CHAPTER VII

PARADISE LOST AND THE RAMAKIEN AS NATIONAL EPICS
7.1 PARADISE LOST AS THE NATIONAL EPIC OF ENGLAND

England's national literature had a boom during the Elizabethan period. The reason why the time of Queen Elizabeth I saw the beginning of the full flowering of English literature is that England was, at that time, emerging as a strong nation. The political upheavals of the previous centuries had already paved the way for comparative peace, so much so that the country could concentrate on the task of developing itself in various fields of life. The routing of the Spanish Armada gave a lift to the nation that it had not known before. The prevailing Renaissance spirit, ably assisted by the slowly emerging Humanist Movement, had induced a strong sense of self-confidence as well as of individualism in almost every Englishman. Men of letters were filled with poetic inspiration and poetic numbers found a spontaneous flow. Though classical models were available, writers never indulged in slavish imitation; rather their creative response to classical models resulted in the emergence of a typically British romantic literature, which could, without any hesitation, be considered to be the national literature of England.

Speaking of Shakespeare as the pride of England, Thomas Carlyle says, "For our honour among foreign nations, as an ornament to our English household, what item is there that we would not surrender rather than him?" (Heroes: And Hero-Worship 138). Continuing his praise of Shakespeare, Carlyle says once again, "Yes, this Shakespeare is ours; we produced him, we speak and think by him; we are of one blood and kind with him" (139). In chapter XV of Biographia Literaria, Coleridge writes,

"What then shall we say? Even this; that Shakespear, no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summit of the poetic
mountain, with Milton as his compeer, not rival. While the former darts himself forth and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood; the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own IDEAL. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of MILTON; while SHAKESPEARE becomes all things, yet forever remaining himself. O what great men hast thou not produced, England! my country! truly indeed –

‘Must we be free or die, who speak the tongue,  
Which SHAKESPEARE spake; the faith and  
morals hold,  
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung  
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold!’  

Wordsworth’ (Vol. II 19-20).

Coleridge, indeed, hits the nail on the head when he says, “All things and modes of action shape themselves anew into the being of Milton.” For in the sphere of art, as in the field of political and religious life, Milton represents individualism carried to the highest point. Right from his childhood Milton had an ambition to distinguish himself. He wanted to project himself as the type of ascetic goodness, which secludes a man as in a monastery. He had the necessary religious zeal and temperament. Quite early in life he felt compelled to dedicate “the talents lodged in him” (“On His Blindness”) to the service of his Maker. It is this moral tenacity of Milton that gives its strength to his verse. There is a firm and solemn music in the lines of Paradise Lost and the spirit of the great writer seems to be moving on every page. His epic, Paradise Lost, is the outcome of noble strength on fire. The sublime and high mystery of a disciplined life is the Miltonic idea and it may be said that this idea, which permeates the epic – Paradise Lost – makes it distinctly the work of this distinguished, freedom-loving Englishman.

In the opening lines of Paradise Lost, Milton writes “… the hight of this argument” (Bk I.24) and in Book IX he seems to dwell elaborately on this idea. He says that by nature he was unfit to take up traditional and wornout
subjects of war, adventures and gallantry, for an epic poem, though till his time such subjects were popular among epic poets:

"Not sedulous by nature to indite
Wars, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deemed, ..." (27-29).

Such poets revelled in describing magnificent knights engaged in duels and tournaments, their carved shields, their heraldic devices, their beautifully saddled and decorated horses, their armoured skirts and golden decorations. They also indulged in describing gorgeous feasts given by marshals in medieval halls and castles, served in fabulous utensils and cookery by attendants and stewards:

"... gorgeous knights
At joust and tournament; then marshalled feast
Served up in hall with sewers, and seneschals" (36-38).

But, Milton feels, they were highly artificial devices and low achievements to bring real honour and glory to men or poems:

"The skill of artifice or office mean,
Not that which justly gives heroic name
To person or to poem" (39-41).

Milton rather sarcastically adds, "Me, of these/ Nor skilled nor studious, higher argument/Remains" (41-43). This passage sounds like the pronouncement of a proud Englishman who attaches utmost importance to individualism. And to distinguish himself as the great son of England he chooses a theme, which is more sublime and comprehensive than the theme of any other epic poet in the whole world:

"... 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: sad task, yet argument
Not less but more heroic..." (6-14).
Paradise Lost takes the highest classical form, but fundamentally transforms it. The transformation seems to suit Milton's ambitious Protestant aim to "...justify the ways of God to men" (I. 26). His fierce sense of freedom did not allow Milton either to borrow or to copy from others. Every Englishman values individualism so much so that it is almost a habit with him not to be indebted to others. In this respect Paradise Lost distinguishes itself by reflecting the national temperament and predilection for absolute freedom.

Milton's portrayal of Satan's character, especially, in Book I of the epic shows, once again, his typical British love for freedom and independence. In spite of the heavy loss he was suffered to incur, Satan seems temperamentally to be unyielding. Addressing Beelzebub, he says that he and his faithful companions have not lost everything:

"... What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?" (PL. I. 105-109).

The reader almost hears Milton's own voice in this passage. As one who supported the parliamentarians in the Civil War of 1642-46, Milton too displayed unconquerable will, immortal hate, and courage never to submit or yield when he was forced to undergo suffering after the Restoration of monarchy.

Paradise Lost contains many puritan ideals, many of which are cherished and practised by the English. Milton's aim in writing Paradise Lost was to vindicate his country, language and faith. It could be argued that when Milton declares: "I may assert Eternal Providence;/And justify the ways of God to men" (I. 25-26), he has his own country's destiny in mind. Milton uses English language and gives it an elevation that it had not known before. Indeed, he fashioned a style for the first time – a style which, though inimitable, became a model for the majority of the poets in later times.
Milton is a staunch Christian and he celebrates Christianity in his epic. Commenting on this G.K. Hunter says, “The Greeks, the Romans, the Hebrews of the Old Testament, the Roman Catholic poets of modern Italy may have to be conceded some built-in cultural advantages – though Milton hopes he can overcome these – but they have one common disadvantage: they do not know God’s truth. He did not, of course, think of his patriotism and his religion as separate; one existed to reinforce the other. He intends his poem to be, as he says, ‘doctrinal to a nation’. The office of the poet is to preach to his countrymen” (Paradise Lost 15).

In the Fall of Man, Milton saw the issues of knowledge, freedom and free will, the very problems which concerned him all his life. The same issues concerned, to a lesser extent though, others too as is evidenced by Marlowe’s hero, Dr. Faustus. These are the issues that England has been tackling for centuries in the hope of putting itself in the vanguard in the onward march of the life of the entire world. Paradise Lost is mainly concerned with these issues.

Milton’s epic is at once the story of the loss of mankind’s spiritual innocence and the parallel story of the loss of Commonwealth Utopia. England and the world were not, according to Milton, a land of saints able to deepen their spiritual understanding or control their passions by reasoned discipline, just as Adam was not a saint able to hold on to Paradise. The poem thus becomes a parable of Milton’s day and of ours, the inner and outer history of mankind. Every reader of the epic, in England, can see in it a clear reflection of his own life.

The writing of Paradise Lost in a way, decided the trend of the later literature of England. English literature is predominantly romantic and tends to be more subjective than objective. The literature of the romantic revival of the early nineteenth century bears testimony to this. Milton’s influence on writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley was so much that it will not be an exaggeration to say that they put on the spectacles of Milton even
when they read Shakespeare's plays. The romantic strain of much of modern literature is obvious even to the naked eye of a sensitive reader. In this respect also Milton's epic can be regarded as a typical national epic. It has influenced and will continue to influence the life and literature of England.

7.2 RAMAKIEN AS THE NATIONAL EPIC OF THAILAND

Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, "The American scholar" has as its subtitle "Intellectual Declaration of Independence". Emerson's essay was, in its origin, a lecture delivered by Emerson in 1837, before the Phi Kappa Beta Society at Harvard. In his lecture Emerson made a passionate plea to his audience to have a literature of their own - a literature which could be called American national literature. He told his audience that the American scholar must allow himself to be influenced by the past; that he must think creatively and also that he must do creative reading.

The Ramakien had been composed long before the Boston Brahmin delivered his famous lecture at Harvard. But the authors of the Ramakien had already put into practice all the virtues that Emerson wanted the American scholar to cultivate in order to produce an independent body of literature. In order to bring out a national epic, the Thai authors allowed themselves to be influenced by the Ramayana of India and, with their rare gift of creative reading as well as creative thinking, they could make a new version of the famous epic, which could be said to be a fresh, original product and which breathes pure Thai atmosphere.

Commenting on the Ramakien as a typical national epic of Thailand, the anonymous author of Ramayana: Masterpiece of Thai Literature, Retold from the Original Version, Written by King Rama I of Siam, says,

"The Thai version of Ramayana is called Ramakien (Ramakirti in Sanskrit, which means in honour of Rama, the hero of the story). The Thai version was adapted to Thai sentiments and colouring, and portrays the customs, beliefs, politeness and gallantry of Thai ways of life. It is told according to what the Thai [people] now
believe in, i.e. the world where giants, evil spirits with miraculous and supernatural powers used to live in order to harass the men. The palaces and places the author described, the dresses the people in the story wear, the flowers, the birds and the beauty of the forests depicted are those of the Thai people and places surrounding them” (2).

People in Thailand love to listen to stories irrespective of where they come from. Stories from various foreign countries have travelled to Thailand and been retold. Such stories have eventually become a part of Thai literature and culture. Samkok, the Chinese legend of the Three Kingdoms, Inao which deals with the adventures of a Javanese legendary hero, and many other stories have been retold and become part and parcel of Thai literature. In the same way the story of Rama, which is on the lips of every Indian, has been adapted by the authors of the Ramakien. As the people of India show a special interest in The Ramayana, so the Thai people show a special interest in the Ramakien. There may be many reasons why this epic has a fascination for Thai people, but the main reason is that it can be put on the boards, or it can be simply read and enjoyed. One can even listen to it with rapt attention. According to Srisurang Poolthrapya, “The performances of Nang and Khon make use of the story of Ramakien exclusively. Khon, in particular, has been a popular entertainment right up to the present century…” (“Thai Customs and Social Values in the Thai Ramakien”, The Second International Ramayana Conference 1986, Thailand 16-17).

It can also be said that the fascination that the Ramakien has for the people of Thailand is due to the fact that it contains a story which has universal appeal. Even though it is not regarded as religious literature the Ramakien highlights lofty ideals of manhood and womanhood besides relating heroic deeds and depicting moving human emotions, which are cherished in Thailand. Looking for the most specific reason why the epic is liked so much by the Thais, one may say that it is because Thai social customs and values – although some of them may be similar to those of India – have transformed the epic into an important piece of Thai national literature.
People in Thailand are proud of three things: nation, religion, and the king. The *Ramakien* reflects the custom of showing respect to the king in the respect that is accorded to Phra Ram who is a scrupulous follower of *Dasarajadhamma*. Even though the *Dasarajadhamma* is emphasized in India also, the *Dasarajadhamma* enumerated in the *Ramakien* gives it a distinctive Thai colour. In Thailand it is a rule that for a king to be considered to be good he must abide by the *Dasarajadhamma* and non-abidance of the same is regarded as the sign of a bad ruler. Thus Phra Ram is a model king because he honours the *Dasarajadhamma* in observance, but Thotsakan is a bad king because he honours it in the breech. The Thai national religion, namely, Buddhism also emphasizes the need for a king to uphold the cause of the *Dasarajadhamma*.

The Valmiki *Ramayana* of India emphasizes the human aspect of Rama’s character mainly because Ravana had a boon from Brahma the creator to the effect that no one except a human being should be able to kill him. Therefore, Rama is presented as a man throughout the epic and his divinity is not mentioned at all. But unlike the Valmiki *Ramayana*, the Thai *Ramakien* puts maximum emphasis on the divinity of Phra Ram, although, for dramatic purposes, the authors portray him as one who is subject to the joys and sorrows of human beings as well as to certain human weaknesses. But though this is the case, Phra Ram is mainly looked upon as a divine person by the Thai people. The reason for this significant change in the *Ramakien* lies in the fact that the Thai authors wanted to project the image of a divine king through the character of Phra Ram, exactly resembling the image of the king under whose aegis they composed the epic. The Thai king, in those days, used to be raised to the status of a divine person through the ceremony called *Rajyabhisheka* performed by specially invited Brahmin priests (Poolthrupya 18). And from the time of coronation (*Rajyabhisheka*) till the end of his rule the king was looked upon as a representative of god on earth, whose duty was to care for the welfare of his subjects. In Thailand, the king is compared to Phra Ram and this practice has been there since the Ayutthaya period. People in Thailand still revere their king.
as a divine person, even though, at present, they have a democratic form of government.

Astrology is valued in India, but it is valued more in Thailand. This can be illustrated from the Ramakien. In the Valmiki Ramayana, for instance, Vibhishana the younger brother of Ravana is a brave warrior, but his counterpart Phiphek, in the Ramakien is presented, mainly, as an astrologer. Phiphek can be said to be blissfully ignorant of martial art. When he goes to Phra Ram he acts as an astrologer, counselling Phra Ram in matters of sending proper soldiers to the battlefield on account of which Phra Ram wins many battles. With his rare gift of vision, Phiphek could tell Phra Ram all the secrets of the enemy camp, thus making victory rather easy for the prince of Ayutthaya.

Thai people have great regard for parents, close relatives, teachers, holy men and so on. In this respect also Thais resemble Indians. Both in India and in Thailand experience and wisdom are highly valued. More than anywhere else in the world, in India and Thailand valuable experience and wisdom of the past are handed down from generation to generation. As a result, they have an enviable, strong tradition, which bequeaths wisdom and experience to each succeeding generation. The entire society is built on the firm foundation of the wisdom of the past. And because this wisdom is imparted by elders and preceptors, people have great respect for the older generation. Out of respect comes obedience.

In the Ramakien, King Thotsarot obediently carries out holy men's wishes. Phra Ram and his brothers obey their parents and holy men. The younger brothers of Phra Ram – Phra Phrot, Phra Lak, and Sattarut – not only love their elder brother but also obey him besides carrying out his commands. They obey their sister-in-law, Sida, too. In the kingdom of the monkeys, Sukhrip has respect for his elder brother, while Hanuman shows respect to both Sukhrip and Phali who are his uncles. In Longka, Kumphakan obeys
Thotsakan and goes to the battlefield to fight against his elder brother's enemies.

Hermits are esteemed very highly in the Ramakien. Their advice is always welcome to every character. This practice is well reflected in the special regard that Thai people have for the monks of their country. Like in the past, the spiritual guidance of the monks is still sought after by the laity.

Birth of babies, marriage and such other special occasions are always, celebrated with solemn ceremonies. Performance of such ceremonies is an important element in Thai tradition. The practice derives from the belief of Thai people in the vital force called Khwan, which governs the life of every being. Though the ceremonies described in the Ramakien show strong Brahminical influence, the basic rituals can be said to have been the same as in the Khwan ceremony.

Respect for guest is an important aspect of Thai culture, even today. Unlike the people in India, the Thai people may not look upon their guests as Devas (Atithi-Deva), but still they believe in according a hearty welcome to their guests. The Ramakien gives a graphic description of how Thotsakan pleased his aides – Sahatsadecha and Munlaphalam – with grand festivities and, especially, with a lavish feast. Indeed, Thotsakan treated every one of those who helped him in his fight against Phra Ram. Thailand still continues to entertain its guests in a similar way both in villages and in towns. People never bother about spending money in matters of entertaining their guests. Even a poor farmer does not hesitate to kill his cow and fowls in order to please his guest with a sumptuous meal. He believes that there has to be an abundant leftover of food items to be thrown away, because he thinks that just enough to go round is not a feast. This kind of lavish spending on food to treat guests is a uniquely Thai custom (Poolthrupya 20).

Even though the coronation ceremony is an adaptation of ancient Indian Brahminical system, it is uniquely Thai in characteristic. In the Ramakien,
Phra Ram's coronation is grandly celebrated. Phra Ram is described as having had a bath with water from the five sacred rivers. The sacred water is poured on him from a conch by Brahmins and the Vedic hymns are chanted. Phra Ram then sits on the throne under the white-tiered umbrella. He is presented with the regalia. After that the Baisi and Wianthian ceremony begins. There are entertainments for the people to celebrate this solemn and joyful occasion. Heavenly denizens are said to have come down to earth to dance as part of the entertainment. There is description of the earthly performances of Khon, Lakhon, Monram, Ngio (Chinese opera), wrestling, puppet show and folk dance (Poolthrupya 22). This type of description cannot be seen in any one of the Indian versions of the Ramayana. Even now when a new king ascends the throne, the old Brahminical way of celebrating the coronation is followed. As for the entertainments, the spirit is still retained, though the items are different.

Justice or fair play is emphasized throughout the Ramakien. Thai society puts maximum emphasis on the concept of justice and considers all other virtues such as obligation towards various members of the family, saving friends and relatives, who are wicked, to be bad. Kumphakan is portrayed as a character who really cared for justice. He even advised Thotsakan to return Sida to Phra Ram, but because he sided with his brother, Thotsakan, who is wicked to the core, he is shown as meeting with a tragic end. On the other hand, Phiphek, though he deserted his elder brother, is blessed with the kingdom because he cared for justice by joining Phra Ram who is an embodiment of Dharma.

Thai society insists that a wife be faithful to her husband, irrespective of what he is and also irrespective of what happens. Sida is portrayed as a model wife in the Ramakien. The sufferings that she undergoes show that she is an embodiment of patience. It will not be an exaggeration if we say that she had the capacity to smile at grief. Even today, faithful women, in Thailand, are compared to Sida, while unfaithful women are compared to Wanthong (in Khunchang Khunphaen), Mora (in Chanthakhorop) and Kaki (in
Kakikhamklon), all of whom were notorious wives who never hesitated to tarnish their husbands' name and fame.

Thailand, like Burma or Laos, is a Buddhist country and Buddhism has been there for more than two thousand years. One should expect such a country to have made a typically Buddhist version of the Ramayana. In fact, the Laotian and Burmese Versions are completely Buddhistic in nature. Thailand strikes a different note altogether. The Ramakien does not toe the line of ancient Buddhist Rama tradition as enshrined in the Dasaratha Jataka. It is not the previous births of Bodhisatva that are dealt with in the Ramakien. Even, a cursory reading of the epic will tell the reader that the Thai epic is one more original version among the many Ramayanas found in India. The Hindu character of the epic is visible even to the naked eye. The epic world of the Ramakien is full of Hindu gods. Phra Isuan (Siva), one of the Hindu Trinity, is treated as the supreme Lord, the creator of the world. He presides over the entire action of the epic. His continuing presence and influence is particularly emphasized by the authors. In the Valmiki Ramayana, the god Narayana is both in the background and in the foreground, but in the Ramakien, Narai as Phra Ram is in the foreground and Isuan as the preeminent creative force is in the background motivating and setting in motion all that happens in the epic. Nevertheless, the values dealt with are Buddhist values. Phra Ram is imbued with the spirit of the Buddhist virtues of a king. He is a scrupulous follower of the Buddhist Dasarajadharna and not of the Rajadharna that we find in the Indian version of the Ramayana. He may, for all appearance, be an avatar of god Narai, but, for all practical purposes, he is a pre-eminent religious figure whose duty is to inspire people to have faith in Buddhism. It is worth noting that Phra Ram is not a religious figure of the type that one sees in Vessantara in the Vessantara Jataka. Rather, he is a religious figure in the apparently non-Buddhist world of the epic, trying to educate himself and, by his example, others also in the Buddha Dharma as practised in Thailand for centuries. And this makes the Ramakien a distinctly Thai national epic.
The influence of the Ramakien on Thai culture is, indeed, profound. The anonymous author of *Ramayana: Masterpiece of Thai Literature, Retold from the Original Version, Written by King Rama I of Siam*, says,

“All the utensils they use, the art of architecture, the form of entertainment, the ancient art of war, the ways of expression and sentiment, are no longer Indian, but pictures of Thai life. True, the story is Indian, but the clothes they now wear are of Thai character that no Thai thinks of it as a thing originated from foreign origin. It so depicts Thai ways of life and sentiments that it has become a true masterpiece of Thai literature. Even the names as appeared in the Sanskrit original were changed and now pronounced in the Thai manner. The details of description and the events were changed so as to fit the Thai reasoning and surroundings. The fact that the Rama of the story could have been any Thai king, and the inhabitants none others except the Thai [people] themselves. The forests, the court intrigues among various wives, the love scenes, etc. can be no other except those happening in Thailand. The Indian touch has lost its characteristics altogether. The story has so taken the imagination of the Thai people, or rather the Thai beliefs have been so well incorporated into the story that the Thai people believe that such things have really happened in the past. Thai mythology still tells of the stories of these gods, goddesses, giants and other supernatural beings with all their gigantic powers and exploits” (2-3).

Ever since its emergence, it has influenced various aspects of Thai life and art. A number of works dealing with performing arts (shadow play, mask play, dance drama, and puppet show) based on the Ramakien have been written and produced either under royal patronage or by the people in general. There are bas-reliefs and paintings in many important temples. One can cite the example of the bas-reliefs surrounding the temple, Wat Phrachetuphon, and paintings crowding the gallery of the temple of the Emerald Buddha.

The most important influence of the epic can be located in the daily conversation of Thai people. Words and phrases such as ‘Lukthoraphi’, ‘Aithaepsaekphaendinni’, and ‘Khatsiankhatkon’ have become familiar, household expressions. The phrase ‘Lukthoraphi’ is used to describe children who are ungrateful to their parents. This derives from Thoraphi, a buffalo, who
kills his father in the **Ramakien** *(Ramakien I. 336).* ‘Aithapsakphandinni’ describes one who is disgraced and hence tries to flee from his surroundings. This expression is coined with reference to the episode, in which the daughter of a Naga king feels ashamed and so flees through the earth to the Netherlands, after the hermits see her having sex with a common field snake *(Ramakien I. 88).* ‘Khatsiankhatkon’ is used to describe an alienated person who has no friends, and also nobody to lend him a helping hand in times of trouble. In the **Ramakien**, this phrase is used to describe the plight of Thotsakan, who has lost his friends, hands and heads, which are cut off by Phra Ram’s arrows *(Ramakien III. 331).*

As Swamy Satyananda Puri says, “No one can deny that without the Ramakirti *(Ramakien)* and its various contributions to the different spheres of her culture, Thailand will lose a great deal of her classical greatness. The Ramakirti has supplied her with a ceaseless flow of figures and phrases, of ideas and inspirations, and in the romantic charm of its poetic narration it captivates the mind of the trained and the untrained alike even in the days when the glory of the East is being gradually shadowed by the glamour of the West” *(Preface to The Ramakirti [Ramakien]: The Thai Version of The Ramayana 8).*

7.3 **COMPARISON**

Both *Paradise Lost* and the **Ramakien** are national epics, but both seem to go beyond the national boundaries because in both universal values are enshrined.

Milton was, right from the beginning, ambitious and wanted to write a great work. Initially, he did not have the epic form in mind, but he ended up by writing one of the greatest epics, which enriched the treasury of English literature.

The authors of the **Ramakien** also wanted to undertake an ambitious project. Unlike Milton, they did not entertain the idea of writing a play in five
acts, but while composing the epic they kept the dramatic mode in mind and wrote the epic in such a way that it has given rise to a number of dance dramas which have been performed for more than a century. Milton’s epic is full of dramatic situations, especially in the conversation between characters such as Satan and his comrades, Adam and Eve, heavenly angels and Adam and so on, though it cannot be said that Paradise Lost has given rise to plays or dance dramas.

The Ramakien is a national epic because it reflects the typical Thai social life, religious belief and political outlook. It may look like a Hindu epic in so far as it deals with the same gods as are dealt with either by Valmiki or by Kamban. But, on that account, the reader cannot say that it is not a national epic. The point is that though Phra Ram is an avatar of god Narai (Narayana), Phra Ram teaches people Buddhist ideals and ways of life. Moreover, he is a faithful follower of the Buddhist Dasarajadhama, which every Thai king is expected to put into practice.

Milton’s Paradise Lost also reflects the protestant religion of England. It reflects, too, the political conflict of Milton’s time. Milton’s idea is to make his reader accept the ways of God without questioning His Supreme authority – a lesson which the protestants of England have, since Milton’s time, taken seriously in order to strengthen their moral fibre.

The Ramakien deals with the ideals of womanhood. The portrayal of Sida is meant to teach the people of Thai society lessons regarding an ideal wife. Even today in Thailand, Sida is considered to be an ideal wife par excellence. Milton also deals with the concept of ideal wife. Adam tells Eve:

“The wife, where danger or dishonour lurks,
Safest and seemliest by her husband stays
Who guards her, or with her the worst endures” (PL. IX. 267-269).

The two epics agree on the idea of youngsters paying respect to their elders. Thus we see Phra Ram paying respect to his parents, teachers, sages and so on. This practice is an important element in Thai culture.
Milton does not portray many human characters or describe various kinds of family relations in *Paradise Lost*, except for Adam and Eve. Therefore, only the idea of showing respect to one's superiors is depicted in Adam, Eve and the heavenly angels, all of whom are always faithful and loyal to their Maker – the Almighty God.

Both *Paradise Lost* and the *Ramakien* are avowedly national epics, even though both are of universal dimension. For both have sprung from their respective native soil and have taken deep roots in that soil. Milton's epic is distinctly national because it reflects the British love for individual freedom, puritan ideals which characterize much of later British life. It has also powerfully influenced English literature since its appearance on the literary horizon.

The *Ramakien* also reflects the Thai people's love of Dharma the tenets of which focus on the establishment of a corporate society in which communal contentment as opposed to individual contentment becomes the cardinal point. Thai cultural, social and political life is always governed by Dharmic outlook. If Milton reflects puritan ideals, the Thai epic reflects Buddhist ideals, which have consoled, sustained and delighted the people of Thailand for generations. Like Milton's epic, the *Ramakien* has profoundly influenced later Thai literature and has particularly been responsible for the production of a number of dance dramas, masques, puppet shows, bas reliefs and paintings which have shaped and moulded the lives of thousands of people. If Milton with his high spiritual predilections sees the supreme king only in the Almighty God, the *Ramakien* sees God in the king and the king in God, thereby enabling the people of the country to have reverential attitude towards the king as well as towards God. For Thai people believe that their reverential attitude towards the king will be salutary in so far as it serves indirectly to prompt the king to take providential care of his subjects, which will go a long way in avoiding fissiparous tendencies as well as in establishing a peaceful society.
CONCLUSION:

FINDINGS IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS (I-VII) AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
FINDINGS IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS (I-VII)

In this dissertation a serious attempt has been made to study and compare the English epic Paradise Lost and the Thai epic, Ramakien. The items chosen for study were (i) European and Asian epic traditions, (ii) social milieu and political background of both Milton and the authors of the Ramakien, (iii) sources of both Paradise Lost and the Ramakien, (iv) final choice of subject, (v) invocation, (vi) development of story, (vii) heroism, (viii) conflict, (ix) architectonics, (x) characterization, and (ix) Paradise Lost and the Ramakien as typical, national epics.

The dissertation falls into two parts: (i) the introduction and the first two chapters (I and II) provide the necessary background material for the study of the texts undertaken for examination, and (ii) chapters III – VII make a study of the two epics, namely, Paradise Lost and the Ramakien.

In the introduction, the concept of comparative literature as well as comparative literature as an academic discipline, which has been pursued for more than a century, was dealt with. The importance of comparative literature as an academic subject – especially now when the interaction between the West and the East has become an unavoidable reality – was also highlighted. Mention was made of the attempts made by a few scholars to compare Milton’s Paradise Lost and Valmiki’s (and also Kamban’s) Ramayana. The introduction also noted how there has been no attempt to compare Paradise Lost and the Ramakien of Thailand and, therefore, how this dissertation is the first attempt to have made a comparative study of the two epics. It also gave a chapterwise outline of the study conducted in chapters I-VII.

Chapter I began with a definition of the term, epic, and recorded the most important definitions that have been accepted by the majority of scholars. It examined epic characteristics and conventions, with reference to both European epics and Asian epics. The chapter then traced the tradition of epic in Europe as well as in Asia. The distinction made between primitive epics, epics
of growth, and literary epics was discussed, besides discussing the epics of various countries and their conception, growth and development. The conclusion arrived at the end of the chapter was that the European epic tradition can be legitimately called the Homeric tradition and the Asian tradition can justifiably be termed the Ramayana tradition.

Chapter II began with a discussion of the social milieu and political background of both Milton and the authors of the Ramakien and the impact they made on the authors, which is evident from the way they the authors shaped and moulded their plots. The chapter noted how much of the social life as well as of political revolutions was consciously or unconsciously recorded by the authors in their respective compositions. The chapter had to make a detailed study of the necessary background in order to arrive at the conclusion that both Milton and the authors of the Ramakien could not help being influenced by their respective backgrounds. The chapter then went on to examine the sources of both Paradise Lost and the Ramakien. It made a careful, critical study of all the sources in the case of both Milton’s epic and the Thai epic. In the case of Milton, it noted the author’s indebtedness to the Book of Genesis, in addition to tracing the influence of the most important classical (both Greek and Latin) works and myths. In the case of the Thai epic, the Ramakien, the chapter highlighted the predominant influence of the story of Rama as well as of its various versions (both in India and other Asian countries). It was also noted that how, besides literary works, certain bas-relief depictions, such as Sukhrip (Sugriva) fighting with Phali (Vali), Phra Ram’s (Rama’s) triumphant return to Ayutthaya (Ayodhya) and so on can also be considered some of the important sources of the Ramakien. The careful study of the sources of both Milton’s epics and the Thai epic led to the conclusion that the nature of the sources of the Ramakien is quite unlike that of the sources of Paradise Lost, in that, whereas Milton’s epic is not the culmination of the various previous versions of the same epic, the Ramakien seems to have been the building up of the same epic over a few centuries until it was fully formed and given a typical national character, so much so that it is a Thai epic, which means, its distinguishes itself by being totally different from all the
other versions of the same story in other Asian countries. Another point that was made was that there is no copying or slavish imitation either in Paradise Lost or in the Ramakien. And while comparing the two epics, with reference to their sources, the chapter arrived at the conclusion that just as Milton invests his epic (which is classical in form) with a radical Christian meaning, the authors of the Ramakien invest their epic (though it deals with Hindu gods and goddesses) with a strong Buddhist meaning in so far as they try to teach the Buddhist Dasarajadhamma through the character of Phra Ram, besides dealing with Buddhist attitudes towards life and Karmic Law. Thus the reader can boldly say that both Paradise Lost and the Ramakien are highly original and fresh in more or less the same way.

Going on to topic of final choice of subject, the chapter, after examining the opinions of critics in the case of both epics (Paradise Lost and the Ramakien), concluded that Milton as well as the authors of the Ramakien had drama as their backdrop. Milton's original idea was to write a play, in five acts, on the theme of the fall of Man, whereas Rama I and his colleagues had the earlier dramatic versions before them. When the actual composition of Paradise Lost began, in 1657, Milton transformed the original plan into an epic, but it cannot be denied that the earlier plan left its mark on the later epic because there are quite a few dramatic situations in the Paradise Lost. On the other hand, Rama I and those who co-authored with him examined the dramatic versions of certain episodes, which figure in the Ramayana, and wanted to bring out a version that would have all the episodes in one place. In executing the whole thing they had in mind possibilities of using, in the future, the majority of the episodes, found in their work, for theatrical performance, though there are scattered here and there, a few episodes, which are not very popular and as such cannot successfully be used on the stage.

In chapter III the invocations in both Paradise Lost and the Ramakien were taken up for critical examination. The chapter began with a brief study of the connection between the word, inspiration, and the term, invocation, and went on to make a detailed examination of the invocation at the beginning of
Paradise Lost. The aim of the study was to bring out the full implications of the invocation and their bearing on the specific, Christian theme of the epic. It noted how Milton had launched on an ambitious project which would have universal significance and, consequently, how both his theme and his style had to be highly serious. The chapter also made an examination of the other invocations (Book I. 27-33; Book I. 376; Book III. 1-54; Book VII.1-50 and also the reference to the Muse in Book IX). While commenting on the second invocation (Book I.27-33) the chapter noted how it serves the purpose of introducing the anti-hero, Satan, just as the first invocation serves the purpose of introducing the hero, in addition to noting how by the time the reader comes to the second invocation the three major characters of the epic (Adam, God, and Satan) have been introduced. While commenting on the third invocation, it was noted how the halting effect produced by the use of monosyllabic words in “Say, Muse, their names then known, who first, who last” (Book I. 376) serves the purpose of suggesting the difficulty that the poet has in indentifying the fallen angels. Discussing the significance of the invocation at the beginning of Book III (1-54), the chapter noted how in that rather lengthy invocation Milton implies that to move from hell to heaven is to move from darkness to light and how it is also significant that Milton marks this change in the form of an invocation – this time to “holy light”, that is, God Himself. The significance of the invocation at the beginning of Book VII (1-50), it was observed, lies in the fact that Milton feels that venturing to write an unprecedented epic, like 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. Apart from serving the purpose of keeping the reader in constant touch with the central theme of his epic (which Milton does every now and then in Paradise Lost), the invocation also implies that the poet himself has inherited the original sin from Adam as the whole mankind has. The chapter also noted the significance of the reference to the celestial Muse in Book IX of the epic.

In the discussion on the invocation in the Ramakien, the chapter, first, traced the history of invocation, with reference to the works that preceded the Ramakien. The discussion also noted the difference in the contents of the
invocation in the Ayutthaya period and the Thonburi and the Rattanakosin periods. In the Ayutthaya period, the poets tended to focus on ritualistic aspects whereas in the Thonburi and the Rattanakosin periods the poets concentrated on human values which characterized the king’s life and conduct. Going on to the Ramakien, the chapter pointed out that the invocation in the Ramakien is in praise of the king, Rama I. A full account of what he had done in the political, religious, and social fields of life was given and commented upon. The chapter said that the highlight of the invocation is the invitation that the king extended to the best poets of the period to collaborate with him to write a poem on the reputation of Rama – Ramakien. The chapter also noted how the invocation strikes the key-note of the main plot of the epic by hinting at the splendour of the Ayodhaya of Rama and also at the splendid work that Rama did.

While comparing the invocation in Paradise Lost with the invocation in the Ramakien, the chapter mainly highlighted the difference between the two by saying that 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 kindom. 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, on the other hand, 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. And commenting on the similarities of outlook in matters of the invocation at the beginning of their works, it was noted that both Milton and the authors of the Ramakien follow the time-honoured convention of having the invocation at the beginning of an important work, like the epic, though Milton, following the European convention invokes the blessings of the Muse/God to aid him in the composition of his ambitious
work, the authors of the Ramakien, following their cultural tradition, seek the good will of the king.

Chapter IV of the dissertation dealt with three topics — (i) development of story, (ii) heroism, and (iii) conflict.

Discussing the subject of development of the story in Paradise Lost, the chapter pointed out that the twelve books of Paradise Lost can be divided into three parts: (i) Books I-IV, (ii) Books V-VIII, and (iii) Books IX-XII. Books I-IV deal with mainly with Satan and his adventures (the scene is laid in hell). Books V-VIII deal with God, heavenly council, creation and so on (the scene is laid in heaven). Books IX-XII deal with the theme of fall of Man and his expulsion from paradise. The chapter then made a Book-by-Book analysis of the topic, highlighting the development of the story and concluding that how the epic (Paradise Lost) contains a well integrated plot.

Commenting on the plot of the Ramakien, the chapter noted how the Ramakien deals with the incarnation of Phra Narai as Phra Ram. But, as is the case with ancient Indian epic, the Ramakien contains a number of episodes — all dealing with the stories of various gods and demons and their incarnations. The epic, as a whole, seems to adapt the idea of evolution (as dealt with in Indian Puranas) and this adaptation is meant to impart unity to the entire work.

The chapter also made a detailed, critical study of the episodic nature of the epic. It classified the episodes into five different categories and noted the connection of each category with the main plot.

The chapter also took note of the opinion of Thai scholars, according to whom the Ramakien can, for purposes of academic study, be divided into three parts: (i) Pre-War, (ii) Great War, and (iii) Post-War. It also noted their way of seeing the development of the story in the epic.
The chapter, then, gave a brief account of heroism, tracing its history from the primitive times to the time of Milton and Rama I. The discussion was developed by illustrating each point with reference to a few heroes and the kind of heroism each one of them displays. Martial heroism and moral heroism were explained in some detail. Satan's heroism and Adam's heroism were dealt with, while discussing the heroism in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and the differences between the two were noted. The conclusion arrived at in this part of discussion was that both Satan and Adam seem to be lacking in martial heroism, and both seem to display moral heroism in two widely differing ways, whereas in the *Ramakien*, Phra Ram displays the martial heroism sanctioned by the tenets of the Law (Dharma) and also moral heroism, whereas Thotsakan displays the martial heroism characterized by unrighteous conduct.

Highlighting the concept of conflict the chapter showed the difference between the conflict as depicted in *Paradise Lost* and the same as depicted in the *Ramakien*. It also noted how Milton, following the Semitic tradition, portrays the conflict as the conflict between God and the Devil (that is, between good and evil), whereas Rama I, following the Dharmic tradition of Asia, sees the conflict as the conflict between the righteous and the unrighteous.

Chapter V made a detailed study of the architectonics in both *Paradise Lost* and the *Ramakien*.

Commenting on the architectonics used by Milton, the chapter noted how the first two paragraphs of *Paradise Lost* are suggestive of Milton's design of his entire epic, in that, he seems to introduce two stories which are equally important: (i) the story of Man's Fall, and (ii) the story of Man's enemy. It is as if these two seemingly independent stories are linked together to form the main plot of the epic. For the gradual growth and development of the epic, Milton seems to have relied on the traditional devices, such as parallelism and contrast. The chapter also noted how seen overall - from above, as it were - *Paradise Lost* is a vast but delicately balanced structure.
The theme of adventures of Satan in Books I-III balances the history of mankind in Books X-XII. Book IV, describing the entry of Satan (and the reader) into paradise, balances Book IX, describing the loss of paradise. Book V and VI, describing the destructive war in heaven, balance as on a fulcrum against Books VII and VIII, which describe the creation and deal with the problems of understanding it. It was also observed how within the epic’s larger structure there are all sorts of secondary balances, which an in-depth study would reveal. Mention was made of a few such secondary balances, and the chapter discussed how these balances make the structure of the poem become massive, though it is, at the same time, delicate. It was also noted that the epic similes are integrated into the structure of the epic. The chapter then gave a brief but comprehensive account of Milton’s cosmology. Milton’s use of imagery was also commented upon, with illustrations from the text. The chapter, then, highlighted the way Milton handled the blank verse. It was observed how Milton’s object was to compose periods with the sense variously drawn from one verse into another and, for this purpose, how Milton united all the arifices employed by his predecessors such as Marlowe and Shakespeare and carried them to artistic and architeconic perfection. This point was illustrated with reference to the first sixteen lines of Book I of the epic.

Repeated reading of the Ramakien revealed that it has the five stages of growth and development of plot of a classical Indian drama. The five stages are: (i) Beginning, (ii) Effort, (iii) Hope of Attainment, (iv) Eventuation of Action, and (v) Attainment of Fruit. These five stages were carefully traced and were related two other types of five stages mentioned in the Nātya-Śāstra of Bharatamuni. The other two types of five stages were mentioned and a chart was given to show the order in which they were arranged. The tracing of the five stages of a dramatic plot in the Ramakien was found to be appropriate because the authors of that epic had as their sources a few dramatic versions of the story of Rama as well as of certain episodes at their disposal. Moreover, Rama I and his colleagues wanted to write the text in a such way that it would provide posterity with the possibilities of preparing its own dramatic versions for dance dramas. The chapter then made a careful examination of the
structural format of the **Ramakien**. On counting the number of stanzas it was found that the text has more than 50,000 stanzas. The chapter noted that the authors had made use of three different kinds of versification: (i) *Rai* for the invocation, (ii) *Klon* for the main body of the text, and (iii) *Khlong* for the epilogue. A detailed analysis of *Klon* was made, with reference to its structure, rhythm and rhyme scheme. Another important point discussed was the consistent use of an introductory phrase, which is either *Mueanan* (then) or *Batnan* (then). The chapter noted the exact context in which these phrases are used in the **Ramakien**. It was noted how the use of these two phrases is by no means arbitrary; they are interchangeable, and they also indicate the status of the characters that are introduced. All the important points connected with these two phrases were elaborately dealt with. One of the most important points discussed was that these two introductory phrases are meant to focus on the characters that are going to speak. Apart from this, they also indicate the mood of the particular character that is focused, besides functioning as an introduction to brief stage direction in which entrance and exit and such other movements of the characters are described. It was also observed how the passages thus introduced look like well-made formulae, so much so that within the passages the format has the stamp of uniformity and the passages appear to be artistically wrought blocks.

The chapter also noted the absence of traditional chapter division in the **Ramakien** and said how the epic can be looked upon as containing a number of stories, each one of which is connected with the main plot.

The chapter also discussed the use of imagery, figures of speech and, particularly, the use of euphemism while dealing with the subject of sexual intercourse. The chapter also highlighted a few stylistic devices used by the authors to link passages within scenes or between scenes.

While comparing **Paradise Lost** and the **Ramakien**, at the end of the chapter, both the similarities and the differences that exist between the two epics were carefully noted.
Chapter VI dealt with the subject of characterization in both epics. To facilitate the comparative study undertaken, only the leading characters were selected for examination— for example, Adam, Satan, and Eve from *Paradise Lost* and Phra Ram, Thotsakan, and Sida from the *Ramakien*. Each character was discussed in as detailed manner as possible.

While comparing the art of characterization in both *Paradise Lost* and the *Ramakien*, it was observed that sublimity is the key to the portrayal of each character in both epics. The very descriptions that Milton and the authors of the *Ramakien* give of their protagonists are suggestive of the sublimity associated with their characters. The point was illustrated with reference to the texts— *Paradise Lost* and the *Ramakien*. The chapter compared the heroes, heroines and anti-heroes, separately, and carefully noted all the similarities and differences.

The chapter added a separate note on Hanuman, the typical Thai hero. Though Hanuman prominently figures in various versions of the *Ramayana*, the way he is portrayed by the authors of the *Ramakien*, shows that he is conceived in a totally different way to meet the requirements of the typical Thai hero, and as such almost all his characteristics must be looked upon as the uniquely special attributes of the hero who belongs only to Thailand. Therefore, it is difficult to compare him with any character in *Paradise Lost*. Hanuman’s sexual exploits enhance the grandeur of the hero because, far from being a lurid sexualist, Hanuman uses his sexual adventures as means to help his leader Phra Ram in his attempt to suppress evil forces in this world. Therefore, it will be meaningless to think in terms of comparing Hanuman’s sexual instincts and Adam’s sexual instincts or, for that matter, Hanuman’s sexual indulgence and Satan’s incestuous relationship with Sin, his own daughter. Even in respect of heroism there cannot be any comparison between Hanuman and Adam or between Hanuman and Satan.

Chapter VII made a critical evaluation of both *Paradise Lost* and the *Ramakien* as typical national epics. The chapter made a careful study of the
presence, in Milton's epic, of the characteristics of the life of the English, with
the reference to religion, society and politics. Two of the chief characteristics
were particularly highlighted and they are: (i) Puritanism, and (ii)
Individualism, which still characterize the life of the English.

The Thai epic, it was observed, seems to give a pen picture of Thai
social, religious and political life. The hero Phra Ram, for example, is
presented as a staunch follower and defender of the Dasarajadhamma, the
importance of which is emphasized in Thai Buddhism. Throughout the epic
Thai cultural requirements seem to be illustrated—especially, while describing
the network of family relationships in which the reader sees a model wife
(Sida), obedient children (such as Phra Ram, Sida, Phra Lak and so on), loving
parents (such as King Thotsarot, King Chanok and so on), loving brothers
(Phra Ram and his brothers, for example), and so on. The chapter also
discussed the beliefs, superstitions, sense of fair play and so on before making
a conclusive statement to the effect that the Ramakien can safely be regarded
as a typical, national epic. The last part of the chapter made a comparison
between Paradise Lost and the Ramakien as typical, national epics. It was
observed that even though both are of universal dimension, both have sprung
from their respective native soil and have taken deep roots in that soil. Milton's
epic reflects the British love for individual freedom and Puritan ideals. It has
also powerfully influenced later English literature. The Thai epic also reflects
the Thai people's love of Dharma (especially, the Buddhist Dharma) the tenets
of which focus on the establishment of a corporate society, which has as its
cardinal point communal contentment as opposed to individual contentment.
Like Milton's Paradise Lost, the Ramakien has profoundly influenced later
Thai literature and has particularly been responsible for the production of a
number of dance dramas, masques, puppet shows, bas-reliefs and paintings
which have shaped and moulded the lives of thousands of people

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Being the first of its kind (that is, the comparison between Paradise
Lost and the Ramakien), this dissertation has brought into the scope of its
study almost all the important aspects of epic literature. Future areas of research are numerous and open-ended.

First of all, one is handicapped, to a certain extent, by the conspicuous absence of translation of the complete text of the Ramakien (Rama I’s version) in English. Translation of the Thai epic, with a good critical introduction, may be treated as a massive project by those who are interested in undertaking the project. In view of the peculiar nature of Thai language as well as of its syntactic structure, the translation will have to provide annotations or explanatory notes, wherever they are absolutely necessary – and they are necessary almost throughout the text. It is worth launching on the project because it will open up new vistas to any scholar’s attempt at comparing Paradise Lost (or any other Western epic) with the Ramakien in the future.

In the course of discussing the structure of the Ramakien, it was observed that the Ramakien, unlike any other epic, is one continuous narration, consisting of more than 50,000 stanzas, but without any chapter or canto divisions. However, a careful, critical examination reveals that the text can be divided into numerous episodes, each one of which seems to have its own beginning, middle, and end. This means that a serious research scholar will have to carefully notice episodic boundaries and thus see the connection of each episode with the other episode as well as the connection of all the episodes with the main plot. Future scholars may profitably do a dissertation on this topic. One may go even further and examine the presence and nature of episodes in Western epics and think in terms of comparing a Western epic with the Thai epic.

Another area of research seems to be a comparative study of the poetics of Paradise Lost and that of the Ramakien.

The chapter dealing with the architectonics in Paradise Lost and the Ramakien shows the possibilities of developing the same into a Ph.D. dissertation.
Yet another possibility is the examination of character interaction in both *Paradise Lost* and the *Ramakien*. This topic can be studied separately and developed into a dissertation.

In classical Asian literature music is inseparable from poetry. The musical tradition associated with literature is still little understood in the West. Music is an integral part of the Thai epic, the *Ramakien*. The need for Western scholars to learn from their Thai counterparts seems to be crucial. Knowledge of every one of the features of music in the *Ramakien* may prompt scholars to think in terms of studying the same and making a comparative study between the Thai epic and *Paradise Lost*. 