CHAPTER III

INVOCATION
3.1 INVOCATION: PARADISE LOST

It was customary with classical poets of yore to invoke, at the beginning of their works, the blessings of God for the successful composition as well as completion of their artistic endeavour. For they were confirmed in their belief that man is limited and so if he undertakes to perform any extraordinary work his limited imaginative faculty and intellectual caliber have to be supplemented with divine inspiration. Therefore, writers such as Homer, Virgil, in the West, and Vyasa, Valmiki, in the East, used to begin their works with a word of prayer in which they used to confess to their limited capacity and thus make themselves humble before God.

In the epic tradition of Europe, poets tended to look upon the word of prayer as a reverent invocation to the Muse, the patroness of epic poetry. Both Homer and Virgil begin their respective epics with an invocation to Calliope, who is the goddess of epic poetry, for both believed that any literary composition is due to divine inspiration.

The term, inspiration, is closely connected with the concept of invocation in literary compositions. The word is derived from the Latin inspirro, which means breathe into. In ancient times, a poet was referred to as an inspired rhapsodist. The poet is said to be inspired when people believe that he functions in an extraordinary way; in other words, the way he functions distinguishes him from the way ordinary workers function. This suggests that the poet does not depend on the power of his own imagination as well as on his own intellectual capacity when he wants to produce a great artistic work. He believes in being acted upon by a superior power or force, which determines the quality of his work. "Thus, Plato says in the Ion, a worthless poet may, if inspired, be able to compose anything of value" (Joseph T. Shipley. Dictionary of World Literary Terms 163). A poet always invokes a Muse — even if it is a matter of convention — because, he knows, poetry is not a mere personal matter. Excellent poetry often springs from the depth of the universal unconscious or what Yeats calls Spiritus/Anima Mundi (Spirit/Life of the
World), or even what Aristotle terms the Great Mind (Ethics IV. Lii), which is
divine in nature: “The mind, indeed, is something divine and remains
unaffected” (D.J.Enright and Ernst De Chickera 301). Hence the need for a
tutelary spirit.

A frequent misuse of the term, inspiration, might here be noted: when
Sidney says, “Stella behold, and then begin t’endite” (W. Peacock ed. English
Verse Vol.I 256), when poets are prodded by external objects, they are
stimulated, not inspired; “inspiration is a possession within” (Shipley 163).
Thus Sidney again: “‘Fool’ said my Muse to me, ‘look in thy heart, and write’”
(Peacock 251).

Some artists warn against yielding to inspiration; for example, the
sculptor Rodin, the novelist Gustave Flaubert says, “you should mistrust
everything that resembles inspiration, for it is often nothing more than a
deliberate determination and forced excitement... . Besides, Pegasus walks
more often than he gallops; genius consists in knowing how to make him take
the pace we require” (quoted by Shipley 163). Some sort of belief in
inspiration seems, nevertheless, constant, though its nature is modified in
response to the prevailing doctrines of poetry.

The word invocation is formed out of the Latin vocare, which means
call, and the prefix, in-, meaning ‘within’, ‘towards’. Etymologically, the Latin
vocare comes from the Sanskrit root, vak. In the religious context, invocation
means calling upon God from within the heart of the devotee. Milton’s lines
“And chiefly thou O Spirit, that dost prefer/Before all temples the upright heart
and pure” (PL. I, 17-18) can be said indirectly to bring out the true meaning of
the word invocation, that is, praying to God within the heart.

The verb, Sing, in “Sing Heav’nly Muse” (PL. I. 6), means sing through
me. With the wisdom of humility, Milton implies that all his lines are sung by
the Heavenly Muse, that is, the inspirer of poetry, and he, as a humble devotee,
took them down. This idea becomes explicit when, in Book IX, Milton says,
"If answerable style I can obtain/Of my celestial patroness, who deigns/Her nightly visitation unimplored./And dictates to me slumb'ring, or inspires/Easy my unpremeditated verse." (PL. IX. 20-24)

The traditional way of looking upon invocation is of it as an appeal made by a poet to the goddess of poetry, especially Calliope (as exemplified in Homer and his followers) at the beginning of an epic, or any other ambitious and voluminous poetic composition. Though it was a natural practice during the classical period, it became a matter of convention during the Renaissance and the Neo-classical periods. Even Shakespeare in his epic play, Henry V, has an invocation to the Muse for he feels that, in venturing to produce something unprecedented (and on a vast scale), his own limited imagination and intellect are in need of reinforcement by "... a Muse of fire that would Ascend the highest heaven of invention" (Henry V I. i. 1-2).

Milton's epic, Paradise Lost, is the realization of a long cherished dream as he himself says, "... long choosing, and beginning late" (PL. IX. 26). It is a work in which he wants to try "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme"(PL. I. 16) or something that remains untouched by mortal hands. Therefore – though part of the poet's intention is to stick to convention – Milton's need for inspiration is genuine, a matter of necessity and in Paradise Lost he brings in invocation not only at the beginning of the work, but also (i) at Book I 27-32 (ii) in the middle of Book I, (iii) beginning of Book III, (iv) Book VII, besides making a reference to the affectionate condescension of the Muse either to dictate the lines of the epic during her "unimplored"(PL. IX. 22) nocturnal visitations, when Milton was "slumb'ring"(23), or to make easy, through inspiration, his "unpremeditated verse"(24) in Book IX.

In the opening lines of Book I of his epic, Milton, after stating the central theme of the epic, namely, man's disobedience, and, as a consequence, the loss of paradise, in which he was placed, and also the subsequent restoration by "one greater Man" (PL. I. 5), invokes the aid of the Heavenly Muse for him successfully to compose his work.
The Muse that Milton refers to is not the Calliope of the Mount Olympus; instead, she is the one, who prefers to dwell on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, near Siloa’s brook. By adding the information that the Muse is seated on Mount Zion, Milton invites a comparison of her with the Greek Muse, thereby giving a suggestive hint that in writing an epic he is toeing the line of Homer and other classical epic writers. But, though he is following the tradition of the epic, he reveals his individual talent by creating his own Muse. For Milton’s Muse is not one of the nine pagan Muses; it is an abstraction of the wisdom and power of the Judeo-Christian divinity, identified here as the Muse who inspired Moses, who was believed to have been the author of the Ten Commandments on Mount Horeb. David Loewenstein seems to suggest that Milton, in a way, exemplifies the Eliotian idea of Tradition and the Individual Talent, when he says, “Milton’s focus at the beginning of his poem is startlingly new: he is writing an epic about a great sacred theme. The sweep of his poem will move typologically from the Old Testament to the New, from the first Adam to the second (Christ, that “one greater Man,” rather than Virgil’s Augustus prefigured by Aeneas), as the negative history of loss (of Paradise rather than Troy) is significantly broken in the middle of line 4 of the invocation by the future history of restoration” (Milton: Paradise Lost 34).

Milton’s Muse is, undoubtedly, the Judeo-Christian Muse who, in spite of her fondness for Mount Zion, is chiefly a heavenly Muse. Milton might have intended a deliberate double entendre when he used the term, Muse, in line 6, because by doing so he could fall in line with tradition and, at the same time, hint at the idea that his Muse’s name is different from that of Homer. And that she is different from Homer’s Muse is indicated by “... that on the secret top/Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire/That shepherd, ...” (PL. I. 6-8). Moreover, when Milton writes, “... I thence/Invoke Thy aid to my advent’rous song./That with no middle flight intends to soar/Above Th’Aonian mount...” (12-15). Scott Ellege, in his edition of Paradise Lost says, “The earth, in Milton’s time was believed to be covered with three layers of atmosphere, the second of which (“middle region”) reached the top of the mountains. The highest heaven of the Pagan gods, Mount Olympus, was in the
middle air; and it is above this region that Milton's Pegasus must carry him on his no middle flight, for Milton intends to sing of true heaven, far above the universe” (John Milton: Paradise Lost 8). In other words, the Muse of line 6 is gradually raised by the poet to the heaven beyond the universe and identified with the Spirit that reigns supreme there as well as in the “...upright heart and pure” (PL. I. 18). It is only this spirit who can teach the past and reveal the future because He was “... from the first/... present, and with mighty wings outspread/Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss/And mad'st it pregnant: ...” (19-22). What Milton emphasizes here is the creative power and wisdom that are necessary for such great undertakings as creating the world and writing this definitive poem, and he calls, not upon the third person of the Trinity, but upon God. And as he is going to trace the history of Creation, his book is going to be no mean work, but the Book of Life – at least another version of the Bible. Commenting on the opening lines of Book I, David Loewenstein says, “Milton... announces his poem as a Christian or Biblical epic and, even more specifically, as a prophetic Protestant epic, as his visionary invocation then goes on to sing of Moses, that inspired prophet (“That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed”) and author of the Pentateuch. Sweeping in its historical time scheme - “coeval with time itself,” as Milton put it in one of his Prolusions (YP 1:297) – this sublime Protestant epic will move, like the Bible itself, from the Creation to the end of time” (Milton: Paradise Lost 34).

The point of view that can be established from the argument so far is that Milton responds to the tradition of the epic, but while writing his sublime poem, he seems to be attempting to compose something “unattempted yet” (PL. I. 16). It can also be maintained that he is trying to revise, as Lowenstein says, “what was by far the most ambitious, expansive, and encyclopedic of all literary genre – the epic” (Milton: Paradise Lost 32) which the Renaissance poets and critics considered to be the highest form of literature, “the best and the most accomplished kind of poetry” as Sidney had said in his “An Apology for Poetry” (D.J.Enright and Ernest De Chickera ed. English Critical Essays 26). Throughout the Paradise Lost, Milton is highly conscious of himself writing in this ambitious and comprehensive form and attempting to do
something entirely new with it. And in doing so he is farther away from the Classical and Renaissance models. He has chosen to write not on a traditional, national imperialistic theme but on a theme of universal magnitude.

As observed by Ian Fletcher, "The opening invocation with its reference to 'one greater Man', Christ, to the creation of the world and the regaining of 'that blissful seat' reminds us that Paradise Lost contains the limits of time; that time is a central element in the poem's structure" (John Milton: Paradise Lost I and II 2). Milton says,

"I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men" (PL. I. 25-26).

To "justify the ways of God to men" Milton will have to see with the eye of God - a God who transcends time and has full foreknowledge. Such foreknowledge is suggested in the poem by a web of anticipations and echoes. Events are reflected in parody or contrast.

The opening lines ask us to go back to Man's disobedience, which is far beyond our experience, though "it may linger in memory as dream, myth, insight, nostalgia" (Fletcher 2). Both Adam, who is susceptible to temptation and fall, and the greater Man who will be tempted and will not fall, are not part of our experience. Paradoxically enough, Satan, who is not a man, is more recognizable. He has already fallen, and Milton as usual pitches his temptations very high. Fletcher says, "He (Milton) recognizes the difficulty of making the case for God. Sometimes his anxiety leads him to intervene in the form of comment, but Satan is more often tactfully placed through anticipations and echoes, time past and time future, which involve implicit ironic comparison between Christ, Adam and the ruined archangel" (3). That Milton felt rather diffident when he undertook the onerous task of writing an unprecedented epic is evident from the tone of the opening invocation, which combines temerity and confidence. Both in style and substance, the invocation is the Paradise Lost in miniature in so far as it gives a synoptic view of the subject of his epic. The first sentence seems to flow incessantly, with a grave authority, until the imperative "sing, Heav'nly Muse" of line 6. "Thus central
imperative”, says Fletcher, “is held back as an index of the difficulty of an undertaking which as a subject is beyond fallen man’s experience and for which there is model” (3). Other epics, indeed, had been there, but they, following classical epic, dealt with heroes, warriors, or chivalry and chivalric love, like Italian Romance epic. Such poems may provide a model for Satan, but not for Messiah or Adam.

It is worth noting that the delayed imperative – “Sing O Heav’nly Muse” (PL. I. 6) does not provide for a full stop, until line number 16. The invocation comes to an end only when the Heavenly Muse begins to respond to the poet’s devout and passionate plea: has begun to sing. Fletcher says, “We are not simply prepared for some high event: the event has begun, and the event is partly enacted through syntax. The difficulty of the undertaking is mirrored in the difficulties of language and syntax. Fallen man has fallen language.” (3).

The first sentence of Paradise Lost states the subject. The statement in the second sentence seems to imitate the statement of a subject in music: rise and fall, light and dark (“… what in me is dark/Illumine, what is low raise and support; …” (PL. I. 22-23) and looks back to the type of all creation: the spirit that

“… with mighty wings overspread
Dove-like sat’st brooding on the vast abyss”(PL.I.20-21)

“Milton’s poem”, says Fletcher, “will be a second creation” (4). That means that the poet’s imagination must “soar” (PL.I.14) to the “highth of this great argument”(PL.I.24). The spirit must illumine what is low, what seems to go downwards, so that the poet “may assert Eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to men” (PL.I.25-26). To quote Fletcher, “falling and rising in Milton are less physical than moral terms, or rather the two are strictly interdependent. And the appeal to the spirit frankly recognizes that God’s ways will all through the poem be open to debate” (4).
Paradise Lost is, according to Milton, a highly serious work because it deals with the subject of man's suffering and redemption in this world. Consequently, the tone and style, throughout, are sublime and serious, and that they are so is indicated by the syntactic structure used by the poet.

The syntax of the first sixteen lines of Book I reveals that Milton uses what Noam Chomsky would call a deviant structure because the sentence begins with the object preceded by the preposition (of) of the verbal phrase "sing of" and not with the subject as is the case with a strictly grammatical sentence in English. By deliberately foregrounding the object, Milton is able to invest the first six lines with a serious tone and thus to suggest the seriousness of the subject that he deals with—"Not less but more heroic..." (PL.IX. 14) as well as the sublime style serious that he uses throughout Paradise Lost.

The second invocation in Book I of the Paradise Lost extends from line 27 to line 33. Line 26, and line 27, are imperative in structure. This is followed by a question, which is typical of epic convention. Homer and Virgil both, in their epics, begin by asking the Muse to tell them which god/gods had caused the events of the story. But, though Milton follows one of the epic conventions, he makes his question appear fresh and not a mere repetition of what had been said by his predecessors. For both Homer and Virgil are concerned with the invisible and inscrutable acts of the gods in their pagan heaven, whereas Milton is concerned with a subject (the beginning, middle, and end of creation), which is known only to his God, as everything is revealed to Him only: "... for heav'n hides nothing from thy view/Nor the deep tract of hell, ..." (PL.I.27-28)

The double use of "say first" (26-27) emphasizes the eagerness of the poet to know the cause of the fall of Adam and Eve, "our grandparents", who had been kept in a "happy state" (29) by God, besides being "favored of Heav'n so highly" (30). Such repetition is also an important characteristic of epic style, especially, in the oral tradition. Although Milton has already mentioned the contents of this passage in the opening lines in order to state the subject matter,
he has not as yet asked the most important question about the real cause of the fall, namely, Satan, "... whose guile/Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived/The mother of mankind, ..." (34-36). Furthermore, while stating the central theme of the epic he introduced the hero, that is Adam, and here, following the method of his predecessors, he is introducing the antagonist, Satan. Thus if the first invocation serves the purpose of introducing the hero of the epic, the second invocation serves as a prelude to the introduction of Satan in his fallen state. It is also worth noting that when the reader comes to the second invocation, the three major characters of the epic (Adam, God, and Satan) have been introduced. This is a very important point because the entire plot/action of Paradise Lost revolves round these three characters.

The angels who fell from heaven along with Satan were for a long time in a stupor. In order to rouse them from their astonishment, Satan addresses them in a highly persuasive language by calling them "... Princes, Potentates, /Warriors, the flow’r of heav’n ..."(315-316). In the concluding line of his speech, he uses such a high-pitched voice "... that all the hollow deep /Of hell..."(314-315) resounds. The moment the angels hear his clarion call, they spring up upon their wings. There were so many of them who had fallen along with the archangel that the poet wants to know who those angels were. For this purpose he adapts the epic device of listing names of warriors. But then he is confronted with the problem of identifying all those who waged an impious war against God and, as a result, fell from His Grace. Therefore, once again, he invokes the aid of the Muse, that is, the creative spirit and wisdom or, in other words, God, who alone knows the truth. The poet says, "Say, Muse, their names then known, who first, who last,"(376). The use of ten monosyllabic words is intended to produce a halting effect which is suggestive of the difficulty that the poet has in identifying the fallen angels who, according to Milton, later tried to lure the people in the neighbourhood of Israel to worship them.

Throughout Book I and II, Milton (after the initial invocation) deals with hell and its new inhabitants. The dominant metaphor has been darkness in
the first two Books. In Book III, however, the poet deals with heaven and consequently there has to be a change in the metaphor also. Therefore, it is appropriate that Milton opens Book III with a reference to “holy Light” (PL.III.1). The juxtaposition of the two metaphors – the darkness of Books I and II and the light/brightness of Book III – serves to produce the chiaroscuro effect of photography or painting.

Lines 1 – 54 are as important an invocation as are lines 1 – 26 of Book I of the epic. In this rather lengthy invocation, Milton implies that to move from hell to heaven is to move from darkness to light, and it is significant that Milton marks this change in the form of an invocation – this time to “holy Light”, that is, God Himself, who is light and dwells in fire, flame, dazzling brightness.

That God is dazzling brightness invites comparison with the same idea in the Indian Vedic texts, which consider God to be one blissful, eternal light (“Ekam jyotih” Atharva-Veda 11.4.21) or Ānanda-prakāśaḥ (Bliss-Light 11.4.24). We are reminded of St. John’s Gospel in which it is said, “God is Light” (I.5).

Though Milton’s speculation (that God is light) is likely to make orthodox theologians raise their eyebrows, yet the reader need not treat his invocation as a strictly theological or scientific discussion. “Light” (PL.III.1) can be said to carry suggestions of God, that is Jesus Christ (“I am the light of the world”), wisdom, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, it means the physical light by which men see the world of nature, if they are not, like Milton, totally blind. The invocation is a hymn and a prayer, uttered by Milton, the bard, the vates, the seer, the prophetic maker of Paradise Lost, who, like Homer, could see only with his memory and his inward eye.

That Milton himself is a bit conscious of improper speculation is suggested by “May I express thee unblamed?”(Book III 3) In other words, he wants to describe God without being guilty of improper speculation.
The opening twelve lines of Book III are a pure incantation charged with the poet's devotion to God. In line 13, Milton says, "Thee I revisit now...." He has already visited God in the first twenty-six lines of Book I. After the invocation contained in those lines, he turned his attention to the fall of Satan and his followers and their new dwelling, Hell. He feels that he dwelt upon the topic of Satan's fall as well as of description of Hell for too long a time: "...long detained/In that obscure sojourn..."(14-15). However, in his journey down to Hell, he used epic notes to sing "...of chaos and eternal Night,'"(18). He was taught to do so by the Heav'ny Muse and so he could reascend, unscathed, to revisit God.

Striking a personal note about his own loss of vision, Milton writes that he feels God's "sovran vital lamp" (22), though God as light does not revisit his eyes. He rolls his eyes in vain to find His "piercing ray" (24) and finds "no dawn" (24).

Though vision was denied to him, Milton does not feel discouraged now. He hopes to attain the same fame as his predecessors – the blind Thamyris, Homer ["Maonides"(35)] and Tiresias – who were endowed with prophetic vision and inner light. He is surrounded by darkness and outward vision is, forever, denied to him. Therefore, he appeals to God – "celestial Light"(51) – to "shine inward, and irradiate the mind, through all her powers, purging it of all mist so that he may "see and tell/Of things invisible to mortal sight"(53-54). David Loewenstein sees a parallel between the solitary flight of Milton and that of Satan. At the end of Book II, we see Satan voyage through chaos on his obscure sojourn towards earth. Similarly, in Book III, we hear Milton say "... while in my flight/Through utter and through middle darkness borne"(15-16). According to Loewenstein, "both, indeed, are moving from darkness to light. The poet's own metaphorical flight through darkness, he suggests, has in fact been no less arduous and epic-like, no less daring and risky than Satan's: having descended to Hell, as Aeneas and the mythic Orpheus had done, he now reascends to the realm of light, in search of internal, spiritual illumination. Focussing our attention on his hard flight, the difficulty
of his poetic task, the courageous Protestant poet himself becomes the heroic subject of his invocation. He refers not only to the darkness of Hell and Chaos, but to the darkness of his blindness, which reinforces his intense feelings of isolation and self-enclosure. But, as he makes his hard journey to the realm of heavenly light, the poet anxiously hopes, in his desire for new and inward vision, not to be tantalized and punished by a judging God, much as Satan and the devils repeatedly find themselves throughout the poem: 'thou/Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain/To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn'” (43).

Book VII of *Paradise Lost* also begins with an invocation to the Muse, but this time Milton calls her Urania. Urania in Greek means heavenly one and she is treated as the Muse of astronomy. As a Christian, Milton cannot look upon Urania as one of the nine Muses mentioned in Greek mythology. Therefore, when he calls upon her he borrows only the “meaning” of the word and “not the name”(PL.VII.5) and because, according to the meaning of the word, Urania is heavenly, Milton, as he has already done in Book I, raises her above the Olympian hill - “... whose voice divine/Following, above th’ Olympian hill...” (2-3) he would like to soar. As if to emphasize the same idea, Milton says,

“... for Thou
Nor of the muses nine, nor on the top
Of old Olympus dwell’st, but heav’nly born,
Before the hills appeared, or fountain flowed,
Thou with eternal Wisdom didst converse,
Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
In presence of th’ Almighty Father, pleased
With thy celestial song...”(PL.VII.5-12).

Milton feels that this Muse, who played in the presence of the Almighty, has led him “Into the heav’n of heav’ns” (the world of the Almighty) and he was one of her “earthly” guests there. And after drawing “empyreal air”, made suitable for a mortal by her [“Thy temp’ring” (PL.VII.15)], he was safely guided down and enabled to return to the earth [“native element”(16)]. This safe guidance he received from the Muse is a blessing as, otherwise, his own riding Pegasus would have amounted to running a risk, especially because it is
difficult to control it once it picks up speed (like it happened in the case Bellerophon). The implication, however, is that, venturing to write an ambitious work, like the *Paradise Lost*, without divine guidance, amounts to being presumptuous – to pluck the fruit of the forbidden tree, which means being guilty of the original sin. Lowenstein says, Milton “depends upon a celestial being or power (the Christian ‘meaning, not the Name I call’ [7.5], says Milton in reference to Urania) to guide him, for the inspired poem, as we have seen, is not solely his own creation. The mythic reference to the classical Bellerophon’s presumptuous (and disastrous) flight to heaven upon the winged Pegasus gives greater resonance to the drama of the poet’s own ambitious epic flight, which exceeds that of Bellerophon, and to his anxieties about its attendant perils: if he falls, after all, it will not be ‘from a lower clime’, since he dares in *Paradise Lost* to soar ‘Above the flight of Pegasean wing’[7.4]” (Lowenstein 43).

In the Prologue to Book IX (lines 1-47), Milton speaks of his coming to grips with the central theme of his epic: “… I now must change/Those notes to tragic; foul distrust, and breach/Disloyal on the part of man, revolt,/And disobedience: on the part of heav’n/Now alienated, distance and distaste,/Anger and just rebuke, and judgment giv’n,/That brought into this world a world of woe,/Sin and her shadow Death, and misery/Death’s harbinger:…” (PL.IX.5-13).

As if commenting on this, the poet says, “… sad task, yet argument/Not less but more heroic…”(13-14) than the themes of both Homer and Virgil, so much so that he is attempting an unprecedented heroic poem for which he needs a style capable of meeting all requirements. He is, however, hopeful because if whatever he has written so far is a gift of the heavenly Muse, she is sure to help him in writing the rest of the work also in a style that corresponds to or suits the tragic theme he is going to deal with. The lines, “If answerable style I can obtain/Of my celestial patroness, who deigns/Her nightly visitation unimplored,/And dictates to me slumb’ring, or inspirres/Easy my unpremeditated verse”(20-24) are not an invocation as such, but Milton’s
humble acknowledgement of the divine help that he has got in composing his masterpiece.

Commenting on the critical sensibilities of Milton as revealed in the invocatory lines of Book IX, Loewenstein says,

"Milton’s invocation does not only range his poem against classical epic models; it also provides a more extended critical commentary on the relation of his “Heroic Song” to romantic and chivalric epic: ‘Not sedulous by Nature to indite Wars, hitherto the only Argument/Heroic deem’d, chief maistry to dissect/With long and tedious havoc fabl’d Knights, In Battles feign’d; the better fortitude/Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom/Unsung; or to describe Races and Games;/Or tilting Furniture, emblazon’d Shields./Impresses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;/Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights/At Joust and Tournament . . .’ When Milton tells us that his long poem differs in crucial ways from that other long poem highly popular in the Renaissance — the romantic epic — he has in mind such texts as Sidney’s Arcadia and Spenser’s Faerie Queene (‘tinsel Trappings,’ for instance, recalls the appearance of the beautiful Florimell’s steed at 3.1.19, as well as continental chivalric romances by Boiardo, Tasso, and Ariosto. Milton suggests the superiority of his sacred subject matter to the fabulous and legendary subjects of chivalric poetry, even as his lines reveal his attraction to the language of romance, which he elaborates here”(37).

3.2 INVOCATION: RAMAKIEN

The Ramakien, as has already been seen, is the Thai version of the Indian Ramayana, the first authentic version of which was composed by the sage Valmiki. In the Indian tradition, the Valmiki Ramayana is regarded as the Adikavya, that is, the first Kavya, which became a model for all the later Kavyas. Kalidasa the greatest poet (Kavi) of India suggests this idea when he, in his Raghu-Vamsa, writes,

Atha vā kṛta-vāg-dvārē varnśēsmin pūrva-sūribhiḥ
Maṇau vajra-samutkīrṇe sūtrasyēvāsti mē gatiḥ (Raghu-Vamsa 1.4).
Kalidasa, who has undertaken to write a Kavya on the lineage of Raghu (Raghuvarnsa), feels rather diffident about the work he has to do, on account of the universal popularity that the Valmiki Ramayana has already gained. He feels that, in comparison with his predecessor Valmiki, he is dull and like a dwarf ("Vāmanah" I.3) who raises his hands and jumps up to pluck a fruit, which is far beyond his reach; in other words, he is after the kind of fame enjoyed by Valmiki – a fame which is sky-high. Therefore, his attempt to write about the lineage of Raghu will be a fruitless one. But still he justifies his attempt by stating that his predecessors (that is, the ancient poets such as Valmiki, Vyasa) have paved the way for speaking or writing about the lineage of Raghu and, therefore, like a thread which can pass through the hole made by diamond on gold (gem), he can also go through the lineage of Raghu.

Kalidasa’s statement is an important piece of literary criticism in as much as it hints at the idea of tradition that is of utmost significance in poetry. Tradition is something that is honoured throughout the world especially, in art, religion, and literature. In the twentieth century T.S. Eliot, in his famous essay entitled “Tradition and the Individual Talent” has given classic expression to the idea of tradition. In India, the word, Parampara, which means tradition, is a widely respected concept. According to the Indian Kāvya-Parampara, there are certain important conventions, which every later poet is supposed to follow. One of those conventions is articulated by Bharata, the author of the Nātya-Śāstra as,

“Āśīr-namasākriyā vastu-nirdeśo vāpi tan-mukham” (NS. I)

That is, any artistic endeavour must begin with a word of prayer either in the form of invoking the blessings of god on the audience/readers or in the form of salutation to one’s favourite god, or by straightaway introducing the plot. To quote an example, we may refer to the commentary on the Rasa-gāngādhara by Jagannatha Pandita. The commentary is written by Nāgēśa-Bhaṭṭa. The commentary begins with the statement,

To ward off all the likely impediments, in the way of one’s well-cherished project, to facilitate students’ understanding of the text, with divine grace, and to lessen the burden of understanding the text in the case of those who would like to read the text, the author, at the outset, invests his work with an invocation, which reads Smṛtāpi etc. (Bhatta-Mathuranatha-Sastri ed. Rasa-Gaṅgādhara 1)

Indeed, invocation, or, benediction as it is often referred to, is used at the beginning of every new project in the religious, social, academic, political spheres of life. The technical term used is Maṅgala-ācaraṇa, which, in drama, is called Nāndī.

It is worth nothing that, in the Indian cultural context, people, at the commencement of important projects, invoke the blessings not only of God, but also of the preceptor, king etc. God is the invisible spiritual force in which people have immense faith; the preceptor acts as an important spiritual guide who is responsible for the flowering of knowledge in people, and the king is looked upon as the visible god (Rājā pratyakṣa-dēvatā) on earth because he provides his subjects with the much needed protection and sustenance. Therefore, it is customary for people to seek the blessings of all three whenever they venture to do something, which they want to last for a long time. Hence the traditional saying:

“Guru-rāja-dēvata-prasādādy-anēka-prayōjanakasya”
(Rasa-Gaṅgādhara 1. prose)

According to Patañjali, Maṅgalādīnī, Maṅgala-madhyāni mangalāntānī ca śāstrāṇi prathantē/vīra-puruṣāṇya-āyuṣmat-puruṣāṇi ca pravaktuṛo bhavanti

Every important doctrinal work has invocation at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. And those who use it thus become strong and are blessed with longevity (Maḥā-Bhāṣya 1. 61)
There is no elaborate discussion of the concept of invocation in Thai critical literature as there is in the critical literature of India, or, for that matter, in that of the West. Nevertheless, Thai writers of the pre-Ramakien period as well as of the Ramakien period were aware of the concept of invocation, which is now known to them as Khampranamphot (Prañāma-vacana) and Asirawat (Aśīrvāda), which can be translated into English as salutational or salutatory word. As in matters of paying respect to people of superior rank, Thai culture seems to resemble the culture of India, it is possible to see a few similarities between the Thai Prañāma-vacana and Aśīrvāda, two of the three different ways in which Maṅgalācarana is observed in practice in ancient Indian literature. For example, Thai people, like the people of India, hold both the king and the preceptor in high regard and even seek their blessings either by sincerely praising them or by saluting them in some of their literary compositions. The king as the protector of his subjects is believed to take providential care of them and of his country as well. Therefore, they sing hymns in praise of his heroic exploits, especially when he drives away a usurper or an intruder. The heroic exploits of an exceptionally great king, like King Rama I, points to an extraordinary epoch concerned with the life and death of the people when there is a political turmoil. Hence it is quite natural for the subjects to look upon such a king as a veritable, visible god come to redeem them.

The Sukhothai period was a period of hectic literary activity, because it was during that period literary activities began in Thailand. Though time the destroyer has caused the disappearance of much of what was done then, what remains gives us some clue, at least, for us to understand the nature of the work done by King Ramkhamhaeng and his nephew, King Phayalithai. The works that have survived inform us that much of the literary activity of that period was in the form of stone inscriptions, a few of which are still intact. Probably, the most famous of those inscriptions is King Ramkhamhaeng’s four-sided stele, which was discovered in 1883 and is now lodged in the National Library in Bangkok (Wit Siwasariyanon. “Thai Literature”, Fact Sheets on Thailand, No. 10, Classification C., n. pag.). It is written in the script invented by King
Ramkhamhaeng himself and the style of writing adopted by him has become a model for later writing. The inscription has three parts: (i) the autobiography of King Ramkhamhaeng from the time of his birth till the time he ascended the throne; (ii) a text meant to highlight Sukhothai customs and temple-building in the kingdom, and (iii) the type of invocation that has been in vogue in Thailand for nearly eight-hundred years – an invocation in which the king is honoured with a sincere eulogy both for his bravery and for his intellectual accomplishments. This is the first instance of invocation in the history of Thai literature. The way the king’s deeds are highlighted shows that King Ramkhamhaeng was looked upon by his people as a divine father god, chiefly because he had the gift of rare creative imagination and talent (as evidenced by his devising the style of writing), and he kept all the enemies of the country at bay, and he was an enlightened soul who taught his people the Buddha’s Dharma (Kromsinlapakon. Charueksamaisukkothai 16-20).

Another important work which belongs to this period is entitled Traiphumphraruang (Three Worlds according to King Phra Ruang) – which contains a short invocation in the form of Pranāma-vacana (Salutation) – that is, paying respect to the Triple Gems, namely, Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, at the beginning of the work (Plueang Nanakhon 40).

The Ayutthaya period is divided, by historians, into three phases: Phase I begins in 1350 and ends in 1628; phase II extends from 1656 to 1688, and phase III ushers in 1732 and lasts till 1767. Of these phases, the first and the third witnessed many wars. The second is said to have been relatively peaceful and as such paved the way for the emergence of classics. However, all the three phases saw the coming up of many poets in the courtly circle – poets who were kings, princes, court officials and so forth. This is an important factor in the sense that literary activities had a boom, which they had never seen either earlier or, for that matter, later. Especially the second phase, during which there was a much looked for calm after the storm that had raged during the first phase, gave incentive to the King Narai, who ruled the country from 1656 to 1688, and to many of his court officials to produce literature of the highest
order—a literature which, in retrospect, can be considered to be classical. This is the reason why literary historians refer to this epoch making phase as the Golden Age of Thai literature (P.N.Pramuanmak 194).

Only a few works, produced during the first phase, have withstood the ravages of time. The most famous of these works is Ongkanchaengnam, which is still widely read in scholarly circles. Ongkanchaengnam is mainly concerned with an important royal ceremony in which the courtly entourage declares its allegiance to the king during his coronation. In this ceremony all the officials are expected to drink consecrated water as a symbol of declaring allegiance to the king, who has just taken over charge of the country and as such wants to ensure the sincere support of all those who are involved in administrative responsibilities. And for this purpose the Trinity (Narayana, Ishvara, and Brahma), the gods including Rama and Lakshmana, demons including Ravana, manes—all are invoked and earnestly solicited to be witnesses to the pledge taken by the courtiers. The ones who officiate as priests are Brahmins and they chant mantras and also use words of caution to forewarn the courtiers of the terrible consequences in case they misbehave by going back on their word (Phichit Akkhanit 80). On the contrary, if they lived up to their promise and conducted themselves in a responsible way, they would enjoy all the good things that life has to offer. The words of caution were: the misbehaving courtiers would meet with their doom in three days or three months or in three years. These words of caution point to the influence of India on the people of Thai in the pre-Ayutthaya period, either directly or via Cambodia. The words of caution remind us of the same words in the second century A.D. work, Pañcatantra, by Vishnu Sharma:

Tribhir-varṣaiḥ tribhir-māsaḥ tribhīḥ pākṣaiḥ tribhīr-dinaḥ/
Atyutkaṭaiḥ pāpa-puṇyaḥ-iraḥvaiḥ phalam-aśnute//

Those who have committed great good or bad deeds reap the fruit of their deeds either in three years, or the tree months, or three fortnights or even in three days (“Mitra-prāpti” 43).
It is significant to note that the Buddha does not figure in this invocatory ceremony. The reason given by scholars is that Brahmin priests, who belong to the Vedic tradition of India, used to conduct this ceremony and hence there was no place for the Triple Gems: Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha (Plueang Nanakhon 52).

In the first phase of the Ayutthaya period, the predominant theme was religion. Verse form, with various styles such as Khlong, Kap, and Chan characterized the works of this period. King Borommatrailokkanat (1448-88), a great royal patron of poets, commissioned Mahachatkhamluang, the Thai version of the Vessantara Jataka, which deals with the numerous previous births of the Buddha, in all of which he is portrayed as a generous, benevolent, compassionate and selfless character. Mahachatkhamluang is written in a style, which is popularly known as Rai, though it is interspersed with stanzas written in styles such as Khlong, Kap, and Chan, which produce sonorous effect and also look like purple patches. In order to keep the original Pali text in tact, Pali passages are given as they are and each one of them is followed by a faithful translation into Thai (Plueang Nanakhon 60). As this work extols the Buddha’s virtuous qualities, it is as sacred a text as any invocation. Therefore, even if there is no specific, conventional invocation as such, the text can still be said to breathe the holy atmosphere of the invocation.

Another important work of this period, worth mentioning in this context, is Lilityuanphai (the Defeat of the Yuan). It celebrates the heroic exploits and the victories of King Borommatrailokkanat in the wars between Ayutthaya and the northern kingdom of Lanna.

Lilityuanphai contains two benedictions – one at the beginning, from stanza 1 to 55 (which can technically be called invocation), and the other, at the end of the work (which we may call epilogue). The work consists of 365 stanzas. The story as such comes to an end with stanza 297. From 298 to 365, once again, there is a benediction (that is, epilogue). In the invocation the Buddha is invoked and praised for the compassion he has for the world. This is
followed by the praise of the heroic king who has come to this world to protect the righteous as well as to destroy the wicked, and also to re-establish the Buddhist Dhamma and thereby make the people happy during his reign. In the benediction at the end, which in Western critical parlance is called epilogue, the king's bravery during the war is upheld, which is followed by a detailed account of all the good deeds he performed after the war (Plueang Nanakhon 85-87).

**Klongthawathotsamat** is a poem, which has love as its main theme. The poet speaks of his separation from his beloved, but he finds consolation in reminding himself of one of the cardinal principles of Buddhism, namely eternal flux, according to which nothing is under the control of man as is proved by seasonal changes which are beyond our control. Both happiness and suffering are impermanent (Anicca) and fixed to the perpetually rotating wheel of time, which shows the ups and down of our life. The work begins with a praise of the Buddha. And in the second stanza there is a traditional invocation in praise of Brahma, Narayana, and Ishvara. The third stanza is devoted to the praise of the king. The majority of the scholars feel that the poet was none other than the son of the king and that he was well versed in Buddhism as well as in the application of Buddhist principles to life in this world. It is also said that because he was a scholar, he was sent to Sri Lanka by the king to invite monks to the ordination ceremony. (Chanthit Krasaesin. Prachumwanna khadithaiphakphisetthawathotsamatkhlongdankamsuanphrayayaowarat 16-17).

The second phase of the Ayutthaya period is chiefly remembered for the reign of King Narai. It was a time of hectic literary activity. As King Narai was a poet himself, he encouraged a number of poets and, therefore, this period, like the Elizabethan period in the history of English literature, many aptly be called a nest of singing birds.

**Suakhokhamchan** is the first poem, in the history of Thai poetry, to use the *Chan* style of versification throughout the work. The plot is from the
Jataka tales, which a monk composed in Chiangmai, north of Thailand, in 1657. Phramaharatchakhrur, who adapted the plot to compose a poem, in the middle of the Ayutthaya period, begins the poem with an invocation in which he pays respects to Brahma, Isvara, and Narayana. The praise of the Trinity is followed by the praise of the king of Ayutthaya, before the actual story commences (Kromsinlapakon. Sueakhokhamchanlae-anirutkhamchan 1).

Samutthakhotkhamchan also deals with one of the Jataka tales and this work also was composed by Phramaharatchakhrur. Though the author uses the Chan style of versification in the story part of the work, he seems to have chosen the Kap style in the invocation in which the Buddha is praised for his kindness to, and compassion for, the people of the world. All the gods, nagas and kings bow their heads before the Buddha to show their humble respect. The praise of the Buddha is followed by the praise of Brahma, Vishnu, Ishvara and kings. Like in Milton's Paradise Lost, the author states the purpose of composition of his work, that is, he intends it as a work for stage performance, which is called the Shadow Play (Plueang Nanakhon 100-101). It may incidentally be added that the way the story is told in many parts of this work becomes a model to be followed by poets of the later period.

Chindamani is composed by Phrahorathipbodi (Kromsinlapakon. Chindamani Books I-II 24). This work has academic interest in so far as the author has chosen to explain to his readers the way in which poems can be composed. It cites the examples of many classical works, so much so that it looks like an anthology of works in which different verse forms are employed. It thus serves the double purpose of teaching young students the art of composing poems and that of providing the pleasure of reading various works in each of which the plot shows the sleight of hand of the author. The invocation, which prefaces the work, shows the author's humble respect for the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The author also pays respect to his teacher who has imparted the knowledge of versification to him (Plueang Nanakhon 129).
Anirutkhamchan is composed by Siprat, who was a young genius in the court of King Narai. A few scholars are of the opinion that he wanted to compete with Phramaharatchakhru by showing the superiority of his work, Anirutkhamchan, over Samutthakhotkhamchan (P.N.Pramuanmak. Kamsuansipratniratnarin 46) Unlike Phramaharatchakhru, Siprat does not deal with one of the Jataka tales; instead he adapts the plot of his work from the “Harivamśa” of the Mahabharata by Vyasa. Though Siprat does not have a conventional invocation, the way he begins the story and describes the city of Krishna points to the respect he has for the cowherd god of Indian mythology. The work ends with a benediction in which he states the purpose of his composition. He says that he wants to enjoy good health, longevity and enlightenment, which come from the teachings of the Buddha (Kromsinlapakon. Anirutkhamchan 82).

Khlongkamsuan is another famous work composed by Siprat. The style used throughout the work is Khlong. This poem deals with the poet’s separation from his beloved. The feelings of separation are reflected in the description of the place he visits. Siprat is mainly concerned with the idea of seasonal fluctuations, which are, psychologically speaking, reflective of our mental fluctuations.

This work has an invocation. The first part of the invocation is written in Rai style. The poet is carried away by the heavenly beauty of Ayutthaya. The second part has a different style altogether. The style employed here is what is called Khlong which describes the beauty and prosperity of the pagoda, the relics of the Buddha, temples, the hall in which Dhamma is taught, the residences of monks, the royal castle, the city-gate, military camps, fortresses, and the atmosphere in the night in the city of Ayutthaya (Kromsinlapakon. Prawatkhlongkamsuansiprat 12).

Khlongchaluemphrakiatphranarai, composed by Phrasimahosot, is in praise of the enviable status of King Narai. It also records the history of the reign of King Narai. The opening stanza is used to pay homage to the three
gods: Ishvara, Brahma, and Narayana. The style of versification, throughout the poem, is *Khlong* (Phichit Akkhanit 251).

**Kaphokhlong** is also composed by Phrasimahasot. The main part of the poem is written in the *Kap* and *Khlong* style of versification. However, the invocation, which appears in the beginning, has the *Rai* style. The poet pays his humble respects to the gods, who are always protecting the city of Ayutthaya (Phichit Akkhanit 263).

**Khlongniratnakhonsawan** is also composed by Phrasimahasot (P.N.Pramuanmak. Niranarinkhamkhlonglaeniratplikyoi 164) The poem narrates the poet’s feelings, when he is asked to accompany the king during the latter’s visit to the countryside, Nakhonsawan. The poet feels bad that he has to be away from his beloved. The style used in this work is *Khlong*. The poem begins with an invocation in which the powerful gods are invoked and requested to protect the poet throughout his journey. The invocation is also used by the poet to describe the beauty of the palace, royal procession, war-horses, war-elephants, and soldiers.

**Lilitphralo** is an imaginative and romantic work. The authorship of this work is uncertain. It treats of an ill-fated romance between the prince Phra Lo and two princesses who belong to a neighbouring kingdom. Scholars are of the opinion that this work must have been composed between 1348 and 1431 or during the reign of King Narai. **Lilitphralo** has an invocation, the first part of which is written in the *Rai* style. It describes the victory of Ayutthaya over the Yuan and the consequent happiness and prosperity, which the people of Ayutthaya enjoyed. In the second part of the invocation *Khlong* is used. The *khlong* style is used only in three stanzas to pay homage to the king. The poet also praises the people for having kept the story alive in the oral tradition so that he could compose the poem and dedicate it to the king (Ministry of Education. Nangsue-ankawinophonrueanglilitephralo 1).
Khlongnirathariphunchai is a poem, which describes the feelings of the poet who, for sometime, is forced to be away from his beloved. The poet is asked by the king to accompany him in a procession to pay visit to a temple and offer worship to the Buddha’s relics in Hariphunchai, the ancient kingdom in the north of Thailand. In this work, the invocation is used to pay respects to the Triple Gems, that is, the Buddha, Dharmma, and Sangha. The poet takes the opportunity to mention the date as well as the purpose of composition of the poem, in the first four stanzas (Prasoet Nanakhon 6).

In the third phase of the Ayutthaya period, many literary works were produced, especially, during the reign of King Borommakot. The greatest poet in this phase was Chaofathammathibet. He composed a number of works, both long and short poems.

Nanthopananthasutkhamluang is a work originally written in Pali by Mahabuddhasirithera. Chaofathammathibet adapts the plot of this work and makes his own version of the story in Thai. He uses the Rai style to tell the story. In the invocation, at the beginning of the work, the poet says that he was named Siripala when he became a monk. He pays homage to the Buddha, Dharmma, and Sangha for enabling him to make a Thai version of the Pali text. He states that his purpose is to produce sonorous effect on the mind of the reader and also to reproduce the entire story in Thai. He expresses his faith in the power of the Triple Gems to bring him happiness and good health and to ward off all the obstacles or dangers (Kromsinlapakon. Chaofathammathibet 148). The story was very popular at that time, because it was believed that the story was a sacred one. It was the story in which the Buddha allowed one of his disciples to use his supernatural power to subdue a naga king, who had the power to pose obstacles, and also to bring round the naga king to listen to the Buddha’s teachings.

Phramalaikhamluang was also originally written in Pali by a Srilankan monk. The Pali original was entitled Malayasutta. Chaofathamma-thibet, who made a Thai version of this work, uses the Rai style to tell the
story. The story deals with a powerful Arahant, Malaya, who goes to hell to teach the people there. From hell he ascends to heaven to pay his respects to the Buddha’s relics. In heaven, he meets Ariyamettrai (the would be Buddha). When the Arahant returns to earth, he tells the people all the experiences he had both in hell and in heaven. He advises them not to indulge in evil activities and also to cultivate good habits. In the invocation he prays to the Buddha, the Enlightened One, to bless and protect him as well as the people of the world (Kromsinlapakon. Chaofathammathibet 239).

**Punnowatkhamchan** is a poem, composed by a monk named Mahanak. This poem is a historical work, with a religious background. It describes the king’s journey to the Temple of the Buddha’s Footprint at Saraburi (Kromsinlapakon. **Bunnowatkhamchan** 13-14). The poet uses an invocation at the beginning of the poem to glorify the high status of the Buddha. He highlights the generous gesture of the Buddha by saying that the Buddha gave His footprint to His followers so that they would have an opportunity to worship Him and thereby get His blessings. The poet also narrates the legend connected with the Buddha’s footprint (Plueang Nanakhon 231).

**Siriwibunkit** is a jataka tale in Pali language. Luangsipricha adapts the plot of this work to tell the story in Thai (Ongkankhakhurusapha. **Chumnnum tamraklonchababhophrasamutwachirayan** 166). At the beginning of this work, the poet shows his humble respects to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. He also pays homage to his preceptors, parents, elders and kings. He mentions his name as well as his position in the king’s court, besides stating the purpose with which he is composing the poem (Plueang Nanakhon 237).

**Dutsadisangwoelklomchang** is a poem, which is meant to be read in a ceremony conducted to celebrate the arrival of precious elephants meant for the king’s use. The poem, which is in three parts, seems to deal with the gods, so that when the poem is read in the ceremony celebrating the arrival of the king’s elephants, it sounds like an invocation. In the last part of the work, the
poet invokes the blessings of the gods and sages on the performers of the ceremony (Ongkankakhurusapha. Chumnumchandutsadisangwoei 125).

From the time of its inception till the end of the Ayutthaya period, it was a common practice in Thai poetic literature to begin a work with an invocation, though, at times, invocations were used either in the middle or as benedictions (epilogue) at the end of the text. The practice was prevalent, irrespective of whether the work was religious or not.

However, in the third phase of the Ayutthaya period, signs of disappearance of invocation are visible, for there are a number of works, which belong to this period — works which seem to have dropped invocation altogether. The influence of this disappearance of invocation is seen on the works produced during both the Thonburi period and the Rattanakosin period. There are, however, stray works which retained the practice of having invocation in order to continue the tradition of classical works composed in the earlier periods. Four dance drama texts are said to have been written (at the command of King Rama I) in the Rattanakosin period, but of these four only the Ramakien begins with an invocation (Nithi laosiwong. Pakkailaebairuea 53)

As has already been noted, a few works of later period continued the practice of having the invocation, but not in the same way as the poets of the classical period had it in their works. The difference is easily noticeable. For example, descriptions of the city or of the temple, or even of the merits of the king came to be more elaborate. Phrayaphrakhlang’s Lilitsiwichaichadok, which belongs to the Thonburi period, is an excellent example to show the difference. In this work, the king, unlike in the works of the earlier periods, is not looked upon as a god, but as an excellent human leader who is fearless in war and capable of overpowering the enemies (the Burmese, for instance). Phrayaphrakhlang is a poet who belongs to both the Thonburi period and also to the Rattanakosin period. His Lilitphayuhayattra, in the invocation of which Rama I figures, is another example to show the difference already
mentioned above. Instead of focussing on the king (Rama I), the poet focuses his attention on the kingdom, which is ruled by a king of sterling qualities. The prosperity of the kingdom is highlighted (Nithi Iaosiwong 53), in spite of the fact that it is due to the able administration of an excellent king. Perhaps, this is an indirect way of praising the king.

Both the Thonburi period and the early part of the Rattanakosin period witnessed a kind of Renaissance in so far as both periods tried to restore the lost glory of the country in almost every sphere of life. The Thonburi period had only one king who ruled for fifteen years. Though after his death, a new dynasty established itself, the characteristics of the Thonburi period continued to prevail in the early part of the Rattanakosin period, that is, the time of Rama I. The poets of the period of restoration entered the court of Rama I and continued the tradition floated during the Thonburi period.

One of the prominent characteristics of the Ayutthaya period is that every literary composition, which belongs to that period, had a ritualistic aura about it. The kind of text that was produced was believed to have a mystical power, which could bring about great changes, or the reading or chanting of which could produce good or bad effects on the writer, and the kind of style that could produce such effects was believed to be the Rai style, which was regarded as a sacred style by many. Therefore, poets used this style in the invocatory part of their works, though other styles of versification were used in the main body of the text (Nithi Iaosiwong 47). For example, thoughout Khlongkamsuan and Lilithuyanphai, the style of versification used is Khlong, though at the outset – that is, in the invocation – the Rai style is used. This way of writing seems to have become a common practice among poets till the early Rattanakosin period. Especially, in Phrayaphrakhlang’s Khlongnirattam sadetlamnamnoi and Rama I’s Ramakien the Rai style is used in the invocation, like in the previous period, because the poets wanted to vie with the poets of the Ayutthaya period by using their methods of composing a poem in a more polished way and thus producing much better literary works. The invocation that adorned the work was primarily intended to protect the author
from the inscrutable, mysterious force's wrath or to bless him with the ability to fulfil all his desires, which were for the good of the community or of the whole universe (Nithi Iaosiwong 53). There are, however, a few invocations in which the poet either prays to the gods to grant him immortal fame or pleads with them to save the city from dangers and calamities, or to keep him away from sickness, suffering, or to enable him to attain Nirvana at the end of his life.

Thus, if in the Ayutthaya period, the poet focused on ritualistic aspects in their invocations, the poets of the Thonburi and Rattanakosin periods tended to emphasize the purely human values which characterized the king's life and conduct.

The invocation in the Ramakien is in praise of the king, Rama I, who invites all the renowned poets of his time to work together in order to produce an epic, which will withstand a bold comparison with any great epic of the world. Therefore, it is in the fitness of things that the king is mentioned and praised in the invocation.

The invocation in the Ramakien says that the king has created a city, which is not only aesthetically appealing but also powerful. It is comparable, like the Ayodhya in the Valmiki Ramayana, to the city of the gods in heaven — to be specific, the sixteenth heaven - “Solasamingmaensawan”. He has named it Nakhonthawarawadi. It is a city, which is said to be noble and honourable, besides being beautiful. In short, one may say it is a veritable heaven on earth.

Not only the city is noble and honourable, but also the king, who has created that city is noble and honourable. His fame has spread far and wide, throughout the three worlds — “chopsamphaenthaenphasuthathoranit”. The Triple Gems of Buddhism (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha) shine with an added lustre throughout the city during his reign. He has wiped out all the enemies of the country and, as a consequence, there is nothing but happiness,
all around. The peace that reigns supreme has imparted a hitherto unknown dignity to the people. It is as if abundant wealth and prosperity are insured to them. Like Narayana, the all-pervading god of Hindu mythology, the king has extended his territory and made the people feel his presence everywhere. And this he has done by way of introducing all valuable and beautiful things, which can be seen throughout the city.

The king has, according to Manipin Phrommasutthirak, supreme divine attributes and so the poets try to justify his ascending the throne, though he did not hail from men of royal siege. The very deeds performed by the king seem to justify this. He came to earth to put an end to the problems of the people as well as to establish a prosperous kingdom for the protection of the people. His advent was a historical necessity because, at that time, there was nothing but chaos in Thailand (Manipin Phrommasutthirak. “Botlakhonruangramakien: phapsathonphraputthayotfachulalokmaharat”, Aksonsat Mahawithayalaisin lapakon 14-16).

The king is a mine of virtuous qualities such as generosity, kindness, and munificence. He is endowed with supreme intelligence, mental boldness and physical strength. His intellectual illumination is profound. He has cultivated the power of concentration to such an extent that with undeterred determination he pursues the path of enlightenment. And as he is bounteous and munificent, he has no trace of parsimony in him. Spiritual enlightenment has endowed him with the ability to destroy the cycle of birth and death – a fact, which can be testified to by the good intention he has and the good deeds he performs. He remains unassailed by the battering waves of the ocean of carnal desires. Compassion towards all beings is his sole pleasure. He is never tired of granting charitable gifts and takes delight in performing meritorious deeds. His unflinching faith in the Triple Gems prompts him to promote the cause of Buddhism. He is a pillar unto his post as well as unto the temple. He invites learned monks, who are well-versed in the teaching of the Buddha (as the Arahants were in the past), to conduct religious discourses. He follows the example of king Ajatasatru, who was the patron of the first Buddhist Council.
meant for Collating the Tipitaka three months after the death of the Buddha, by being the patron of the Council for Collating the Tipitaka at Wat Mahathat in Thailand. As a follow up, he has a learned scholar write the complete version of the Tipitaka in palm leaf. The whole event culminates in a grand celebration—a celebration in which pujas are conducted at his own expense. He also honours the monks by offering them things connected with their requisites such as the costly yellow robes and the black bowls. His dedication to Buddhism is such that he donates his wealth to renovate a temple, which he calls Wat Phrachetuphon (the Thai version of the name of a temple, Jetuvanaram, in the Buddha's time). The temple is decorated with beautiful designs and is filled with bright images of the Buddha all around. His fame has spread far and wide on account of the gifts he made to the poor, constructing and renovating the temples, and pagodas containing Buddha's relics. He has created Wat Phrasisanpet, which shines with the brightness of gold and silver on it. He regularly pays homage to the Emerald Buddha's image, which is highly respected by the people. The Emerald image inspires people to be religious and thus lead a happy life under the rule of the king. The merits earned by the king, with his faith in Buddha's teaching for kings (Dasarajadhamma), make the people happy and peaceful throughout the kingdom, and they lead a free, merry life. As there is peace all around, there are frequent dance performances, which are like a visual, sumptuous feast to eyes of the spectators. The frequency with which such dances are performed prompts the poets to write a number of texts for performance. In order to achieve something great, the king invites the best poets of the period to collaborate with him to write a poem on the reputation of Rama (Ramakien) who slays demons. The poem has its own alluring and haunting music because music elicits spontaneous response from the readers/listeners. There is no doubt that such a poem as this written under the patronage of the king will spread the reputation of the king, besides providing the country with valuable ideas in order to cultivate a sense of literate culture.
3.3 COMPARISON

The invocation in Paradise Lost shows the author pleading with the Judeo-Christian Muse to help him in his onerous task of writing an epic which deals theme the theme of creation and fall. His imagination must soar to the height of this great argument. Therefore, the spirit of God must illumine what seems to move downwards, so that he may successfully carry out his mission of asserting "...Eternal providence" and that of "justifying the ways of God to men" (PL. I. 25-26).

The invocation in the Ramakien, on the other hand, is in praise of the king, Rama I, who has invited the best poets of the time in order to produce an epic, which will stand in bold comparison with any great epic of the world. According to the Thai tradition, therefore, it is in the fitness of things that the king, who has undertaken a mighty project, is mentioned and praised in the invocation. Unlike in England, in Thailand one could pray to one of the following four: (1) Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha), (2) God, (3) Preceptor, and (4) King.

Milton, in his invocation to the Muse, suggestively throws light on the biblical theme, which he is going to deal with in his ambitious epic. The authors of the Ramakien, on the other hand, indirectly praise King Phra Ram and the glory of his kingdom. Milton is more concerned about his ability to carry out his work in a successful manner and so seeks divine help. The authors of the Ramakien are mainly concerned with the welfare of their country, which is dependent on a good king and strong fortress to ensure perennial safety and peace. The apparent differences between the two are due to the differences in their cultural outlook. According to Milton, safety of the world is dependent on Man’s loyalty to God, whereas, according to the authors of the Ramakien, the same is dependent on a king who possesses divine attributes.
Beginning the epic with an invocation is a time-honoured convention, which both Milton and the authors of the Ramakien faithfully follow. However, the way the invocations are written by both the Western and the Eastern authors proves that it is not a slavish copying of the invocations that they had seen in the works of their predecessors. They are highly innovative in their own two different ways.

Milton has six invocations (Book I 6-26; Book I 27-33; Book I 367; Book III 1-54; Book VII 1-50 and also the reference to the Muse in Book IX) in his epic, whereas, in the Ramakien, there is only one at the beginning of the work.