Chapter 6

Conclusion

Our study on the characters of *Paradise Lost* shows that Milton has inverted the existing pattern of the epic hero in his characterization of Satan, Christ and Man. Satan possesses many heroic qualities such as great stature, physical prowess and pride. This has prompted many critics to see Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost*.

In fact, these heroic qualities are made use of by the author in a negative sense. Milton writing a religious epic could not have possibly fashioned 'the adversary of the Almighty' as the hero. The fact that Satan withdraws from the action long before the end of the epic also supports this view. It shows that the function of Satan is not needed to reach the culmination of the epic. This also eliminates the possibility of Satan being the protagonist of *Paradise Lost*.

An interesting parallel can be seen between the antagonists of the two epics, Satan and Duryodhana. Like Satan, Duryodhana too possesses many heroic characteristics such as the grandeur and splendour that goes with kingship, pride, prowess, companion and other world experience, only to be exercised in the reverse.

The portrayal of Christ in *Paradise Lost* is as 'Christ the victor'. He is armoured with the warrior heroic outfit of the sword, arrows and thunderbolts, riding victoriously on the chariot of God with his irresistible power. Christ defeats Satan the antagonist 'what no lesser hero could not achieve' (Woodhouse, 1972, p188). Like Aeneas, Christ becomes the hero of the epic who combines the strength, prowess and courage with sustained and exalted divine purpose.
According to Bharata, if there are many characters who qualify as hero, the one who undergoes great difficulties and miseries by dint of the energetic ultimately attains exalted position is the *nayaka* (discussed in Section 3.5). Thus, according to both the Western and Indian traditions, Christ naturally occupies the position of hero in *Paradise Lost*.

In *Mahabharata* many characters possess the heroic qualities. Hemachandra is of the view that one, who enjoys the ultimate fruit of the efforts and in whose interests all movements are directed and culminated, becomes the *nayaka* (discussed in Section 3.5). Pertaining to this view Yudhishthira should be the hero of *Mahabharata*. Sarma (1995) too defines Yudhishthira as the sublime hero (dhirodatta) of *Mahabharata*. Chapter 5, while bringing out the heroic qualities of Yudhishthira, clearly proves that he does not possess some of the most important qualities of the epic hero while Arjuna possesses most of them.

In Misra’s view Bhima kills the antagonist Duryodhana and therefore is the hero of the epic (Misra, 1992). As discussed in Chapter 5 Bhima lacks many of the other qualities of the epic hero and is far behind Arjuna in the scale of the position of hero in *Mahabharata*. The arguments presented in Chapter 5 prove that though Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Bhishma, and Krishna possess many of the qualities of an epic hero Arjuna ranks high among them. On the other hand, *Paradise Lost* has only a limited number of characters and there is no contender for epic hero other than Christ.

Popular view on the question of hero of *Mahabharata* is in favour of Krishna. This view is not based on strict analysis of Krishna’s character in *Mahabharata* but on merging the Krishna of *Bhagavada Purana* with the Krishna of *Mahabharata*. Though not the hero in the strict sense Krishna plays a very powerful role in the epic which, according to the analysis presented in Section 5.4, can be identified with that of the protagonist.

It is interesting to see that *Paradise Lost* with a limited number of characters has a protagonist in addition to the hero like in an epic as vast as *Mahabharata*. As already
discussed in Chapter 5 by being responsible for the movement of the epic plot and by functioning as the author's voice Krishna and Vyasa become the protagonists of Mahabharata. It is noteworthy that Vyasa who possesses none of the qualities of an epic hero becomes one of the protagonists of the epic. Similarly, Man in Paradise Lost too has no epic heroic qualities but becomes the protagonist as brought out in Chapter 4.

Vyasa is the original author of Mahabharata. However, there is no author intrusion in the epic even though Vyasa is a prominent character in it. On the other hand, Milton, in Paradise Lost 'praises and rejects, elevates and crushes as an ultimate arbiter' (Hagin, 1953, p151) while he has no place as a character in his epic. This has made Dennis proclaim Milton as the hero of Paradise Lost (Dennis, 1704, Cited in Hagin, 1953).

It is quite interesting that both Mahabharata and Paradise Lost have protagonists in addition to the hero. In fact, Mahabharata has two protagonists. Neither Vyasa of Mahabharata nor Man of Paradise Lost possesses any of the qualities of the epic hero. Mahabharata being a vast epic is able to accommodate a complex mixture of characters. It is to the credit of Milton that he is able to create a protagonist without any heroic qualities in his epic that has only a limited number of characters.

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