insolubly ambivalent, in so far as the reading of Satan's character is concerned, and that this ambivalence is a precondition of the poem's success—a major factor in the attention it has roused" (Carey, 2000: p. 161). Hamilton affirms: "he wins our admiration the more firmly because he is ultimately real, while the inhabitants of Heaven are remote and strange."

On the other hand, anti-Satanists such as Charles Williams and C. S. Lewis downgrade Satan and consider him as a representation of uncontaminated mischievous spirit. They stress Satan's self-centeredness, foolishness or irrationality. As sighted from C. S. Lewis, "throughout the poem, all his (Satan's) torments come, in a sense, at his own bidding" (Lewis, 1942: p. 99). And he considers that Satan's rebellion next to God "is entangled in contradictions from the very outset"

because “he only thought himself impaired” (Lewis, 1942: p. 96). As William Hazlitt commented, he is “the most heroic subject ever chosen in a poem.”

Pro-Satanists as Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Blake and William Hazlitt prepare Satan and scrutiny him as a outstanding hero. They gave emphasis to Satan’s pride, courage and rebellious spirit. In Shelley’s judgment, Satan is a devil, but “very different from the popular personification of evil” (Miller, 1997: p. 148). Coleridge distinguishes in him the “alcohol of egotism” a self-absorbed, self-obsessed creature.

He clarifies his replacement on the Devil and Devils that Milton’s Devil, as a moral being, is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in a purpose which he has conceived to be excellent, in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy—not from any mistaken notion of bringing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the open and alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* Freud verbalizes the enormous authority of the superego and the moral requirements it enforces on the personage in contemporary traditions.

The cosmos is, normally according to Milton’s point of view of religion, separated into four major regions: glorious Heaven, Dreadful Hell, confusing Chaos, and a young and vulnerable Earth in between. With the established settings of good and evil, light and dark, much of the action occurs in between on Earth. Merritt Hughes considers that Satan is shaped as “an example of the self deception and the deception of others which are incident to the surrender of reason to passion.”

*Paradise Lost* is concerning pecking order to the extent that it is regarding compliance. “The layout of the universe—with Heaven above, Hell below, and Earth in the middle—presents the

universe as a hierarchy based on proximity to God and his grace” (Shawcross, 1993: p. 29). The romantic criticism professed Satan as the prototypical hero. Shelley for example measured that Milton was occupied in a stout disagreement with the attitude of evil on its earthly demonstration of dictatorship and unfairness.

“Satan begins the poem as a just-fallen angel of enormous stature, looks like a comet or meteor as he leaves Hell, then disguises himself as a more humble cherub, then as a cormorant, a toad and finally a snake” (Fish, 1967: p. 12). A additional temperate standpoint be in the right place to Tillyard who creates a straightforward dissimilarity stuck between the conscious and unconscious connotations in *Paradise Lost*. In his estimation Milton definitely planned Satan to be a terrible warning embodiment of the unrestrained passions, inspiring horror and detestation rather than sympathy. One important way in which the narrator develops our picture of Satan—and gives us the impression that he is a hero—is through epic similes, lengthy and developed comparisons that tell us how big and powerful Satan is. To emphasis this thought, Gen Ohinata utters that Satan’s petition cultivate on one occasion with his unhappiness.

### **Discussions and Findings:**

'O, speak again, bright angel!'

(William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II.ii.26)

Satan was one of the most significant of God's archangels, other than revolted when God confirmed the Son being above all the archangels in magnificence. Satan convinced a third of the archangels to revolt with him, and affirmed warfare on God. Satan was beaten by the Son and shed into hell or misery with all the other mutineer archangels. Satan tells Beelzebub that "the mind is its own place, and can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n." Book 1, lines 254-5 and

Satan tries to make the best of the situation in hell, explaining "better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n." Book 1, line 263.

Perhaps the most renowned quote regarding *Paradise Lost* is Blake's proclamation that Milton was "of the Devil's party without knowing it." While Blake may have meant something other than what is usually comprehend from the line, the thought that Satan is the hero, or at slightest a type of hero, in *Paradise Lost* is prevalent. However, the development, or, more specifically, deterioration, of Satan's character from Book I through Book X furnishes a greatly dissimilar and much apparent representation of Milton's approach toward Satan.

The writers as well as the critics of the Romantic period sophisticated the concept that Satan was a Promethean hero, hollowing himself in opposition to an unjust God. Most of these writers based their thoughts on the portrait of Satan in the first two books of *Paradise Lost*. In those books, Satan ascends off the lake of fire and conveys his gallant words still challenging God. Satan advises the other dissenters that they can build "a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (I, 255) and appends, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n" (I, 263). Satan also entitles for and escorts the splendid assembly. Lastly, he departs forward on his hold to cross Chaos and discover Earth. Without inquiry, this portrait of Satan constructs him valiant in his preliminary prologue to the reader.

In addition to his proceedings, Satan furthermore materializes stout for the reason that the first two books spotlight on Hell and the fallen angels. The reader's introduction to the poem is all the way through Satan's point of view. Milton, by beginning *in medias res* presents Satan the first scene in the poem, a fact that makes Satan the first sympathetic character. Also, Milton's writing in these books, and his characterization of Satan, construct the archfiend comprehensible and

etched in the mind of the reader. Mammon advocates living to themselves in hell, free, and to none accountable, preferring hard liberty before the easy yoke of servile pomp and he advocates a new course of action: attack mortal man, who Beelzebub describes as less in power and excellence (than themselves), but favored more by God.

These facts unquestionably craft Satan the most fascinating character in the poem — but they do not compose him the hero. For the reason that the reader has the sense of hearing Satan's edition first, the reader is uninformed of the embellishment and absolute lies that are parts of Satan's outstanding verbal communications. In addition, the reader can without difficulty fails to notice the actuality that Milton asserts that, whatsoever supremacies and aptitudes the fallen angels encompass in Hell, those commands and capability approach from God, who could at any instant seize them away.

In quintessence then, Milton's magnificent poetic style locates Satan up as daring in Books I and II. The appearance of Satan formulates him give the impression superior than he in point of fact is and in the beginning illustrates the reader to Satan's point of view. Supplementary, for the reason that all of the other characters in the poem — Adam, Eve, God, the Son, the angels — are fundamentally categories to a certain extent than characters, Milton expend additional imaginative liveliness on the improvement of Satan so that all the way through the poem, Satan's character sustains the reader's concentration and, conceivably, empathy — at least to a degree.

No matter how luminously Milton shaped the disposition of Satan, the principal devil cannot be the hero of the poem. For Milton, Satan is the opponent who prefers to consign an act that goes in opposition to the fundamental commandments of God, that confronts the incredibly temperament of the cosmos. Satan endeavors to obliterate the ladder of Heaven from beginning



to end of his revolt. Satan entrusts this act not because of the totalitarianism of God but because he wishes what *he* wants to a certain extent than what God wishes. Satan is an extremely egoist. His benefits until the end of time go round on his individual requirements. Contrasting Adam, who thrashes out a diversity of subjects matter with Raphael, rarely revealing his personal wishes, Satan distinguishes the whole thing in conditions of what will occur to him. A factual Promethean / Romantic hero has to revolt in opposition to an unjust oppression in an endeavor to accurate a erroneous or assist someone a lesser amount of opportune. If Satan had been Prometheus, he would have embezzled fire to temperate himself, not to facilitate Mankind.

Milton gives the readers an idea on the subject of his personal approach in the direction of Satan in the technique the character deteriorates or is besmirched in the development of the poem. Satan is outstanding, even commendable in Books I and II. By book IV, he is misrepresented. In his speech that begins Book IV, Satan announces that Hell is everywhere he himself is. Away from his supporters and permitted several introspections, Satan before now divulges a supplementary inconsistency character.

Correspondingly, Satan's intentions transform the same as the story proceeds. In the beginning, Satan desires to carry on the struggle for liberty from God. Afterward his purpose for ongoing the struggle has been magnificence and prominence. Subsequently, the enticement of Adam and Eve is merely an approach to interrupt God's strategies. Furthermore, at the end, Satan appears to declare that he has performed as he has to amaze the other devils in Hell. This deterioration of intention demonstrates moderately a collapse.

Satan furthermore retreats or disintegrates physically. Satan transfers figures all the way through the poem. These modify visually correspond to the deterioration of his character. First, he seizes

the figure of a minor archangel, a cupid, when he articulates to Uriel. Subsequently, he is a voracious glutton in the tree of life — a creature although capable to fly. Afterward he is a lion as well as a tiger — earth-bound monsters of quarry, nevertheless outstanding. Lastly, he is a toad and a snake. He has been reptilian and sickening. These figure modify graphically disclose how Satan's proceedings transform him.

Still in his own figure, Satan deteriorates. When Gabriel tackles Satan in Book V, no one of the angels primarily distinguish Satan for the reason that his manifestation is conspicuously distorted. Similarly, in Book X, while Satan just the once yet again sits on his throne in the Hell, nothing of the previous splendor of his bodily manifestation is gone. At the moment he appears similar to the drunken debauchee.

Despite the fact that Satan is not the epic hero in *Paradise Lost*, he at epochs does boundary on tragedy. As the luck would have it, he also restricts on comedy. The humorous constituents associated with Satan obtain from the ludicrousness of his situation. As a mutineer, he confronts an unstoppable antagonist, God, with supremacy that is settled him by his enemy. God just dolls with Satan in encounter. Satan is, in actual fact, cartoonish while he and Belial take pride over the accomplishment of their hellish cannon in Book VI. Satan and Belial plunk laughing at the disarray they have reasoned, other than they are ignorant of the mountains and boulders just on the subject of the land on their cranium.

If each and every one of *Paradise Lost* were lying on the stage of the encounter scene, the epic would be humorous. Other than Satan's persuasion of Adam and Eve shift the mischievous sprite nearer to catastrophe. Satan's intentions in obliterating the human pair may be debatable, nevertheless the consequence and its insinuations are not. Satan transports the humans downward

and reasons their elimination from heaven. In consequently responsibility, he also makes available the approach to recovery meant for those humans who prefer generously to follow God. On the other hand, Satan offers not anything for himself. Hell is somewhere Satan is for the reason that he has no path to retort God. Contrasting humanity, Satan as well as the other fallen angels has already conserved their destinies. They survive until the end of time in the company of the comprehension of Hell.

In the ending Satan entitles to intelligence the Macbeth of Shakespeare. Both in cooperation with the characters are outstanding manufactures of evil. Both are laudable after an approach, but both are condemned. Both are philosophical with reference to the life after death. Satan is on familiar terms with that he have got to remain in Hell; Macbeth utters that he would "jump the life to come," if he could slaughter Duncan with no effect on Earth. Both in cooperation with the characters are the pouring strength in their individual mechanisms. And lastly both construct a type of Hell; Macbeth's on Earth, Satan's in the cosmos.

Satan was called Lucifer in paradise previous to his defiance, he was one of God's preferred angels in anticipation of his pride or arrogance obtains in the approach and he revolves away from God. Satan transports lots of paradise's archangels with himself, on the other hand, and sovereignty because ruler in hell. He carries on an everlasting encounter by way of God as well as decency for the souls of human races. He initially was an archangel with a single mistake, pride or arrogance, other than all the way through the tale he became bodily as well as ethically more and more dishonest or corrupt.

Satan, now back on earth, has a moment of doubt and despair in which he says that "the hell I suffer seems a heav'n and he notices that they are both not equal, as their sex not equal seemed.

Satan explains that Adam's "eye sublime declared absolute rule." Book 4, lines 300-1 and he hears Adam tell Eve that they must not eat of the Tree of Knowledge, calling it "the only sign of our obedience left, or else God will kill them. Satan, having just learned that the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to Adam and Eve, ponders ignorance, is that their happy state, / the proof of their obedience and their faith?

### **Conclusion:**

Considering all the images drawn by the author, John Milton, the readers fall into dilemma regarding the treatment of Satan whether he is hero (protagonist) or anti-hero. And it has been another issue of contradiction regarding religious treatment of Satan. In case of illustrating the character, Satan the author keeps a proper schedule and draws the most well-developed character in the epic *Paradise Lost*. The author maintains Satan's degeneration of character, beginning as a celestial warrior and ending as a serpent in Hell. He fights back to conquer his own uncertainties as well as limitations and finishes his aspiration debasing human race. Neither the readers nor the critics could reach the final decision regarding the treatment of Satan's character in *Paradise Lost*. In spite of having so many contradictions about Satan the author of this paper can say Satan is well-developed and well decorated by the author of the great epic, *Paradise Lost*, John Milton.

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