

**BIFOLD OF HEROISM AND ANTAGONISMS IN RAVAN AND
SATAN'S CHARACTERS**

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Abstract

This paper examines the character of Ravan in Valmiki's Ramayan and Satan in John Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost(1667). This further implicit that Ravan and Satan are the anti hero in the great mythological beliefs but through the literature point of view they posses paramount heroic qualities which leave most of its readers spellbound. The findings of the paper reveal that character of Ravan and Satan are the best characters depicted in the history of literature and of two oldest religions remaining the prominent antagonists. Though both the characters were supreme demon still the development of the character and its traits make them bifold of heroism and antagonism.

Keywords: Ravan, Satan, Demon, religious, beliefs, mythological, Ramayan, Paradise Lost, God.

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Introduction: Literary studies reveal that heroic epics are cultural documentations and heroic narratives. Valmiki's Ramayana and Milton's Paradise lost are good examples. The two epics reflect the idea of pride, honor and dignity as derived from the deeds performed by extraordinary men. The Ramayana is an ancient Sanskrit epic which follows prince Rama's quest his beloved wife Sita from the clutches of Ravana with the help of an army of monkeys. It is traditionally attributed to the authorship of the sage Valmiki and dated to around 500 BCE. Paradise Lost is an epic poem in blank verse by the 17th century English poet John Milton (1608-1674). The first version, published in 1667, consisted of ten books with over ten thousand lines of verse.

Milton begins the epic with a description of Satan, lying on his back with the other rebellious angels, chained on a lake of fire. The poem thus commences in the middle of the story, as epics traditionally do. Satan, who had been Lucifer, the greatest angel, and his compatriots, warred against God. They were defeated and cast from Heaven into the fires of Hell. The two dynamic characters written in these epics are Ravana and Satan.

Every person has both good and bad characteristics about them. So is the case with some of the greatest characters in our Hindu mythology. Some of the characters who were depicted as villains in the Ramayana stories had many heroic traits, for example Ravana. He had many qualities but only a single tragic flaw in his character brought about his downfall. And that is pride. Let us explore the heroic side of this great mythological character. Birth- Ravana was born to a Brahmin sage Vishrava and a demon princess Kaikesi. He thus was blessed by all the scholarly qualities of a Brahmin and the immense power and strength of a demon. He was the grandson of Sumali, the Demon King. Kubera (the treasurer of all Gods) was his brother. And he also had a sister named Shoorpanakha. Ravana Image Source Scholar- In Hindu mythology Ravana is depicted as ten headed man. This is often referred to as symbolism of the immense knowledge of the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures that he had. He had also mastered all Kshatriya skills. His twenty hands depict his never ending desire for more in his life. This great scholar had also composed the 'Shiva TandavaStotra'. He could entrance everyone with his amazing of skills playing the veena (musical instrument). Ravana was one of the most ardent devotees of Lord Shiva. He received many

boons from him. Lord Shiva was very impressed by his musical skills of playing the Veena. He was also blessed with a moon blade by Lord Shiva. Once this demon king worshipped Brahma and received the boon of being the supreme and the most powerful among the three worlds. Faithful Husband- According to the Ramayana stories, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana was a very beautiful woman and also counseled him in many political matters. He loved his wife and was faithful to her. He was a very good husband. He never doubted his wife, no matter what the circumstances. A Good King- Ravana was a very efficient and good ruler as per the Ramayana stories. He assumed leadership over the army of demon king Sumali and established a golden rule over Lanka. According to Hindu mythology, Lanka was built by Vishwakarma, the best of all architects. He got all his money from Kuber who was his step brother. In spite of having all such good traits his character he brought about his own downfall. Categorically some heroic qualities of Ravan are:

Intellectual and scholar demon:

Though Ravana is looked upon as a cruel demon that annoyed the innocent, he is also known as a great intellectual in the history of Hindu mythology. Under the guidance of his father, Ravana grasped vast knowledge. He learned sacred texts like Vedas. He mastered holy scripts. Ravana himself was a Brahmin but he learned the skills and techniques of Kshatriyas.

Devotee of lord Shiva:

The demon that was well known for his evil powers had great faith in almighty. He was a believer of the supernatural beings. Ravana was a faithful devotee of lord Shiva, one of the incarnations of lord Vishnu. While possessed with obsession to manifest Lanka, Ravana confronted Shiva. Ravana tried to move on the mountain Kailash, the home of the lord *Shiva*. In anger Lord Shiva punished Ravana by pressing him under his little toe. Ravana howled and danced to please lord Shiva. Then on Ravana worshipped lord Shiva with unconditional devotion. During this chance meeting with Shiva, Ravana composed Shiva tandavastotram.

The king of demons :

Ravana was obsessed with the thought of conquering Lanka. Ravana performed tapas for many years to please Brahma, the god of creation. Seeing his dedication Brahma bestowed him boons. *Brahma* granted his wishes to be unbeatable by gods and other powers. After getting the control of divine power, he conquered Lanka. In his tenure, Lanka was a prosperous and wealthy kingdom. He leded Lanka with his skills and he was considered one of the great monarchs. Under his ruling people in Lanka were living affluent lives. It is

said that they actually owned gold vessels to consume their food. Ravana was admired for his huge knowledge of weapons and sorcery.

He knew the ins and outs of public administration.

- His senses are not afflicted by passion. He is capable of administering not only earth, but also the three worlds."
- He was very handsome and he is also black in skin color.
- He was a great warrior

He is skilled in the use of various weapons known to celestials, demons and men. He has duly concluded his vow of studying the various sciences and has systematically learnt all the Vedas along with its branches. *"

- Sri Rama was stickler to Dharma and righteousness.

Rama speaks only truth. He is a great hero. He serves elders. He kept the senses under control. Rama, who talks smilingly, protects righteousness in all ways.

The following characteristics/qualities are being attributed to Ravana, eulogising him to be a good guy/misunderstood hero.

- He stood for his family and his clan. He was a Brahmin, descendant of Visravasa a great scholar.
- A great warrior
- Developed Lanka as a beautiful and advanced land to live in for Demons

The people, who cite the above qualities of Ravana, should know that he was a descendant of Visravasa. It is true, but he followed Kshatriya Dharma - rules of Warrior Clan. So according to Varna system he was not a Brahmin. It is Myth. He himself stated that he was following Kshatriya Dharma.

Satan: Milton first published his seminal epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, in 1667. A "Revised and Augmented" version, which is the one read more widely today, was published in 1674. In it, Milton explains why he has chosen to compose his long poem in English heroic verse without the use of rhyme, following the models of Homer and Virgil. Milton argues that rhyme is particularly unnecessary in longer poems, and that its unquestioned use by his peers, "carried away by Custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint

to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worst than they would have express them." Milton sees an inflexible application of rhyme and meter as in danger of becoming rote and mathematical, and he defends the liberty he found in releasing his poem from rhyme's limitations.

The story opens in hell, where Satan and his followers are recovering from defeat in a war they waged against God. They build a palace, called Pandemonium, where they hold council to determine whether or not to return to battle. Instead they decide to explore a new world prophecied to be created, where a safer course of revenge can be planned. Satan undertakes the mission alone. At the gate of hell, he meets his offspring, Sin and Death, who unbar the gates for him. He journeys across chaos till he sees the new universe floating near the larger globe which is heaven. God sees Satan flying towards this world and foretells the fall of man. His Son, who sits at his right hand, offers to sacrifice himself for man's salvation. Meanwhile, Satan enters the new universe. He flies to the sun, where he tricks an angel, Uriel, into showing him the way to man's home.

Satan gains entrance into the Garden of Eden, where he finds Adam and Eve and becomes jealous of them. He overhears them speak of God's commandment that they should not eat the forbidden fruit. Uriel warns Gabriel and his angels, who are guarding the gate of Paradise, of Satan's presence. Satan is apprehended by them and banished from Eden. God sends Raphael to warn Adam and Eve about Satan. Raphael recounts to them how jealousy against the Son of God led a once favored angel to wage war against God in heaven, and how the Son, Messiah, cast him and his followers into hell. He relates how the world was created so mankind could one day replace the fallen angels in heaven.

Satan returns to earth, and enters a serpent. Finding Eve alone he induces her to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. Adam, resigned to join in her fate, eats also. Their innocence is lost and they become aware of their nakedness. In shame and despair, they become hostile to each other. The Son of God descends to earth to judge the sinners, mercifully delaying their sentence of death. Sin and Death, sensing Satan's success, build a highway to earth, their new home. Upon his return to hell, instead of a celebration of victory, Satan and his crew are turned into serpents as punishment. Adam reconciles with Eve. God sends Michael to expel the pair from Paradise, but first to reveal to Adam future events resulting from his sin. Adam is saddened by these visions, but ultimately revived by revelations of the future coming of the Savior of mankind. In sadness, mitigated with hope, Adam and Eve are sent away from the Garden of Paradise.

Satan is an Archangel in Heaven. He has a high place in the hierarchy of angels. But he is proud and defiant. He rebels against God and falls down to Hell. One third rebellious angels also suffer from the same fate. From pride arise all the evils. Satan is full of pride. He is courageous. He may be wrong headed, but he has infinite courage in himself. As the poem begins Satan is in a hopeless situation. He lies dazed & stunned in the Lake of liquid fire along with other angels. Heaven is lost to Satan & his followers. He says-

"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."

He has firm determination and courage. He says that he will never 'submit or yield.' It is a heroic quality. He makes his evil intentions clear. He is prompted by undying hatred for God & a desire for revenge. He is not going to beg God for mercy because of fear. He claims to be equal to God in arms & superior to Him in foresight. This claim is sheer arrogance on his part. He resolves to wage war against God "by force or guile", and never to think of reconciliation with Him. To him weakness is crime-

"Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable, Doing or suffering"

There are some descriptions. Satan's bodily dimensions. He is "huge in bulk". He is compared to Briareos who fought against Uranus and to Typhon who fought against Jove. He is also compared to the sea-monster "Leviathan", which God of all His works created hugest that swim "ocean stream" This description of His external features of Satan is surely worthy of an epic hero. But no sooner have we formed this impression then Milton informs us of Satan's "dark-designs". Satan's wholly evil aims & designs are too obviously emphasized that Satan has some heroic attributes. Thus, Satan is the character of the epic poem Paradise Lost. He is courageous proud, strong willed and responsible leader. Yet his character degenerate as the poem ends.

In Books I and II, Satan reigns supreme as he addresses the fallen angels in direct speech. In contrast, when Raphael tells Adam about Satan's revolt in heaven, Satan's oratory comes to Adam (and the reader) as reported speech. The narrative conventions of the poem demand this, and we would scarcely expect Raphael to misrepresent Satan's words, but still the oratorical power of Satan is mediated through the medium of the tale-teller. There is nobody to question Raphael, nobody to protest at errors or omissions, and

no chance for Satan to defend himself or tell his side of the story. In the next instance of Satan's speech, he speaks to Eve in 'human voice' (IX.561). It is a plea, rather than a speech; rather than commanding and rousing his troops to action, he is now convincing a woman to eat fruit. In one sense this is a step down, but it does also demonstrate another kind of power; one of persuasion and subtlety. The final humiliation comes in Book X, when Satan and his troops are turned into serpents, and deprived entirely of the power of speech he would have spoke, But hiss for hiss returned with forkèdtongue Toforkèd tongue. (X.517)

In Books I and II, Satan's speech dominated the narrative, and the action of the poem stopped while he had his say. Now the words of the narrative swallow him up - 'to serpents all as accessories' (X.520). The sibilant 's' sounds of this description mockingly imitate his speechless hissing. Satan has been silenced completely and humiliatingly for the rest of the poem. It seems to me that the only way to give God's life-giving word prominence is in a monologue. Satan's speech must be silenced, as its immense power over the poem and the reader is too attractive and too great a competitor. There is only room for one king at the end of this poem, one majesty, one talk.

God's greatest enemy and the ruler of Hell Satan (his original name is erased; "Satan" means "Adversary") was one of the most powerful Archangels, but then became jealous of God and convinced a third of God's angels to rebel with him. Satan is cast into Hell, which he proudly rules until he realizes Hell is inside his soul and he can never escape suffering. He resolves to corrupt whatever he can of God's goodness, and flies to Earth to tempt Adam and Eve. Satan is meant to be the antagonist of the poem, but he is also the most dynamic, interesting character.

Conclusion:

In our society, we view the Devil as a single being, full of malevolent qualities, a few of them being thievery, deception, and betrayal. However, in most Asian cultures, and especially in the Hindu religion, the Devil is represented as a demonic entity, having nine heads, twenty arms, and garbed in traditional Indian garb, shedding a whole new light on how the Devil is viewed in our society versus the South East Asian region of the world. Ravana is the name of the Demon god referred to in Hindu theology. Ravana is seen as an evil force in the spiritual world. He is also the dreaded God of War, seen as every arm he possesses yields a weapon. Ravana is infamous for kidnapping Sita, the goddess and wife of another god, Rama. Eventually, Rama forced his army of Gods into Ravana's underworld kingdom and saved Sita. In the Vedas (the Hindu's book of religion), Rama slaughters

Ravana by shooting an arrow through his chest, since cutting off his heads was ineffective as they grew back. Although his body is expired, his haunting spirit is still said to cause destruction and chaos, as his living being would have on the earth. There are obvious, distinctive differences between the Devil Westerners choose to imagine and the Devil South Asians imagine. The appearance is a striking difference; we view our Devil to be a single being, probably red, with a pointed tail, horns, a pitchfork, hoove and sometimes in a comical way, accessorized with a goatee. Whereas Ravana is seen as a fierce, gigantic King with several heads and armed with several swords, giving him a mystical instead of a demonic appeal. Ravana, unlike our Western Devil, is actually referenced to as an actual God instead of a spiteful being. The most important distinction is that Ravana has an actual cemented background story of his notorious acts and his eventual downfall, while our Western Devil's story comes from the Bible and has been altered and revised over generations. In our minds, we have a solid, set Devil image that we can place in stories and legends. But we forget that there are other representations of the Devil, such as the one told in the Vedas in Hindu theology.

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