Milton and Madhusudan were both imbued with the spirit of renaissance and reflected it in their literary works. As rightly pointed out by Shibprasad Bhattacharjee, the characteristic feature of renaissance art and literature is revival of the antiquity or a reassessment of classic art and literature (translation mine) (37). We may further say that the characteristic feature of renaissance literature is both a reassessment of classical literatures and their skillful and creative assimilation into contemporary creative constructs. Both Milton and Madhusudan felt it ennobling for their epic poetry, to take resort to classical allusions in building up their epic similes and metaphors. Thus, both of them, it may be opined, belonged to the same category of poets.

Madhusudan, a poet of the nineteenth century, was much indebted to seventeenth-century Milton. He had great regard for Milton’s Paradise Lost and considered him as ‘divine’ (Ghosh, Ajit Kumar et al (Eds.) Madhusudan Rachanabali, Letter no. 79, 326) and obviously came under his hallowing influence. His indebtedness to Milton consists in re-inventing the “given” in epic legacy; in parallels of incidence and situational images, similes, etc. It, again, consists in numerous improvisations in verse form and syntax, in creation of word music, internal rhyme, inversion of word order, and such other activities of verbal wit; overall it consists in his creation of Bengali blank verse, amitrokshar. But, most significantly, it consists in his characterisation of his protagonist in the Meghaneadvadh, Ravana, whom he, perhaps both consciously and unconsciously, modeled on Milton’s Satan in the Paradise Lost.
Milton in his epic tried to recapture Homer’s epic tradition in the use of invocation to the Muse. He, however, changed Zeus’ daughters for the Heavenly Muse (the word “Heavenly” implying a Christian Muse instead of any pagan divinity). In both his Tilottamaasambhay and Meghanaadvadh, Madhusudan changed Homeric Muse for goddess Saraswatee.

Milton’s invocation is a two-stage one:

Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe.
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us. and regain the blissful seat.
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb. or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos: …
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th’ upright heart and pure.
Instruct me, for thou know’st; thou from the first
Wast present, and. with mighty wings outspread.
Dove-like sat’st brooding on the vast Abyss.
And mad’st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That. to the height of this great argument.
I may assert Eternal Providence.
And justify the ways of God to men.         (Book 1. 1 – 25)
The invocation, as we can see, requests first the Heavenly Muse and then the Holy Spirit (line 17 onwards) for inspiration and illumination. Madhusudan’s invocation in the Meghanaadvadh, too, is a two-stage one:

Sammukh samare padi, veer chudamoni
Veerabahu, chali jabey gelaa jampurey
Akaaley, kaho, he devee amritabhashini,
Kon veervarey vari senapati-padey,
Pathailaa raney punah rakshakulanidhi
Raghavaari? Ki koushaley, rakshasbharasaa
Indrajit Meghanaadey – ajeya jagatey –
Urmilaavilasi nashi, Indre nihshankilaa? ...
– Tumio aiso, devee, tumi madhukori
Kalpana! Kavir chitta-phulavana-madhu
Loye, racha madhuchakra, Goudajan jahe
Anande koribe paan sudha niravadhi. (Canto I, 1 – 32)

Madhusudan invokes goddess Saraswatee first for benediction, and then calls upon Imagination (29th-line onwards) to aid his composition of the poem. Besides this oneness of the invocations being two-staged, there is yet another point of proximity between the two poet’s invocations. Milton in the first part of his invocation prays to Heavenly Muse to sing of the “subject proper” he has undertaken to write his poem on. Madhusudan, too, in the first stage of his invocation prays to Saraswatee and requests her to sing or tell (‘kaho’) of his “subject proper”. Again, Milton knows that his poem is going to be an ‘adventurous song’ that

with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th’ Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme. (Book I, 14 – 16)
This sublimely bold aspiration of Milton to pursue ‘things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme’ is inherently present in Madhusudan’s poetic endeavour too. Madhusudan has chosen to write on and unveil the “unjust” stratagem (‘koushal’) that, he thinks, was employed to “assassinate” Meghanaada, an indomitable hero and the eldest son of Ravana, the King of Lanka. This is something that no poet or prose writer before him has attempted to compose on.

In the second part of his invocation, Milton seeks the aid and inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the composition of the poem; he almost entrusts the Holy Spirit to do it on the poet’s behalf, because he is confident that the Spirit

dost prefer
Before all temples th’ upright heart and pure  (Book 1. 17 – 18)

and that

thou know’st; thou from the first
Wast present … …

Heaven hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of Hell …  (Book 1. 19 – 27)

In the first two quoted lines. Milton tries to internalise into his poetic heart the spark of verve that the Holy Spirit would ignite. In the next two extracts, he praises and emphasizes the all-knowing aspect of the Holy Spirit and the all-ranging ken associated therewith. The aspect and ken would ensure illumination in his heart when his physical eyes are of no avail.

Similarly, Madhusudan, in the second stage of his invocation, calls upon Imagination to reside in his heart (‘chitta’) and to draw like a honey-bee the nectar from the poetic blossoms that have been blooming there – as a result of his wide readings of classical literatures of the world – and to build a honeycomb (‘madhuchakra’) brimming with the sweet honey of Bengali epic poetry. Thus, in
Madhusudan also, there is an attempt at internalising, and in his case it is his reading experience, and then coupling it with poetic verve.

In the above aspect of internalisation, we once more, come across Milton and Madhusudan as two poets of the renaissance spirit, poets who recapture classic grandeur in a new garb of poetry for the contemporary age and also for posterity. Milton does this from Homer and numerous other sources. As W. M. Dixon put it, ‘Paradise Lost is charged with references to the Bible, to the Greek Mythology, to Homer, to Plato, to Euripides, to Virgil, to Dante, to Ariosto, to Spenser’ (quoted from Shibprasad Bhattacharjee 37). Madhusudan, we have already seen (in Chapter Four and Chapter Five of the present thesis), recaptures from Homer, Virgil, Dante and Tasso, besides doing it from the Indian classical and neo-classical poets like Valmiki, Vyasa, Kalidasa and others. And, he recaptures from Milton who may be considered as the culmination of, perhaps, all epic poets that Europe could witness and nurture.

Shibprasad Bhattacharjee cites some instances of Milton’s classical allusions (37 – 38). Among them one is reproduced under:

For never since created man,
Met such imbodied force, as nam’d with these
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warr’d on by Cranes: though all the Giant brood
Of Phlegra with th’ Heroic Race were join’d
That fought at Theb’s and Ilium, on each side
Mixt with auxiliary Gods; and what resounds
In Fable or Romance of Uther’s Son
Begirt with British and Armoric Knights:
And all who since, Baptiz’d or Infidel
Joust’d in Aspramont or Montalban.
Along with this, the critic cites some from Madhusudan as well that allude to the poet’s classically or mythically fertile mind:

a) Se bhairav ravey rushi; rakshah-aneekine
Ninadila veernadey, ninaden jatha
Danavadalananee Durga danavaninadey!

(the Meghanaadvadh, Canto VII)

b) Na jani e vama-daley ke atey samarey,
Bheemaroopee, viryavatee Chamunda jemati –
Raktaveej-kula-ari? (Canto III)

c) Singha-prishthe jatha
Maheesh-mardinee Durga: Airavatey Shachi
Indrani: Khagendre Roma Upendra-ramanee,
Shobhe veeryavatee satee Badabaar pithey – (Canto III)

One may experience in the quoted lines Madhusudan’s rich inheritance of Indian mythology. This is the spirit which he imbibed in significant measure from Milton. In the words of Thomas Mann, ‘Certainly when a writer has acquired the habit of regarding life as mythical and typical, there comes a curious heightening of his artistic temper, a new refreshment to his perceiving and shaping powers, which otherwise occurs much later in life,’ (quoted from Tapodhir, Punarnirman, 105). What the novelist Mann asserted about his own artistry is equally applicable to Milton and also to Madhusudan. This typical outlook or typifying temperament of Madhusudan streamlined his amalgamation of Western and Eastern cultural elements and archetypes: evidences of which are manifest in his poetic...
experimentations ranging from invocation to imagery, from verse form to characterisation.

Besides the Meghnaadvadh, in his preceding poem the Tilottamaasambhay too, Madhusudan in several places in his invocations recaptures from the Paradise Lost. In the opening lines 1 – 6, Canto IV of the Tilottamaasambhay, Madhusudan tries to reconstruct from Milton’s invocation in Book 1 of the Paradise Lost (19 – 22; and 14 – 15). Milton’s lines were

Instruct me, for thou know’st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat’st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad’st it pregnant (19 – 22)

and

That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th’ Aonian mount … (14 – 15)

In the extracted lines, Milton builds up an image of a mighty-winged bird that, taking inspiration from the ‘dove-like … brooding’ Holy Spirit, aspires to soar very high and even above the ‘Aonian mount’ (meaning, classical Greek poetry) and thereby bring vision and glory to his poetic creation. On the other hand, Madhusudan’s lines were

Suvarna bihangi jatha, aadare vistari
Pakha, – shakra-dhanu-kanti aabhaay jaahaar
Malin, – jataney dhanee shikhaay shavakey
Udite, hey Jagadambe, ambar-pradeshe; –
Dasere koriya sangey rangey aji tumi
Bhromiyaachho nana sthaney … (1 – 6)
Madhusudan translates Milton’s expression ‘with mighty wings outspread’ into ‘aadare vistari pakha’. However, the difference between Milton and Madhusudan is that the former is about to set out on his flight above the ‘Aonian mount’, and the latter is almost done with his flight of imagination under the mothering of Saraswatee across shining celestial regions and is now ready to return to the earth.

Milton re-invents Greco-Roman and other mythologies in Paradise Lost, Book 1, 374 – 521 & 732 – 751. In the first case, he re-invents gods of the pagan or heathen origin as many of the fallen angels. Very dexterously he prepares the readers for the train of the fallen angels he is about to name and enlist, by giving some introductory message of make-belief:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{down they 'light} \\
\text{On the firm brimstone, and fill all the Plain; …} \\
\text{Forthwith from every Squadron and each Band} \\
\text{The Heads and Leaders thither haste where stood} \\
\text{Their great Commander; Godlike shapes and forms} \\
\text{Excelling human, Princely Dignities,} \\
\text{And Powers that erst in Heaven sat on Thrones;} \\
\text{Though of their Names in heav’nly Records now} \\
\text{Be no memorial, blotted out and raz’d} \\
\text{By their Rebellion, from the Books of Life.} \\
\text{Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve} \\
\text{Got them new Names, till wand’ring o’er the Earth,} \\
\text{Through God’s high sufferance for the trial of man,} \\
\text{By falsities and lies the greatest part} \\
\text{Of Mankind they corrupted to forsake} \\
\text{God their Creator, and th’ invisible} \\
\text{Glory of him, that made them, to transform} \\
\text{Oft to the Image of a Brute, adorn’d}
\end{align*}
\]
With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold,
And devils to adore for deities:
Then were they known to men by various Names.
And various Idols through the Heathen World. (349 – 375)

When he has prepared the readers’ mind by informing that in heavenly annals there are no written records of the fallen angels he is about to enlist in a catalogue, he proceeds by requesting his Muse:

Say, Muse, their Names then known, who first who last,
Rous’d from the slumber, on that fiery Couch,
At their great Emperor’s call … (376 – 378)

After that he begins his reconstruction of the “given” in the epic and the Biblical legacy. One instance may be cited for illustration:

Next Chemos, th’ obscene dread of Moab’s Sons.
From Aroer to Nebo, and the wild
Of Southmost Abarim; in Hesebon
And Horonaim, Seon’s Realm, beyond
The flow’ry Dale of Sibma clad with Vines,
And Eleale to th’ Asphaltic Pool.
Peor his other Name, when he entic’d
Israel in Sittim on their march from Nile
To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.
Yet thence his lustful Orgies he enlarg’d
Even to that Hill of scandal, by the Grove
Of Moloch homicide, lust hard by hate;
Till good Josiah drove them thence to Hell. (406 – 418)
In the above extract, Milton diligently picks up the Biblical thread of Josiah and his reforms and entwines with it the suggestive account of Josiah’s grandfather Manasseh adapting the Temple of idolatrous worship. Since no reference to Josiah exists in surviving texts of Egypt of the period 641/640 BC to 610/609 BC, and no archaeological evidence, such as inscriptions bearing his name, has been found, Milton’s only source, we can conclude, was the Bible; and after that he builds upon it to re-invent the story of Chemos as one of the fallen angels.

Madhusudan must have felt an artistic lineage of freedom to Milton in this regard, which resulted into his re-inventing characters of Indian Purana-s in the light of modernity, occidental mythology, and contemporary consciousness. Thus, Shiva and Parvati were remodeled on Greek Zeus and Hera, Skanda on Ares, and so on. One of the major reasons behind so happening was Milton’s irresistible and inspiring influence on Madhusudan.

In a dateless letter (already mentioned in the present chapter once) to Raj Narain – a letter which must have been written after the publication of the first part of Meghnaadvadh containing the first five books or cantos – Madhusudan elucidated on his rating of Milton’s greatness. There he wrote that he did not consider it impossible ‘to equal Virgil, Kalidasa and Tasso,’ but that ‘nothing can be better than Milton’. Whereas he designated Virgil, Kalidasa and Tasso as glorious but ‘mortal poets’; he described Milton as ‘divine’ (Ghosh, Ajit Kr. et al (Eds.) 326). His admiring response to Milton, thus, indicates his indebtedness to his master in the varied spheres of his creative art, and particularly on the level of inspiration.

Milton, as mentioned earlier, re-invents the “given”, again, in Book 1. 732 – 751. In this case, he restructures the traditional belief regarding the Roman divine artisan Mulciber’s fall from heavenly position. Milton, of course, had
before him exemplary Dante who had done something similar in his *Divine Comedy*.

Among many situational parallels that Madhusudan established with Milton’s epic, one most obvious is found in the *Tilottamaasambhav*, Canto IV, 244 – 269, where Tilottamaa had become narcissus at her own beauty reflected in water. In the *Paradise Lost*, Book 4, 449 – 469, Eve had become spellbound with her own image in water. Milton’s lines are as follows:

That day I oft remember, when from sleep  
I first awak’t and found myself repos’d  
Under a shade on flow’rs, much wond’ring where  
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how.  
Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound  
Of waters issu’d from a Cave and spread  
Into a liquid Plain, then stood unmov’d  
Pure as th’ expanse of Heav’n; 1 thither went  
With unexperienc’t thought, and laid me down  
On the green bank. to look into the clear  
Smooth Lake, that to me seem’d another Sky. (449 – 459)

In the extracted lines, Eve relates to Adam her discovering herself as a being in the Garden of Eden. The pristine environ is depicted with deft touches by the poet. In the *Tilottamaasambhav*, Tilottamaa roams about in the pleasure garden of gods now usurped by the two demon brothers Sunda and Upasunda. and as though blossoms as the queen of beauty, the cynosure there, commanding unawares reverence and wonderment from the objects of nature around and even from the presiding deity of that garden:
Having roamed awhile, Tilottamaa comes near a lake of crystal clear water: she feels tired after her wanderings, and wishes to rest awhile on its banks. After some time she looks onto the lake water and discovers her image reflected there: she does not realise it to be her own image though. Immediately she is mesmerised by the beauty of that image. In the *Paradise Lost*, Eve, as an absolutely innocent woman, is startled by her own image reflected in the Lake water in the Garden of Eden:

As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A Shape within the wat’ry gleam appear’d
Bending to look on me, I started back.
It started back, but pleas’d I soon return’d.
Pleas’d it return’d as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love, there I had fixt
Mine eyes till now, and pin’d with vain desire,
I had not a voice thus warn’d me, ‘What thou seest.
What there thou seest fair Creature is thyself.
With thee it came and goes … (Book 4, 460 – 469)
We note that her narcissus trance is broken by the voice of someone unseen informing her of the reality of the image and its movements. Madhusudan reconstructs this section from Milton in his own artistic way to produce the following lines:

Kshanakaal bosvama chahi sara paney
Aapan pratima heri – bhranti-maidey mati,
Ekdrishtey taar dikey chahitey lagila
Vivashe. “E heno roop” – kohila roopasi
Mridu swarey – “Kaaro aankhi dekhechhe ki kobhu? …
kaar tulanaa e lalanaar saha
Saajey? Ichchha karey, mori, kaay mana diya
Kinkori hoiya or sevi paa dukhani!
Bujhi e vaner devee. – morey daya kori
Dayamoyi – jala-taleey darashan dila.” (247 – 260)

And again,

Etek kohiya dhani omni uthiya
Namaailaa shir – jeno pujar vidhane.
Pratimurti prati; seo shir namaailo!
Vismay maniya vama kritaanjaliputey
Mridu swarey sudhila – “Ke tumi. hey ramani?”
Aachamvitey “Ke tumi? Ke tumi. hey ramani –
Hey ramani?” ei dhwani baajilo kaananey!
Maha bhaye bhitaa duti chamaki chahila
Chari dikey … (261 – 269)

Madhusudan’s Indianisation necessitates for him to bring in more details than Milton had used. It also provides him the opportunity to differentiate Tilottamaa from Eve. Before watching her own image, Eve had seen none. But
Tilottamaa has seen Indra, Sachi, Vishwakarma, Ananga, many other deities, celestial soldiers, etc. Tilottamaa, therefore, has some experience to compare with the image she discovers in water. And unlike an unseen and unknown voice that had made known to Eve the reality of the image in water, it is the voice of Ananga who comes and stands before her that wakes her up from her fear and daydream:

\[
\text{hena kaaley haasi sakoutukey} \\
\text{… Rati-bandhu aasi dekha dila.} \\
\text{“Kaharey daraao tumi, bhuvan-mohini?”} \\
(\text{Kohilen Pushpadhanu}) \text{“… dekhichho je vama-murti jaley.} \\
\text{Tomari pratima, dhani; oi madhudhwani,} \\
\text{Tava dhwani pratidhwani shikhi ninadichhe! ...”} (269 – 276)
\]

On another occasion, Madhusudan made a close translation of Miltonic lines. In Canto III. Pavana during his aerial sojourn to the end of the world to North Pole, where Vishwakarma’s palace was located at a mountaneous region beyond the sea of darkness, saw Yamapuree lurking below. At the sight of hellfire and torturous punishments of the Yamapuree, Pavana from above felt in mind that

\[
\text{Haay re, je asha asi toshe sarvajaney} \\
\text{Jagatey. e duranta Antakpurey gati-} \\
\text{Rodh taar!} \quad (415 – 417)
\]

Pavana felt that \text{asha} (hope) that came to all and comforted, was forbidden to enter that Antakpur (the house of Antak or Yama). The quoted lines immediately remind us of Milton’s famous construction, ‘…hope never comes / That comes to all,’ (Book 1, 66 – 67)

Among stray parallels that Madhusudan established with Milton’s \text{Paradise Lost}, one may be mentioned from the \text{Meghnaadvadh}. He reconstructed Milton’s description of Satan’s flight up from the hellish lake of fire and through the dusky
...air on to the bank of the lake (Book 1) in his own descriptions in 80 – 84 and 482 – 484, Canto VII of the Meghanaadvadh. There Veerbhadrta may be seen flying – at the command of Shiva – to Lanka and Ravana in order to instill rudrateja (Shiva’s own energy) in him and thus enable him to recover from the shock of his son Meghanaada’s death. Interestingly, Madhusudan changed the hellish atmosphere permeating Milton’s description for a sombre one which would better suit Veerbhadrta’s task of acquainting Ravana with the news of Meghanaada’s death.

Among more evocative parallels, we may go to Meghanaadvadh, Canto III, where Pramila and Meghanaada are together and engaged in frolic and entertainment watching and listening to dance and singing, and are blissfully unaware of the approaching doom – doom that would end their conjugal life by bringing an end to Meghanaada:

swarnaasaney basila dampati.

Gailo gayak-dal; nachilo nartaki: …

bhuli nij duhkha, pinjar-majhare.

Gaay pakhi … (543 – 547)

The image of a bird that, forgetting its encaged and thus vulnerable state, sings out happy and tuneful songs, very subtly suggests the approach of possible sadness in the bird’s life, that is, in the couple’s happy life after fresh reunion. Shortly after their nighttime entertainment, the couple retires to their bedchamber. This we make out from Canto V, where we see Meghanaada waking up at dawn, beside his peacefully sleeping wife. Sadly, this would remain their last night spent in togetherness.

Milton also, as Ujjwal Kumar Majumdar points out, gave a premonition of the coming tragedy in the life of Adam and Eve by comparing Eve with Pandora (Paschatya Prabhav 83). The lines are quoted below:
Here in close recess
With Flowers, Garlands, and sweet-smelling Herbs
And heav’ly Choirs and Hymeneal sung,
What day the genial Angel to our Sire
Brought her in naked beauty more adorn’d,
More lovely than Pandora, whom the Gods
Endow’d with all their gifts, and O too like
In sad event, when to the unwise Son
Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnar’d
Mankind with her fair looks, to be aveng’d
On him who had stole Jove’s authentic fire.

(Book 4, 708 – 719)

Moreover, Milton also employed an atmosphere of songs and music through mention of ‘heav’nly Choirs’ and ‘Hymeneal sung’. As we have seen, Madhusudan as well took to similar recourse.

Another prominent reconstruction by Madhusudan is from Book 5 of \textit{Paradise Lost} where Adam awakens Eve at dawn:

he on his side
Leaning half-rais’d, with looks of cordial Love
Hung over her enamour’d, and beheld
Beauty, which whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar Graces; then with voice
Mild, as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whisper’d thus. “Awake
My fairest, my espous’d, my latest found,
Heav’n’s last best gift, my ever-new delight.
Awake, the morning shines, and the fresh field
Calls us, …” (11 – 21)
In the Meghanaadvadh, Canto V, Meghanaada, in a similar fashion, wakes up at dawn in his bedchamber and finds Pramila, his wife, still asleep beside him. Then he wakes her up with loving caresses:

Jagila veer-kunjar kunjavana-geetey.
Pramilar karapadma karapadmey dhari
Rathindra, madhur sware, haay re, jemati
Nalinir kaaney ali kahey gunjariya
Premer rahasya katha, kohila (aadarey
Chumbi nimilita aankhi) “Dakichhe koojaney,
Haimavati Usha tumi, roopasi, tomarey
Pakhi-kul! Mila, priye, kamal-lochan!
Utha, chiraananda mor! Suryakantamonii-
Sama e paraan, kaantaa; tumi ravichchhavi; –
Tejoheen ami tumi mudile nayan. …
Uthi dekho, shashimukhi, kemone phutichhe.
Churi kori kaanti tava manju kunjavane
Kusum!” … (372 – 387)

When we read both the extracts, we immediately spot how Madhusudan has reproduced ‘my ever-new delight / Awake’ as ‘Utha, chiraananda mor’. or how he has replaced ‘Zephyrus’ with bee (‘ali’) and thus has Indianised the context, and has also brought in warm amorous whispers of love (‘premer rahasya katha’) in place of mere breathing of the Zephyrus; moreover, how he has chosen the more particular expression ‘pakhi-kul’ (birds) instead of Milton’s more generalised ‘fresh field’ that gives the call to be awake in the morning. Besides, we note that Madhusudan has also transformed Adam’s ‘enamour’d’ beholding of Eve’s dishevelled beauty (‘Tresses discompos’d, and glowing cheek’ [10]) into a much milder and cooler love-talk of Meghanaada for peaceful Pramila to be awakened. (Eve had a disturbed sleep because of Satan’s ‘assaying by his Devillish art to
reach / The Organs of her Fancy’ through her ear. But Pramila had a peaceful sleep after moments of fulfillment in conjugal love.) But, what perhaps matters more than all these things, is Madhusudan’s recapturing of the atmosphere of beauty and love as portrayed by Milton, of a sense of magical entirety that Milton perhaps breathed through his lines describing Adam and Eve waking up one after another.

There is at times a kind of telescoping in Madhusudan’s use of epic similes. He sometimes brought up, for comparison and description, an event of a later Puranic or historical period and juxtaposed it with the event at hand. Such a practice is in accordance with Miltonic telescoping. Milton, for example, compares, in Book 1 of Paradise Lost, Satan’s shield to the circumference of the ‘Moon’ as viewed by Galileo through his telescope:

his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views
At Ev’ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or mountains in her spotty Globe. (284 – 291)

Chronologically Galileo ‘the Tuscan artist’ belongs to a much later period in human history (1564 to be precise) than the period of creation of Biblical history or saga. With his famous construction, his telescope, he used to observe the surface of the moon. His ‘Optic Glass’, thus, gave him a bigger look of the circumference of the satellite of the earth. But, Milton the epic poet finds it suggestively expansive to bring up Galileo’s enlarged view of the moon for comparison with the ‘broad’ shield of Satan who belongs to an earlier time zone.
Madhusudan, in a similar vein, employs telescoping in his epic poems. In the first canto of *Meghanaadvadh*, for instance, he compares the royal court of Ravana with the one built by Moy, the demon artisan, at Indraprastha in the Dwapar age, for the Pandavas, only to suggest the magnificence and superiority of the former. Again, in the same canto, he compares Veerabahu with Ghatotkach:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Padiyachhe Veerabahu – veer chudamoni,} \\
\text{Chapi ripuchay balee, padechhilo jathaa} \\
\text{Hidimbaar snehaneedey palita Garuda} \\
\text{Ghatotkach, jabey Karna, kaalprishthadhaari.} \\
\text{Edila ekaghni vaan rakshitey Kouravey.} \quad (264 – 268)
\end{align*}
\]

By Puranic chronology, the age of Treta (when Ravana reigned in Lanka) comes earlier than that of Dwapar. But, for poetic convenience, Madhusudan telescopes the two courts and the two heroes lying dead pressing upon enemy soldiers, as though they belong to the reverse chronological order, or to the one and the same time zone.

Milton’s influence on Madhusudan on the level of verbal wit is remarkable indeed. Just as Milton used Latin syntax in his epic, Madhusudan used English syntax, along with Bengali, in all three of his epic poems. Since he constructed his *amittrakshar* out of English blank verse of Milton, one may discover in many places in his epic poetry, inversion of the syntax, use of parenthesis, dash, etc. Through Milton he assimilated some aspects of Italian legacy of Tasso as well (Ujjwal Kumar, *Paschatya Prabhav*, 90).

There are numerous examples of English word order in Madhusudan. Ujjwal Kumar has cited a number of them (90).
a) Jemati, maatah basila aasiya,
   Valmikir rasanaay (padmaasaney jeno)
   Jabey kharatara sharey, gahana kananey
   Krounchavadhusaha krounchey nisliad bindhila,
   Temati daserey, aasi, daya karo sati!  (Canto I, 11 – 15)

b) Kahiyo, jekhaney taar ranga paa dukhani
   Rakhiten shashimukhi basi padmaasaney,
   Sekhaney photey e phul, je abadhi tini,
   Andhari jaladhigriha, giyachhen grihey.  (Canto I, 479 – 482)

c) Kintu, bheve dekho, veer, je vidyut chhataa
   Ramey aankhi, marey nara, taahaar parashey.
   (Canto III, 243 – 244)

Among the above three examples, the first one also includes Madhusudan’s use of parenthesis, dooraamvay (agreement among far removed parts of speech, phrases and clauses; and so, creation of agreement among specific parts of an out-of-sequence construction), etc.

Wherever there was room for simile or metaphor, Madhusudan expressed it as an English clause (90 – 91). For example:

i) Dwirad-rada nirmita grihadwar diya
   Bahirila suhasini, meghavrita jeno
   Usha!  (Canto II, 366 – 368)

ii) Haay, devee, jathaa vaney vayu
   Praval, shimul shimbi, phutaile baley.
   Udi jaay tularashi, e vipul-kul-
   Shekhar rakshas jata padichhe temati
   E kaal samarey.  (Canto I, 369 – 373)
In the above extracts, the clauses ‘meghavrita jeno / Usha’ in (i) and ‘jathaa vaney vayu / Praval, shimul shimbi, phutaile baley, / Udi jay tularashi’ in (ii) express respectively a metaphor and a simile.

Like his poetic ideal Milton, Madhusudan performed what is called inversion of the syntax, and succeeded in making the feeling of his poetic lines undulate, sometimes stagnate and sometimes surge forward.

Since Madhusudan wrote his epic poems in Miltonic blank verse, i.e. run-on *payaar* lines without end-rhymes, he preferred to use *jamak, anupras* etc. – though these poetic tools of the ancients were no longer in the good book of the English-bred Bengali intellectuals – and to make them work as internal rhymes. He thought this necessary to make amends for the Bengali readers’ ear, habituated with end-stopped rhymed lines of *payaar*. Ujjwal Kumar has cited some examples of these internal rhymes as well:

a) Veer putra dhatri e kanak puree.
   Dekho veershoonya ebeey; nidaghey jemati
   Phulshoonya vanasthali, jalshoonya nadee!
   Barajey sajaaru poshi baruir jatha
   Chhinna bhinna karey tarey, Dasharathaatmaja
   Majaachhe Lanka mor!(l. 360 – 365)

b) Ki karaney, kahalo sajani.
   Sahasaa Jalesh Paashi asthir hoila?
   Dekh. tharthar kori kaanpe muktamoyee
   Grihachooda. Punah bujhi dushta vayukul
   Jujhitey tarangachay-sangey dilo dekha. (l. 451 – 455)

c) Aasheeshila Dasharatha dasharathi shoorey:
Pitri-padadhooli putra loibar aashe.
Arpila charanpadme karapadma; – vritha! (VIII, 799 – 801)

[Paschatya Prabhav 91]

Milton’s word music had a lasting effect in Madhusudan’s poetry, especially epic poetry. As Ujjwal Kumar mentions, Madhusudan has acquired and assimilated through English, especially through that of Milton, various linguistic features of the Italian language. In fact, Milton, following Tasso, endeavoured to bring into his ever sonorous language, diverse play of words, so to say of word music [translation mine] (Paschatya Prabhav 92). Madhusudan’s own comment on Milton’s poetry is worth remembering here: “We hear the sound of his ethereal voice with awe and trembling. His is the deep roar of a lion in the silent solitude of the forest (Ghosh, Ajit Kumar et al (Eds.), Letter no. 83. 329).

What is more important to realise, both Milton and Madhusudan employed novel word order or inversion of word order not to compensate for end rhymes or to create internal rhymes alone, but also, perhaps, to uplift their poetry from the monotony of epic grandeur and gravity [translation mine] (Ujjwal Kumar. Paschatya Prabhav. 92).

In his book entitled The Italian Element in Miltonic Verse, F. T. Prince has written about Milton’s tendency for word music and inversion of word order:

In Milton’s epic poetry there is an incessant, sometimes obtrusive, activity of mind at the level of verbal wit: there is play upon words, sometimes in puns, sometimes in emphasizing the jingling qualities of words of different or kindred meaning, sometimes in twisting grotesquely ingenious complexities of syntax. These freaks of fancy are combined with a remorseless chopping of logic, above all in speeches, which has a similar effect. The effect is, above all, to compensate for the somewhat stupefying power of the “magnificent” diction, to add possibilities to a technique of
which one of the chief dangers is monotony. The play upon words and the
metaphysical or logical conceits are not indeed alien to the epic style. for
ingenuity is here omnipresent in one form or another, it is present in the
artificial word-order and in the music of the verse no less than in the
assiduous search for what is astounding in thought and image and
emotion.(123 – 124)

Examples of what Prince talks about may be cited from different Books of
Paradise Lost:

a) hope never comes
   That comes to all (Book 1. 66 – 67)
b) a fiery Deluge, fed
   With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum’d (Book 1. 68 – 69)
c) into what Pit thou seest
   From what heighth fall’n (Book 1. 91 – 92)
d) Which tempted our attempt, and wrought our fall (Book 1. 642)
e) him who disobey
   Mee disobeys (Book 5. 611 – 612)
f) Thoughts, which how found they harbour in thy breast.
   Adam, mislought of her to thee so dear? (Book 9. 288 – 289)
g) Serpent, we might have spar’d our coming hither.
   Fruitless to me, though Fruit be here to excess. (Book 9. 647 – 648)

Milton’s master Tasso as well exhibited such tendency for verbal wit:

(i) But of the plants once more who speaks not the plaint.
   (Mondo Careato. Giornata Terza)

(ii) Not avarice, nor infamous famishment for gold
   (Mondo Careato. Giornata Terza)
When we look at Madhusudan, we discover a similar play on the level of verbal wit:

a) padatik-vraja,
   Kanak-shiraska shirey, bhaskar pidhaney
   Asivar, prishthe charma abhedya samarey,
   Hastey shool, shaalvriksha abhrabhedi jatha,
   Aayasi-avrita deha, ailo katorey.  (Canto I, 426 – 430)

b) Niskoshiya tejaskar asi  (Canto V, 212)
c) Kad kad kadey vajra padilo bhutaley  (Canto V, 241)
d) padilo rakshonarakularathi;
   Padilo kunjarpunja, nikunjey jemati
   Patra prabhanjan baley.  (Canto VII, 522 – 524)

Again, Madhusudan also has the tendency, following Milton, of manoeuvring to keep the meaning of a verse line suspended or incomplete to the utmost extent possible and thereby get descriptive words or adjectives to express the desired suggestive meaning. F. T. Prince further comments on Milton’s diction and sentence construction:

... the sense of the statement is suspended or interrupted. A quite direct, simple or logical order of words is avoided in order to provide one in which the completion of the statement is either postponed or anticipated. (126 – 127)

Instances may be sought for in the Paradise Lost:

(i) but torture without end
    Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed
    With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum’d  (Book I. 67 – 69)

(ii) his gestures fierce
He mark’d and mad demeanour, then alone
(Book 4, 128 – 129)

(iii) others on the grass
Coucht, and now field with pasture grazing sat.
Or, Bedward ruminating. (Book 4, 350 – 352)

(iv) From thence a Rib, with cordial spirits Warme.
And Life-blood streaming fresh. (Book 8. 457 – 458)

In Madhusudan as well we find such suspending of sense of the verse line, either
by placing of the adjective after the noun, or by placing of the second adjective
after the noun (Ujjwal Kumar, Passchatya Prabhav, 94). Examples are:

(a) Katadoorey yamapuree
    Bhayankari dekhilen bheem sadaagati
    (Tilottamaasambhav, Canto III. 390 – 391)

(b) Mahavegey dui bhai dhaila sakaashey
    Vivash
    (Tilottamaasambhav, Canto IV, 455 – 456)

(c) Dhwajadhar balee
    Melila ketanvar, rataney khachita
    Vistariya pakha jeno udila Garud
    Ambarey. (Meghanaadvadh, Canto I, 436 – 439)

(d) Jani ami Vibheeshan upakari mama
    Parama. (Meghanaadvadh, Canto IV, 515 – 516)

(e) Vidyalabh-hetu jabey basitey, sumati.
    Gurupadey: grihakarma bhuli papiyasi
    Ami, antaraley basi shunitam sukhey
    O madhur swar, sakhey, chira-madhu-makha!
But, having discussed all, it should also be said that Madhusudan’s indebtedness to Milton is profounder in the creation of amitrakshar.

In a letter to Raj Narain, dated July 1st, 1860, Madhusudan wrote:

You want me to explain my system of versification for the conversion of your skeptical friends. I am sure there is very little in the system to explain; our language, as regards the doctrine of accent and quantity, is an “apostate” … If your friends know English, let them read the Paradise-Lost, and they will find how the verse, in which the Bengali poetaster writes, is constructed. … Let your friends guide their voices by the pause (as an English Blank-verse) and they will soon swear that this is the noblest measure in the language. My advice is Read, Read. Read. Teach your ears the new tune and then you will find out what it is. (Ghosh, Ajit Kumar et al (Eds.) 308)

Madhusudan’s categorical advice for the skeptical enthusiasts to read Milton’s Paradise Lost points to or at least suggests the degree of his indebtedness to Milton’s blank verse.

Mohitlal Mazumdar has elucidated at length on Madhusudan’s amitrakshar. He has been an authority on Madhusudan and his artistic works and technicalities. Despite disagreements on several grounds, critics and scholars like Kshetra Gupta, Ujjwal Kumar Majumdar, and many others have often referred to what he has to say on intricacies and subtleties of Madhusudan’s poetry. Given below is his explanation of the poet’s blank verse formulated in Bengali:

Being a Bengali of those years (those olden days), Madhusudan had one great advantage: he read the poetical works of Krittivasa, Kashidasa, Mukundaram, etc. in his very childhood and thus could not only master
pure Bengali but even could get his ears accustomed to its rhythm. He must have closely noticed the artistic advancement the same Bengali language and rhythm then made in the poetry of Bharatchandra. Practically, he adopted his poetic feet from the poetry of Kritivas and Kashidasa; from Bharatchandra he acquired a subtle and suggestive understanding of the role of Bengali syntax in Bengali rhythm. That fourteen-syllable line \( \textit{payaar} \), a somewhat elegant and refined style of language, and some hints of syntax in rhythm – that much alone he could find and receive from his poet-predecessors; and with that much alone he dared to create blank verse (\textit{amitrakshar}) in Bengali. [Translation mine] (Bangla Kavitar Chhanda 88)

The aforesaid commentary of Mohitlal clearly points to the fact that Madhusudan more or less had to be on his own as far as creation of Bengali blank verse was concerned. From his poet-predecessors, he did not get much to improve upon, except the ready-reckoned \textit{payaar}, some hints of Bengali syntax in Bengali rhythm, and a somewhat polished and noble style of language. They did not provide him with the grandeur and sonority he required in his verse form for rendering it befitting for his elevated epical compositions.

Madhusudan, as we have already seen, did not say much about his techniques of construction of his \textit{amitrakshar}. Mohitlal nevertheless asserts that there is no doubt about Madhusudan’s having constructed his Bengali blank verse in the ideal of Milton’s English one. But then he poses the question as to how it became possible, since one rarely gets an instant of the like where a Bengali poet searches for his ideal of versification in English poetry [translation mine] (Bangla Kavitar Chhanda 88 – 89).

Mohitlal studies both Milton’s verse form (especially the one used in the \textit{Paradise Lost}) and Bengali \textit{payaar} that Madhusudan transformed into \textit{amitrakshar}. He finds:
Milton’s five stress line understandably resembles to a great extent the Bengali *payaar* in its measure. But one wonders as to what affinity there can be between five numbers of stresses of the former and a monotonously drawn cadence of the latter. But Madhusudan was not deterred by that. Brushing aside all scruples of a skeptic like Jotindra Mohan Tagore, he is reported to have said, that what had not been possible even in a language like French, that blank verse would be possible in Bengali since there was the rich legacy of Sanskrit standing like a mother (or grandmother) behind Bengali; and even better and highly rewarding it would be if in the process of inventing a new verse form in Bengali, the language itself got enriched with sublime and sonorous words culled from Sanskrit. But the question is: how was the five-stress line of English rhythm to be imported into Bengali?

[Trans. mine] (Bangla Kavitar Chhanda 89)

Mohitlal comments that that measure of Bengali rhythm proved very useful for Madhusudan’s purpose; that the measure probably was a great source of faith and confidence of the poet. He further elucidates on Milton’s blank verse and its difference from a Bengali verse line of *payaar*:

The ten syllables forming an English [and therefore a Miltonic] blank verse line, are not exactly conforming to the *varnamatrik* (letter-oriented) *akshara* (metrical units) of a Bengali verse [*payaar*] line; – because of the stress that occurs almost at every other syllable of it, its length based on metrical time would be a little more than what our *payaar* is. [Trans. mine] (Bangla Kavitar Chhanda 89)

In the above quoted lines, Mohitlal is trying to point out that Miltonic blank verse was not a metre for Madhusudan to readily apply as his *amitrokshar*. Milton’s contribution in Madhusudan’s invention, hence, needs to be traced at
another level. Mohitlal’s next comments may be seen as a background screen against which we may trace the needful here.

According to Mohitlal, Madhusudan took the fourteen-lettered metre of payaar as the basis for his rhythm of blank verse of run-on lines to move and surge forward in waves of varying intensity, rumbling sonority, pace, pause or caesura, break, etc.; but that measure was a major factor; overflowing the shore of that fourteen-letter measure, the current that flows on is none other than the surging waves of rhythm. But, the rhythm has to bend with the shoreline in order to flow unhindered. That is the greatest secret of this rhythm or verse form … [translation mine] (Bangla Kavitar Chhanda 89).

Ujjwal Kumar Majumdar makes some significant point: that Madhusudan adopted Milton’s ideal of run on verse rhythm which would be rigorously bound and contained within the flow (Paschatya Prabhav 96).

Milton, while perfecting his unique grand style of blank verse, had before him masters like Marlow, Shakespeare, etc.; similarly, the Bengali poet Madhusudan had before him his master Milton (Mohitlal, Bangla Kavitar Chhanda, 88).

Shakespeare’s use of blank verse in a liberal division of verse lines became much transformed in Milton’s hand as it was now contained and well-bound in Miltonic rigorousness of poetic discipline and balance. Besides, the way Milton weaved into his verse paragraphs the grand verse lines of unequal metrical time or caesura, was something that greatly sustained his verse and rhythm. This was Madhusudan’s ideal too. [Translation mine] (Ujjwal Kumar, Paschatya Prabhav, 96)

Madhusudan, ofcourse, had his own standpoint to make in regard of his verse form:
The verse is what in English we would call, “Alexandrine” i.e. containing 6 feet. The longest verse in our language is 7 footed payaar [italics mine] – but that is, like the Greek and Roman Hexameter, too long and pompous for dramatic purposes. The Greek and Latin dramas are not written in Hexameter. Our 7 footed verse is our “heroic” measure.

In the aforementioned extract from one of his letters, Madhusudan may actually be seen to be formulating and theorising for not only his own epic poetry but even for prospective poetical creations in Bengali in near future. And he may, again, be seen to be theorising in and continuing the Miltonic line of composing longer version of the poetic art, the epical. That his theory did not receive considerable practice in the hands of his successors is a matter altogether different.

Milton applied breathtaking changes in the much used iambic pentametre – a metre that, by rule, consists of five disyllabic feet where each foot has one slack syllable followed by one stressed – and provided the readers a thitherto unknown word music with shift of weight or stress from usual places or syllables and in the process achieved a subtle suggestiveness in his poetry. One example from the Paradise Lost would make the point clearer:

For he, be sure,
In heighth or depth, still first and last will Reign
Sole King... (Book 2, 323 – 325)

Beelzebub, Satan’s henchman (next to him in status and intimate proximity), is the speaker of the quoted lines. In the great consultation he speaks of God’s supreme power and reign. His speech happens to fall just after three preceding ones from Moloch, Belial and Mammon – speeches that considered and debated about the various prospects available before the fallen angels to continue their life henceforward and also to keep up their opposition against God. Moloch’s forceful suggestion for ‘open war’ and Belial’s seemingly wise counsel for peace
('peaceful sloth' in fact) did not convince the assembly up to the expectation of the two speakers. Mammon's speech fared much better and won resounding applauses from all around the assembly in Pandemonium. His opinion was for neither open war nor inaction, but for establishment of a new kingdom in Hell away from and independent of the ruler of Heaven. But, Beelzebub, who perhaps has better insights of his leader Satan's heartstrings, realises the situation and tries to maintain status quo for Satan's sway and leadership over all others in Hell. He, therefore, reminds the assembly of God's supremacy. Milton provides his Beelzebub with such beat or rhythmic effect of syllables that goes on building up a regular pattern of drumming into earshot and then suddenly changes the pattern with two consecutive similar drum-strokes as though to clinch the message home for all hearers. The regular iambic pentametre strokes of slack-n-stress are suddenly overruled or improvised in the two words 'Sole King': where the strokes sing stress-stress (along with the two capitalisations for the readers — "S" and "K") and emphasize through their audibility the inherent message of the speaker as well as of the poet.

Madhusudan, in a similar manner, constructed his *amitrakshar* with a great deal of alterations brought about in the usual *payaar* metre. He did not have the advantage of a stress-based English metre as seen in the aforementioned example. But he made amendments for his disadvantage and indeed fared well. First of all, he dispensed with the practice of end rhyme in coupling lines associated with *payaar* and thus achieved the namesake "amitrakshar" which means unrhyming. By doing so, he followed Milton's footsteps: the latter had made his declaration on the verse used in the *Paradise Lost*:

The Measure is English Heroic Verse without Rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin; Rhyme being no necessary Adjunct or true Ornament of Poem or good Verse, in longer Works especially, but the Invention of a barbarous Age, to set off wretched matter and lame Meter:
grac’t indeed since by the use of some famous modern Poets, carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have exprest them. Not without some cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish Poets of prime note have rejected Rhyme both in longer and shorter Works, as have also long since our best English Tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight: which consists only in apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoided by the learned Ancients both in Poetry and all good Oratory. This neglect then of Rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so, perhaps to vulgar Readers. that it rather is to be esteem’d an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recover’d to Heroic Poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of Rhyming.

Milton had added the above declaration to his *Paradise Lost* in 1668. Madhusudan. in the wake of Milton, set his verse free of the bondage and constraints of rhyming. He even tried, and succeeded on many occasions, to alter the usual “eight + six” division prevalent in a *payaar* line. Instances may be cited:

a) Vishwopaantey timira-sagara-teerey sada
   Baso tumi, nahi jano Swarger durdashaa!
   (the *Tilottamaasambhav*, III, 474 – 475)

b) Til Til loiya gadilaa sundareerey
   Dev-shilpi, tei naam rakho Tilottamaa.  (III, 637 – 638)

c) Shiver mandirey ebe ranee Mandodaree.
   Yuvaraj! Tomar mangal-hetu tini
   Anidraay, anahaarey poojen Umeshe!
   (the *Meghanaadvadh*, V, 433 – 435)
Thus, Madhusudan set himself not only as a follower of Milton but found himself a niche in the great Greco-Roman tradition of Epic poetry (of which we find mention in Milton’s aforementioned declaration) just as in the tradition of Sanskrit epic legacy.

Moreover, his indebtedness to Milton’s technique of creating music with ‘apt Numbers, fit quantity of Syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one Verse into another’ is evident in his manner of composing the verse paragraphs of his epic poems, as we have already seen in the present chapter.

But, the most compelling and interesting reconstruction that Madhusudan effected out of Milton’s Paradise Lost, is probably the characterisation of his protagonist (or, should we say antagonist?) in the Meghanaadvadh, Ravana.

Both Milton and Madhusudan were creators of immortal characters. Milton created Satan; Madhusudan created Ravana. There is a surprising resemblance between the two characters. Both evoke heroism; both are indomitable in spirit. But, both feel agonised at shattering of dreams.

Ravana is Madhusudan’s ‘grand fellow’ who tries to take the attack to the enemy camp; despite continual defeat in war against Rama’s army, he is unshaken in determination. Satan is the undisputed lord of the first two books of Paradise Lost and stands towering over others in Hell. Both have their blemishes. Though Milton glorified Satan, he recurrently pointed to his faults; and finally proved his
pride as hollow. Through dialogues of other characters – such as Chitrangada, Lakshmee, Shiva, Sarama, Vibheeshana, etc. – Madhusudan revealed Ravana’s grievous faults. To use Aristotle’s terminology, there is tragic flaw in both Ravana and Satan. Because of their tragic flaw, they are unable to see truth or stand face to face before actuality. They are, therefore, guilty of self pity and self deceiving. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are enemy to themselves and self-destructive in tendency.

The discrepancy that we usually perceive in Milton’s Satan, as far as glorification of the character is concerned, can be discovered to some extent in Madhusudan’s Ravana. In Books I and II of his epic, Milton gives Satan a stature quite astounding. However, by the time we reach Book IV and then move on to Book V, that “magnificence” of character slowly but progressively crumbles down. Madhusudan allows himself his share of freedom in portraying Ravana as a ‘grand fellow’. But, following suit after his master Milton, he undercuts this grandeur here and there – occasionally – with taunting remarks which point to Ravana’s essential faults or flaws of character. The following is one such example where Seeta describes her own abduction by Ravana. Jatayu was one of those who opposed Ravana and fought to prevent him from abducting Seeta. Jatayu begins his opposition with this invective:

Chor tui. Lanka-r Ravana.
Kon kulabadhu aaji harili. durmati?
Kaar ghar aandhaarili nibaiya ebe
Prem-deap? Ei tor nitya karma. jaani. (Canto IV. 422 – 425)

Jatayu not only calls Ravana a thief but even surmises that such acts are but his daily lustful indulgences.

It is not only an outsider like Jatayu who inveighs against Ravana’s calumny; even his own second wife, Chitraangadaa, takes him to task as she
unveils the cause of her son Veerabahu’s untimely death and also the reason behind Rama’s invasion of Lanka and the subsequent misfortunes of the city and its citizens:

bhebe dekho. nath. kotha Lanka taba:
Kotha she Ajodhya-puree? Kiser kaarane.
Kon lobe. kaho raja, esechhe e deshe
Raaghava? E swarna-lanka debendrabanchhita,
atul bhavamandale; ihar choudike
rajata-pracheer sama shobhen jaladhi.
Shunechhi sarajuteere basati tahar –
Khudra nara. Taba hoimasinghaasana-aashe
Jujhichhe ki daasharathi? Baamana hoiya
Ke chahe dhorite chande? Tabe deshripu
Keno tare balo. bali? Kaakodar sadaa
Namrashir; kintu tare prohaaraye jadi
Kecho. oordha-phanaa phanee dangshe prohaarake.
Ke. kaho. e kaal-agni jvaaliyachhe aaji
Lankapure? Haay. nath. nija karma-phale.
Majaale raakkhaskule, mojila aaponi! (Canto I. 390 – 405)

Chitraangadaa, too, unmistakingly suggests towards Ravana’s act of abduction as the root cause of Rama’s invasion and siege of Lanka. of Veerabahu’s sad end and of the plight of the entire demon race of the city.

Satan and Ravana both take resort to guile and deception. Satan allures and deceives Eve. Ravana tempts Seeta with maya mriga or golden deer. deceives her in a hermit’s disguise, and forcibly abducts her.

Madhusudan subtly uses the serpent image for Ravana as he is about to abduct Seeta:
Chamaki dekhinu jogee boishwaanar-sama
Tejoswee. bibhuti ange, kamandolu karey,
Shirey jota. Haay, sakhi, jaanitaam jodi
Phula-raashi maajhe dushta kaal-sarpa beshe.
Bimal salile bish, taa hole ki kabhu
Bhume lutaiya shir nomitaam taare? (Canto IV, 323 – 330)

We cannot but remember how Milton associates Satan with the serpent. In the
Paradise Lost, Satan first enters into a serpent and then goes on to seduce Eve into
transgression. (Seeta, too, transgresses into an unknown zone in the absence of her
husband and Lakshmana, for fear of curse falling upon her husband’s clan. It is
Ravana in a hermit’s disguise that threatens her with dire consequences happening
to Rama’s family and clan and forces her cross the threshold of their forest hut.)

Both Satan and Ravana are vainglorious, since they feel distressed at the
disparity between the desired state and its realisation. Satan who had been Lucifer
before fall, has lost Heaven, and has become in large measure devoid of angelic
lustre. Ravana has lost hundreds of demon heroes, and above all his own sons:
devoid of Meghanaada, he is as though a spent volcano.

Satan rules in gold-inlaid Pandemonium. Ravana has his golden Lanka and
within that his gemmed and gilded royal court. Ravana’s majesty consists in his
material prosperity and opulence. Satan’s wealth is his pride and verbosity: these
two features have repeatedly let out his human-like thoughts tallying achievements
with non-achievements and the widening gap in between. The Lankan demon race
counts on Ravana. Fallen angels are obedient to Satan and his leadership. Satan
feels sad at their thought: they have received the consequence of following him.
and, as punishment, have lost Heaven and reached the torturous confinement of
Hell fire. Disaster on Lankan citizens, gradual death of great heroes, immensely
pain Ravana; he experiences it like the agony of demise of hundreds of sons.

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Satan, on the first place, weaves for his followers, the dream of unsettling the unopposed dictatorial rule of God. After the fall (when the contrary has happened and all his followers along with him have found themselves banished from Heaven forever), he makes them surmise even the gloom, the ‘dismal situation, waste and wild’. as heaven of freedom devoid of God’s dictatorship. He as though pointed his finger towards a dream – though indistinct – nascent amidst apparent uncertainties of a hellish environment: the novel plan of leading “human” against God’s wishes and dictates and thus impeding God’s work and destroying it to the extent possible. “Human” as the newest creation of God, had been the most widely discussed topic among the heavenly angels for quite some time then. Satan now voices his determination of accomplishing his task through all possible means, fair or foul, open-war or guile. Whether he really feels his dreams realised, after instigating the newest created race to transgress the God-directed boundary in eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, remains perhaps a question. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Satan is able to dream dreams and make others do the same. This access and attachment to “dream” is a reflection of Satan’s urge for independence and a possible key to his freedom of spirit.

Ravana, like Milton’s Satan, lives in a world of his own weaved majestic dreams. He is the arbiter of the fate of golden Lanka, a citadel of undreamt of material affluence. The demonic island-city that he has built up in the midst of an oceanic stretch of political rule, by dint of his prowess in warfare, is in fact an evolution of his heartfelt vision. He, sure enough, is determined to rescue it from the clutches of foreign aggression. Hence, he has appointed many a commander-in-chief in succession and sent them all one by one to the warfront: has dreamt of bringing an end to the enemy siege around Lanka. Again and again he has projected his own dream onto the eyes of the Lankan citizens: that the daunting heroism of Kumbhakarna, Veerabahu and such other invincible commanders, would scatter away all phalanx of enemy soldiers, and that Lanka once more
would breathe free of oppression. His dreams, and that of his Lankan subjects, have been shattered repeatedly. Anointing of Meghanaada, the greatest hero of Lanka, as the commander-in-chief of the demon army, is the pinnacle of Ravana’s aspiring dreams as it is of the demon race. Meghanaada’s death is the greatest of catastrophe that has ever befallen the city of Lanka and its ruler Ravana.

A similarity of psychology is also noteworthy between Ravana and Satan. Ravana considers himself to be under the dictates of *vidhi* or destiny. In each step of his life, he has tasted the bitterness of his lot. He abducted Seeta. Rama’s consort, in order to avenge his sister Soorpanakha who had been insulted at the hands of Rama and Lakshmana, and brought her to the fort-like city of Lanka and kept her as captive in Ashokevann. But, consequently, the battle-cry that has roared all about the city walls has as though rung the death knell of Lanka. The reader should realise an important aspect of the matter here. Ravana in the *Meghanaadvadh* is not the rapacious rapist of a demon king we come across in Valmiki’s *Ramayana*; he rather is a dignified and gloriously humanised hero created out of Madhusudan’s nineteenth-century renaissance-imbued poetic spirit and vision. He has kept Seeta as his captive, but has not violated her modesty. Therefore, he feels no remorse perhaps, in relation to his act of abducting Seeta. In his view, the abduction was purely a square retort for insult meted out to his sister. The post-retort battle at Lanka and the siege around by Rama’s monkey army, therefore, appear to him as unwanted foreign enmity. Quite naturally, he is unable to comprehend his wife Chitrangada’s complaints against him:

Haay, nath, nij karma-phale.
Majaale rakhaskule, mojila aponi  (Canto I. 404 – 405)

On the contrary, he thinks

Vidhi prosarichhe bahu
Vinashite Lanka mama.  (Canto I, 373 – 374)
Such thoughts express, besides Ravana’s anger and dissatisfaction over fate, his deep love for his city, Lanka. To him the whole of Lanka is an extended family, his very own. When misfortune befalls his kingdom, it is his heart only that feels the agony.

Ravana’s heart-rending sobs and lament at Meghanaada’s funeral (Meghanaadvadh, Canto IX) resembles Satan’s remorse for what he has no more, his deep anguished sigh at the sight of illuminated blissful heavenly Paradise before him (Paradise Lost, Book 3, 540 – 554) and that of the sun at the horizon near Paradise (Book 4, 32 – 109). The difference, however, is that whereas Ravana is unaware of his own faults. Satan knows full well what his wrong-doings have been.

Satan has rebelled against God. The reason for his rebellion is his wounded pride. Despite being the foremost amongst the angels, he was adjudged – in God’s dispensation – less eligible for leadership than the son of God. But, Satan (better known as Lucifer till then), being boastful of himself, found it unacceptable. To him, therefore, even God appeared to be dictatorial. His dissatisfaction turned into rebellion. A huge number of angels became part of that rebellion and the battle thereafter. In subsequent defeat in the celestial battle and in perpetual banishment from Heaven, however, Satan has understood that he did not have a clear idea as to the power of God as his enemy. Yet he pins his faith in that unequal fight. This self-reliance of his is a clear proof of the strength of his character.

If, as per conventional parameters, Satan’s and Ravana’s boastful steps are adjudged blunders, then it must be said that the two cannot comprehend their blunders quite easily, or that they do not want to comprehend readily. Inability or unwillingness for understanding his own defects and follies, leads Ravana by degrees into a vast void – a void of unfathomable agony of dreams shattered – where he keeps looking with wondering enquiring eyes at his destiny. all the while
trying to grasp for what sin committed by him such harrowing and all-engulfing
punishment is being meted out to him, his family and his demon clan. But his
inner self gets no satisfactory answers.

Going against God was perhaps not wise on the part of a sagacious person
like Lucifer. But, in Lucifer, passion and pride are forces much stronger than
sagacity. Consequently, he engages once more into opposition and provokes
“man” against God’s will and makes “him” fall from heaven-like happy seat of
Paradise, and thus finds a satisfaction of victory for his pride. His subsequent
turning into a serpent forever is probably not something that counts to him that
much.

Ravana and Satan have similar enemies. In the Meghanaadvadh.
dambholinikshepi’ Indra, i.e. Indra who hurls thunder, is the enemy of
Meghanaada and hence enemy of his father Ravana too. In the Paradise Lost. God.
the so-called enemy of Lucifer or Satan, as well hurls thunder; it is the weapon of
thunder that has made him the all-compelling lord of Heaven (as least this is what
Satan thinks). Mention may be made here that Zeus, the lord of the pantheon in
Homer’s Iliad, is called the “far thunderer”; it is thunder that has propelled him
above all other gods.

In Book 1 of Paradise Lost, Satan speaks thus:

... but what power of mind
Foreseeing or presaging, from the Depth
Of knowledge past or present, could have fear’d
How such united force of Gods, how such
As stood like these, could ever know repulse?
For who can yet believe, though after loss,
That all these puissant Legions, whose exile
Hath emptied Heav’n, shall fail to re-ascend

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Self-raised, and repossess their native seat. (626 – 634)

In Satan’s opinion, the rebel angels pitted to Hell are a united invincible force. That they have failed to re-ascent the heights of Heaven is a state unthinkable for their leader. The above extract, therefore, suggests a wondering query and deep psychology. It contains wonderment, and perplexity at happenings unimaginable. But, then come the irresistible desire for dreaming newer dreams, hope for regaining lost honour and seat of happiness.

Satan’s reaction to that which is unthinkable but true is noteworthy:

... so much the stronger prov’d
He with his Thunder: and till then who knew
The force of those dire Arms? (Book 1, 92 – 94)

But, it is followed by his determined declaration:

yet not for those
Nor what the Potent Victor in his rage
Can else inflict do I repent or change,
Though chang’d in outward lustre ...
... 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?
That Glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me. (94 – 111)
Despite being a “fallen” angel, Lucifer is indomitable in his own world of ideals. Mental perplexity in the face of changes in the external world, therefore, is also transitory with him: it is something his mind can dispense with at will. Mind is his moving force, since

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n. (Book 1, 254 – 255)

When we juxtapose Ravana with Satan, then the former’s psychology too becomes evident by degrees. To Ravana, the death of Veerabahu, his son, at the hands of Rama in the battlefield, is

Nishar swapansama ... vaarataa (Meghanaadvadh, Canto I, 80)

It is an unbelievable news; an information that sounds like a night dream to Ravana. Though Veerabahu is no match for his elder brother Meghanaada, yet the father in Ravana esteems his prowess considerably high. In comparison, Ravana considers Rama, at least initially, as a forest-dwelling beggar (vanavaasi ‘bhikhaari’). His astounded mind, therefore, asks

Amarvrinda jar bhujabaley
Kaatar, se dhanurdharey Raghava bhikhaari
Vadhilo sammukh raney? Phuladal diya
Kaatilaa ki vidhata shaalmali taruvarey? (Canto I, 81 – 84)

His mind, like Satan’s, feels at a loss at the defeat of an unconquerable commander. But that perplexity is only momentary. His kingly heroic mind relishes and draws satisfaction from his messenger Makaraksha’s description of Veerabahu’s heroics in the battle. When, from the top of his palace, he views son Veerabahu’s corpse lying on the battlefield below, he utters

Je shajyay aji tumi shuyechho, kumar
But then he is grief-stricken, also, at the demise of a heroic commander son:

\[
\text{Je hriday, mugdha mohamadey} \\
\text{Komal se phul-sama. E vajra-aaghaatey,} \\
\text{Kata je kaatar se, ta janen se jan,} \\
\text{Antarjaami jini; ami kohite aksham.} \quad \text{(Canto I, 275 – 278)}
\]

Thus, we find a harmonious blend of iron will and flowery softness in Ravana’s heart. His wife Chitrangadā’s open complaint and scathing criticism against him, before all in the royal court, however, rids him of whatever iota of stupor he has had and makes his determination firmer.

\[
\text{E kaal samarey,} \\
\text{Aar pathaibo karey? Ke aar rakhibe} \\
\text{Raakshaskuler maan? Jaibo aponi.} \\
\text{Saajo, he veerendravrinda, Lankar bhushan!} \\
\text{Dekhibo ki gunn dhare Raghukulamoni!} \\
\text{Aravana, arama va habey bhava aji!} \quad \text{(Canto I, 411 – 416)}
\]

At the end of the quoted stanza, Ravana swears on life that the world that day would become devoid of either Rama or he himself. He knows well the glory of martyrdom for the protection of one’s country. This thirst for glory is a unique feature of his personality. Concomitant to that are his choices of a free life to be lived as per his own will, and of governing his subjects with a benevolent nurturing hand. Rama and Lakshmana, with their huge army, have crossed the ocean and reached the shore of Lanka and then have laid a siege around the city.
walls. Ravana finds it tormenting to his self and spirit as though even to breathe in this besieged state. He surveys from his palace-top the boundless stretch of ocean in the distance and finds

Meghashreni jeno
Achal, bhasichhe jaley shilakul, bandha
Dridha bandhe. ... ... ...
Apoorva-bandhan setu; rajpath sama
Prashasta; ... ... ... (Canto I, 287 – 293)

The enemy army has reached the island city only after having succeeded in gaining control over the vast billowy ocean by building a bridge of floating stones across it. The ocean god must have himself assisted them in their enterprise; or else such an impossible task was undoubtedly beyond their capabilities. The thought makes Ravana sentimental. He addresses the ocean thus:

Ki sundar mala aji poriyachho galey,
Prachetah! Ha dhik, ohe jaladalapati
Ei ki saje tomare, alanghya, ajeya
Tumi? Haay ei ki hey tomar bhushan,
Ratnakar? ... ... ...
... ... ei je Lanka, haimavati puree
Shobhe tava bakshasthaley. hey nilaambuswami,
... kena hey nirday ebe tumi er prati? (297 – 311)

His fervent appeal to the ocean follows next:

Utha, balee; veerbaley e jaangaal bhangi.
Dur karo apavad; judao e jwala,
Dubaye atal jaley e prabal ripu. ...
Hey Bareendra, tava padey e mama minati. (312 – 316)
Such an appeal from Ravana may appear incongruous with his personality of steely determination. But we have to remember the context. The ocean around the island-city of Lanka is a natural sentry; it is like a protecting wall of silvery water (‘rajatapachir’). In the eyes of the King of Lanka, the ocean is the enemy of tempestuous winds, an indomitable and lion-like powerful force. As a protective belt around Lanka, the ocean, therefore, has been the source of pride for the king. But the selfsame ocean now been tamed by Rama’s army, Ravana’s pride has been crumpled. It is then natural for the king in him to become sentimental. Madhusudan the poet’s true Indian sensibility is at work here. It is an Indian tradition to consider the country, and the borders around, in totality as a living entity. That living entity is the soul-kin of the natives. Hence, Ravana appeals to the ocean, the sentry the people of Lanka trusts and depends upon for protection, to relinquish its involvements in antinational activities. The appeal is in fact a reflection of Ravana’s cultural nativity.

On the other hand, like Veerabahu’s defeat and demise, the taming of the ocean in the hands of Rama’s army is also an unthinkable and unexpected happening in the history of Lanka. Ravana, therefore, is surprised. But he is not inactive. He rather tries his best to motivate his warriors for arms:

Saajo. he veerendra vrinda. Lankar bhushan! (Canto I. 414)

It is again Ravana, we have seen, who tries to encourage the ocean not to side with enemy. In such acts of encouragement and inspiration Madhusudan’s Ravana and Milton’s Satan come almost under the same category.

Satan has declared God as an oppressor, a dictator, and rebelled against him. With the influence of his personality and logic, he has made many angels believe into his “unerring” path and opinion. This act of his has resulted as a whole into factionalism among the angels serving under God. One faction has continued to be obedient to God and trustworthy; while the other has turned
rebellious to God and broken his trust, warred against him, and finally become defeated denizens of Hell. Satan, whose instigation, assurance of democratic dream coming true, and logic of liberalism and equality have moved the second faction and led them into tortures of Hell, is himself a dictator (if not an oppressor), and is deadly against cropping up of any kind of factions or factionalism in Hell among the fallen angels under him and is particularly active against the same. In this context we may see Paradise Lost, Book 2, 18 – 40 and 465 – 479. However, Satan’s courage and prowess is indeed unmatched. It is Satan who comes forward for an expedition that consists of such perilous and unlikely tasks as opening the locked gate of Hell and coming out of the imprisoned state there, crossing the perilous chaos stretched between Hell and Heaven and approaching the heavily guarded vicinity of Heaven, finding out the location of God’s newest creation “man” and his abode Paradise, etc.

Madhusudan’s Ravana, in his turn, himself takes charge in the post-Veerabahu war situation: he does not send for his son Meghanaada to be the commander (Canto I). Though Meghanaada’s sudden arrival from the pleasure bower outside the city of Lanka stops Ravana on that occasion from going to the warfront, his forgoing of tears, and heroic prowess in the battle after Meghanaada’s demise, his one-pointed dedication in avenging Meghanaada’s unjust death do attract attention of the reader (Canto VII). Though, in the last canto of the poem, Ravana sheds tears at the agony of his revenge turned futile and the memory of loss of his son, the gravity of his character does not diminish by that; instead, his personality becomes completely humanised and ennobled.

Both Satan and Ravana have magnetic personalities that make them extraordinary among others. Milton and Madhusudan created the two figures with an inexhaustible reservoir of individual prowess that traces its steps back to Greek idea of heroism and Greek definition of a hero, especially the ones that had been portrayed through characters in the two Homeric epics. It would not be out of
place to re-quote Moses Hadas’ comment from his *Humanism: the Greek ideal and its survival*:

The most striking single feature of the Homeric ethos is the enormous importance attached to individual prowess, individual pride, individual reputation. ... In Roman or Christian or Indian Epic, it is a function of heroism to submit to a higher sanction; the Homeric hero may not compromise loyalty to his own being with loyalty to any other, human or divine. (21)

Milton and Madhusudan by creating, respectively, Satan and Ravana as unbending and indomitable individuals, placed them on pedestals quite distinctly contrary to more prevalent Roman, Christian and Indian traditions of characters.

In his book *The Greeks*, H. D. F. Kitto, the renowned critic and scholar of Greek life and literature, has shed light on Greek notion of man. He quotes from Pindar, in order to give the reader some idea of the dignity of man and the associated vulnerability in man’s existence as had been portrayed and ideated in Greek literature and thought. According to Pindar’s quotation

One is the race of Gods and of men: from one mother [the Earth-Mother] we both draw our breath. Yet are our powers poles apart: for we are nothing, but for them the brazen Heaven endures for ever, their secure abode.(Kitto 10)

Kitto opines that the crux of Pindar’s statement is ‘the dignity and the weakness of man’ and that ‘this is the ultimate source of that tragic note that runs through all classical Greek literature’ (10).

Satan and Ravana voice their protest against divine dispensation: but finally they reflect signs of defeat. Their lives, like that of a classical Greek hero, lead as
though inevitably into an agonising and gloomy end. In the end of their respective poems, both are submerged in perpetual and unredeemed tragedy.

Thus, we may conclude that Milton’s Satan and Madhusudan’s Ravana stand together both in undaunted fortitude and leadership, in rebellion against divine dispensation and unredeemed tragedy.