



RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POETRY OF JOHN MILTON AND MIRZA GHALIB

*Rahila

Research Scholar, LNMU, Darbhanga, Bihar

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a comparative study of John Milton and Mirza Ghalib, two poetic giants who, despite belonging to distinct linguistic and cultural traditions, share a common spirit of rebellion and introspection. Through a close reading of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Deewan-e-Ghalib*, this study investigates how both poets question divine authority, confront moral contradictions, and reinterpret religious dogma in light of human experience. While Milton's Puritan worldview seeks to justify divine justice through reason and scripture, Ghalib's Urdu poetry expresses an existential skepticism toward the same cosmic order. The analysis reveals how both poets transform theological discourse into a humanistic quest for freedom, positioning poetry as a dialogue between the finite and the infinite. The topic Comparative Literature in itself offers a broader range of research to a student who is willing to dig deep the intertextuality of literature. The comparisons more often lead to a new dimension of thought, explore hidden meaning and most importantly flourish the life in a text. As in the words of Julia Kristeva, "Any text is the absorption and transformation of another." So, we can say literature is a process of dialogues and counter dialogue or a continuous reply of reply to the text. The stalwart of English literature of the Puritan age, John Milton (1608-1674), famously known for his masterpiece, 'Paradise Lost' and the Urdu literature poet Mirza Ghalib (1794-1869), both share the same kind of magnitude. When we study both the poets the grandeur, the diction, the style, the tone these poets have some magnificent impact on readers. In spite of having linguistic differences, cultural differences, religious differences their ideas are equivocally radical, phenomenal. It is not just an overnight conclusion but over the passing decades people looked upon their works and found it still majestic and stately. In the age of globalization when we study these writers closely we realize that humanity has just one race and that is humanity itself. We cannot make an analogy between the writers that how they appear same but on some context they almost react the same towards the society. In the case of John Milton when Europe was loaded with Puritan thoughts he dare to project the religious mythology in his own way, though we cannot fully understand the intention of the writer what he means by his text, the collective response was to him was a little different as William Blake argued that "he was of the Devil's Party without knowing it. The radical views of John Milton is very much similar to Mirza Ghalib. Milton and Ghalib both belong to the same school of thought who ponder over the development of mankind. They both carry the responsibility of more a moral teacher. We can perceive the same pinch in Ghalib's poetry, as he says, Humko Maloom hai Jannat ki Haqeeqat lekin Dil ke Khush Rakhne ko Ghalib yeh Khayal Achha hai... How Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib satirizes over the concept of heaven and even indirectly makes fun of it. The spirit of questioning over the Lordly sayings is as bitter as we find in Milton's.

*Corresponding author: *Rahila*

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INTRODUCTION

Even though Milton in the prologue of "Paradise Lost" depicts what he is going to narrate through his poem but when we move through his poem then we definitely do not find that acclaimed thought dominating throughout this epic poem. As he claims that he is going to justify the ways of God to men but sometimes when we closely study the character of 'Satan' it appears that he is in fact justifying the ways of Satan to God rather. The majestic lines, the all-powerful emotions he has given to the character of Satan is rather confusing and make us doubt on Milton's intention regarding his great epic poem. The phrase "Better to reign in Hell than serve in the Heaven" is

spoken by Satan reflects the idea of positivity, optimism and bravery. It seems that this single phrase has defended the whole argument of the story. That forbidden tree God, Adam and Eve, and everyone seems just a character but on the contrary, the character of Satan appears thundering. The rebel through the character of Satan demonstrates the identity crisis as he is fighting for his own self. Milton himself was a person of rebellion in nature as he denounced the chauvinism of priest and bishop of catholicism and tried to study Bible himself. Being a protestant his views and ideas on religion is very much scholar-like. He likes questioning over things, set rules and regulations of society. In his book "Areopagitica" he advocates the freedom of speech and press and against the censorship of government sometimes appear similar to what the character of Satan

portrays in his 1667 book "Paradise Lost." At times the rebel of Milton and the rebel of Satan sound similar. Discarding the monarchy, promoting the elected ones, freedom over anything and everything cannot only be the traits of an evil but sometimes writers too adhere the same spirit in themselves and sometimes it gets difficult to a reader to identify or distinguish the personality of a writer from the personality of a certain character. To hide behind a major character is not a naive job but it takes a subtle understanding to figure out who the character is writer has given his mouth to. We can penetrate more into Milton's psyche when we unravel his other pieces of writings, in "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" (1643, 1644) he raises questions over the separation of spouses as churches were not giving permission to break the marital bond but Milton rather prefers going with 'Mosaic Law' instead of following the dogmas of clergymen. He is a person who chooses scriptures over persons and most importantly chooses his own intellect and wisdom to diagnose the matter rather going after sayings. When we come to study Mirza Ghalib, his poetry appears to be intricate with scholarly wisdom and sometimes it feels like a vagabond or a gypsy is singing a melodious song while walking through life. In one of his couplets he says,

De ke Khat Munh Dekhta hai Naamabar
Kuchh to Paigham-e-Zabaani aur hai...

These very times instill the foundation of personality of "Mirza Ghalib" as a seasoned man who has read ages and times and put all his perceptions infused into his poetry. These couplets may be understood as the Creator has sent letters to mankind and He has expected humanity to read His text beyond words. In the history of mankind many prophets or messengers have come and gone but the core meaning was same in all the scriptures and this 'Naamabar' might be prophets who are expecting their followers to reach beyond. The romantic touch in Ghalib's poetry often leaves a sense of ambiguity in itself. Readers may not always find its real meaning but find themselves in a void of sentences. In his another couplet, he says,

Ye Laash-e-Be Kafan Asad-e-Khast Jaan ki hai
Haq Maghfirat kare Ajab Aazad Mard tha...

Here in this couplet, Ghalib introduces himself to audience. Through these two lines we assume that the sufferings of life made him so bitter that he himself wrote an elegy on himself. Furthermore he says to his audience that he should be considered dead even though there was no funeral ceremony took place, nor in coffins and no more either. Along with readers he is addressing the Almighty too, to have a mercy on him. When we read his collection of poems there is still a source of relativeness to today's life, his thoughts are so enduring and modern and even thought-provoking that those meanings are not easily assessable even though they appear plain and simple. In this age of multiculturalism when we translate his writings from Urdu to English language it would not be easy to figure out whether he was an Asian or Non-European writer. We cannot find particularization in his writings but there is a global thought which anyone from anywhere can easily relate with. His Urdu and Persian poetry is so deeply enriched with metaphors that at times readers find it difficult to unlayer the meanings of his writings. Those allusions which he intends to convey becomes an illusion to readers. His poetry which covers the vast arena of mysticism often leads readers to study spiritualism. Mirza Ghalib is not a poet who is merely appears to be read and sung in poetic gatherings but needs a special attention to unfold the meanings of his works. The trait of wit and spontaneity in his writings make him different from other poets. He is also famous for his epistolary art as his letters to his friends are still taught to students that how he made formal writing into informal tone readers still enjoy reading his letters. Ghalib himself was a religious person but most of the times he implies his intellectual liberty to question the heavenly statements. Readers may find it out that he is ridiculing the concept of heaven or commenting over the descriptions of the religion by Mullas and Maulanas. He is very much critical about human nature, he juxtaposes the fall of first man ever to the whole of humanity.

Ghalib understands that human being in himself is so arrogant that he has forgotten why he was ousted from heaven whereas Milton in "Paradise Regained" depicts a picture that what human being lost has successfully been regained by Jesus Christ. We clearly witness the difference of belief system in both of these writers. Ghalib thinks human being is still in loss and yet to regain his position by his deeds while Milton believes that saviour of humanity; Jesus Christ has restored the lost position. Milton believes in the concept of Trinity while Ghalib was monotheist and their belief system contradicted their outcome while having the similar theme. But in the art of writing both of these poets share the same splendour of thought of intensity in their writings. Milton availed all the favours of life while Ghalib struggled a lot personally and financially and was living in a society which was colonized by Britishers and Mughals. These poets are towering personalities in their respective fields. Milton sees the world through theological lens whereas Ghalib is sarcastic over religious doctrines. Milton emerges as an obedient child of scriptures but Ghalib rises questions over Divine justice and deals with the subject of existentialism. This very trait of existentialist in him makes him a global poet and even in this twenty-first century people from corners of the world are familiar with his writings and find it still relevant. Milton lived in the age of Puritanism and we find its greater impact on his writings. Puritans are the people who strongly believe in God's sovereignty, strict moral discipline and spiritually tuned with Divine and Milton is no different from them. His writings most often advocate Biblical stories be it a poem or a pamphlet he is always found guided by religious teachings while Mirza Ghalib's writings often give a taste of irony over cosmic design. In spite of having metaphysical touch in his writings he is mostly found engaging with sarcasm and wit. Milton considers religion as a canon and in his writings he uses it for didactic purposes, but Ghalib even with all his understandings of Divine plan he views the world with the absurdist point of view. The spirit of 'Renaissance and Humanism' has made Milton think that Man is a central character in this Divine game and he is meant to achieve that lost position and Milton effortlessly showed it in his sequel book "Paradise Regained." On the other hand Ghalib believes in human frailty, he doesn't fight for human position. Hereby we can easily understand what makes these poets different from each other. They both share the equal loftiness in the art of writing, their style and diction is marvellous. They do not choose complicated sentences for their readers but in simple phrases they entwine the great theme. In technical aspect they are parallel to each other but their views and ideas make them as special as they are.

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Rahila
Research Scholar , LNMU
Darbhanga, Bihar
Email -
Contact No - 9507472775

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