



PARADISE LOST

John Milton

Sub : British Literature
from Chaucer to 18th
century (PG 1)
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John Milton

- “God gifted organ voice of England”.
- Completed MA from Christ College, Cambridge.
- Staunch Puritan.
- He attacked both Prelacy and Pope as a strong Puritan.
- He wrote several pamphlets against his religious enemies.
- After Restoration, Milton fell on evil days and evil tongues.
- He was imprisoned and his works were publicly burnt.
- After the release, had to live in utter poverty and solitude.
- Later became blind too.
- His blindness did not stop him from writing.

- Both in matter and manner Milton is sublime.
- Greatest exponent of the grand style in the English language.
- Fourth great influence on English prosody after Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare.
- An Epic genius.
- Minor work: Paradise Regained., Lycidas, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso.
- Dramatic poem: Samson Agonistes.
- Prose : Areopagitica.
- According to Milton his prose writings were the work of his left hand and therefore they were of inferior quality.

Puritanism

- Began as a moral and social force in the latter part of Elizabethan period.
- Primary aim : Purify the usages of Church and to rectify life in strict conformance with the scriptures.
- Noble movement and won large number of followers.
- Politically it was opposed to all kinds of tyranny.
- The Church ruled by Bishop and the state ruled by the King were detested.
- They believed in the rule of God and the freedom of conscience.
- not beneficial in the literary field.
- Life of imagination and feeling was despised.
- Resulted in fewness of literary men and meagreness of literary output.

Epic

- It is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centred on a heroic or quasidivine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or the human race.
- Large in effect in the characterisation, events and in the settings.
- Historical theme not of the immediate past but of a distant or remote past so that the incidents and the characters of the epic acquire this aspect of remoteness.
- Along with the heroes on whom the actions primarily depend, there are supernatural elements also.
- Supernatural elements are indispensable part of the epic. (mythical and divine).
- Epic poem is bound to conform to certain conventions because it is essentially an outgrowth of traditional story telling, very often the incidents and characters chosen for the epic would be so well known that it restricts the inventive freedom of the writer.
- Every epic begins by stating the theme of the poem (justification or explanation).

- Not limited to time nor place. Innumerable events.
- It enforces some moral or epics.
- Diction is sublime , serious, aligned with the theme , syntax.
- Frequent use of prophecy or predictions in the text.
- Description of wars, events, angels etc. Use of dreams and visions.
- Inclusion of several allegorical elements like Sin , death etc.
- Two types of epics: Primary and Secondary epics.
- Primary epic or traditional epics were written versions of what had been oral poems about a tribal or national hero. Eg. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey.
- Secondary or Literary epics were composed by individuals in deliberate imitation of the traditional form. Eg. Virgil's Aeneid, Milton's Paradise Lost.