

## **Satan's Satanic Conspiracy against God: An Analytical Study of Basavaraj Naikar's Play *Victory of Christ***

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### **ABSTRACT**

The play *Victory of Christ* by Basavaraj Naikar is designed to familiarize the audience and the readers with the theological concept of eternal clash between Good and Evil. It is based upon the theme of Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The play ingeniously depicts Satan's Machiavellian conspiracy against God to take revenge on Him for the punishment of damnation inflicted on him and other fallen angels by Him. Although according to Bharata's *Natyasastra*, the playwrights were supposed to select their themes from the epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, no dramatist dared to dramatize the entire epics by compressing them into stage-worthy plays. But Basavaraj Naikar's creative adventure lies in compressing the entire epic of Milton consisting of its two uneven parts by removing the descriptive and narrative element but concentrating on the dramatizable element and highlighting Milton's essential religious vision.

**Keywords:** *Natyasastra, Milton, Victory of Christ, Kauraveswara, Lord Krishna.*

The play *Victory of Christ* by Basavaraj Naikar is designed to familiarize the audience and the readers with the theological concept of eternal clash between Good and Evil. It is based upon the theme of Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The poet conceives this theme in the light of the Christian mythology of Fall of Man. Naikar's play is thematically a new approach to comprehension of Milton's epic. It seeks to dramatize the metaphysical and moral victory of Good over Evil by way of presenting the picture of the story of Satan's rebellion against God for restoration of his lost position in heaven. The play ingeniously depicts Satan's Machiavellian conspiracy against God to take revenge on Him for the punishment of damnation inflicted on him and other fallen angels by Him.

Dramatizing the entire epic by essentializing it synoptically by removing the narrative and descriptive elaboration and lengthy epic similes is not a joke. A playwright can undertake this adventure of transforming the material of one genre into that of another requires a real mastery over the subject and an ability to do away with the non-dramatizable element from the epic. Dr. Basavaraj Naikar has succeeded in this adventurous task of giving us a compressed version of Milton's epic vision as if in a nutshell. He therefore deserves our hearty congratulations.

The play begins with a scene of the plight of the fallen angels. As the fallen angels suffer physically the torture in the burning lake of hell, some of them repent guiltily for their atrocity

of rebellious action against God and others contemplate to take revenge on Him. One of the adversaries of God is Moloch, who denounces Him vindictively and ponders over the feasibility of resumption of their clash with Him. He emboldens all fallen angels and inspires them with the stimulus words to embark upon their expedition to heaven with a view to restoring their former positions therein. He speaks to them “By exhibiting our heroism let us defeat Him and return to heaven and occupy our former seats of power and position”. (Basavaraj 15) Moloch seems to be motivated by a revengeful spirit to wage a war with Almighty. Nevertheless, he betrays his diffidence of discomfiture and failure in fighting with God. Other fallen angels like Beliel and Mammon revengefully meditate to stimulate their energy and stamina for resurgence of fight with God.

One of the fallen angels is Beelzebub, who is the deadliest enemy of God. He suggests a strategy to forsake the plan of fighting with God and reconcile with the situation of suffering. He, on the other hand, machinates to foil and thwart the design of God in creating a new creature in the newly created World. He advocates the discovery of the new World and beguilement of His Man so as to degrade him. He further instigates all angles to impel Man to transgress the Law of God imposed on him. His transgression of Law is tantamount to frustration of God’s plan of Creation. This suggestion professed by Beelzebub is highly approved and applauded by the fallen angels. As this plan was brought forward, it dreaded them and deterred them from giving their consent to accept the challenge. As a result of their silence which evinced their reluctance to undertake the venture none, but Satan comes forward to brave the journey to the paradise. All his companions complimented him for his willingness and readiness to undertake this venture of discovering the new World and seducing Man to subvert God’s design and accomplish his premeditated objective.

Before embarking on his mission, he intuitively visualizes the various hazards and impediments which are likely to occur on his way to the new World. As he sets out his journey, he is debarred by Death from advancing and threatened by him with dire consequences. He is further accosted by his daughter Sin who reveals to him her tragedy of impregnation and allows Satan to pass through the gate of hell by unlocking it. His adventurous journey to the new World comes to the knowledge of God who is omniscient and aware of Satan’s attempt to stoop down to the earth and visit the new World created by Him for enjoyment of man and woman.

Meanwhile Satan experiences the inclement weather by passing through it and arrives at the paradise. On his arrival there he is bewildered in tracing out the dwelling place of Man in the

new World. He meets Uriel, an angel of heaven and seeks his help to locate it. Uriel points out to him the way to the Paradise where there is the Eden Garden in which Man and Woman abide. After learning this he proceeds clandestinely towards the Eden Garden without the knowledge of Gabriel who is ordered by God to guard it and prohibit any one from entering it.

Satan slinks furtively into the garden transforming himself as a cormorant. He is at first bewitched by the beauty of the garden where he locates the Tree of Knowledge. As he notices Adam and Eve walking majestically and gracefully, his jealousy is awakened in him at the sight of their convivial movement. He speaks to himself maliciously “I must ruin their bliss thereby subverting God’s design. Oh young couple you enjoy yourselves for some more time but soon you will end up in misery”. (Basavaraj 27)

In the meantime, while making movement in the garden Adam reveals to Eve the mystery of the Tree of Knowledge the fruits which are forbidden by God for consumption and violation of His command results in infliction of divine punishment. God has given them the latitude to move freely in the garden and enjoy its enchanting beauty, but He has prohibited them from tasting the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge that enkindles in them the consciousness of Good and Evil.

While Eve moves in the garden at pleasure Satan comes there stealthily defying the order of forbiddance and warning sounded to him by Gabriel. He assumes the figure of a serpent and comes near Eve. At first, he admires the matchless beauty of Eve and takes this opportunity to entice her in view of her gullibility. He speaks to Eve hypocritically and pretentiously in a convincing tone and fascinates her by beguiling her. He states falsely that he has tasted the forbidden fruits of the Tree of Knowledge which he finds to be exuberantly tasteful and palatable. He further adds that consumption of the fruits arouses in him a miraculous change. Now he gains the intellectual power of ratiocinating and speaking in a fascinating manner. His mind is elevated to a sublime state by which he is able to think and judge rationally and prudently. Satan pronounces such delusive statements in order to lure Eve and entice her to taste the fruits covetously. Consequent upon his enticement, she is tempted to taste the fruits irrespective of divine displeasure. She bloviates God’s warning and forbiddance and ignores His prohibitory command. When Satan prevails on Eve to taste the forbidden fruits, she at-first pleads her reluctance and shrinks to do so in obedience to his instruction in view of God’s forbiddance. She restrains herself from yielding to his temptation, but Satan persists in cajoling her cunningly so as to entice her to eat the fruits. His enticement impels her to taste it. As she

tastes the forbidden fruit. God is enraged and decides to inflict punishment on them by depriving them of celestial joy and beatitude.

As a result of her consumption of a fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Eve feels a strange experience unprecedented before. She perceives the imperceptible, comprehends the incomprehensible and becomes susceptible to the insusceptible. Eve's consumption of fruits without foresight and self-restraint enables Satan to accomplish his evil design against God. With a feeling of self-satisfaction for his success in his mission he disappears from the spot of the tree. As Adam comes there, Eve reveals to him her experiences and feelings of having eaten the forbidden fruit. On learning this he is instantly shocked and outraged by her offence of transgression of God's law of life. He admonishes her for her imprudent and unscrupulous action and accuses her of committing unforgivable sin. Afterwards he is also tempted by Eve to taste a fruit and consumes it. As he eats the fruit the earth convulses, and nature betrays her furies by groaning. Furthermore, carnal appetite is born in Adam and Eve. Both of them feel instantly voluptuous and sexually excited and indulge in sinful activities of fornication. After sexual gratification they begin repenting incessantly for transgression of God's command of forbiddance. Consequently, they come under, the cosmic law of mortality and invite perennial tragedy by committing this guilt. Their spiritual degradation which is attributable to Satan's bedevilment of Eve signifies the evanescent success of his mission. This abject degradation of Adam and Eve contributes to the subversion of God's plan of creation of a new World and to the success of Satan's demoniac machination. Although Satan is incapable of restoring his former position in heaven by fighting with God who is invincible and invulnerable, yet he is vindictively determined to despoil His creation and derive masochistic pleasure. Satan's attempt to frustrate God's plan was a dastardly conspiracy by which he succeeds transitorily but his joy for success evanesces and ends in fiasco. As he conspires to degrade Adam and Eve into a life of consciousness of good and evil and thereby deprive them of heavenly beatitude, he fails desperately in his attempt to manipulate his diabolic plan as God retrieves them from eternal suffering by enabling them to attain salvation and transcendence. As God favours Man, he regains the divine grace. This plan of deliverance of man from suffering is executed by the son of God.

Despite his beguilement to Eve and consequential degradation of these heavenly figures Satan still persists in his vindictive mission to wreak his vengeance upon God. He directs his daughter and grandson to kill the Man created by God so that his campaign against God materializes. After returning to the hell, he proclaims his victory to the fallen angels "I have won this war

against God with the help of a small apple. As Man displeased God he fell from the grace of God, to live in the mortal World and earn his bread by means of hard labor”. (Basavaraj 41) After the fall of man human-being comes to be governed by Sin and Death.

As Adam and Eve indulge in repentance for their defiance and disobedience to God and beg Him forgiveness, He responds to their prayer and compassionately sends his son to the earth and directs him to extricate mankind from suffering and damn Satan his archenemy to eternal suffering for having beguiled innocent Eve to taste the forbidden fruit. As desired by God His son is born to Virgin Mary. He is known as Jesus the son of the carpenter Joseph. His birth is divinely preordained to deliver humanity from eternal suffering and enable them to attain salvation by virtue of their piety and virtues. This design of God is known to Satan by his power of prescience and with this knowledge he appeals to the army of his fallen angels to get ready to fight with Jesus the son of God. Since Jesus is a representative of God and Goodness Satan’s fight with Him is tantamount to his fight with God. With this assumption he looks upon Jesus as his target of attack and persists presumptuously in manipulating his conspiracy against Jesus.

Satan appears before Jesus in the guise of an old shepherd with rural look and appearance in order to entice him to commit sinful and sacrilegious deeds, but Jesus recognizes his real self and taunts him “you are not the man that you seem to be outwardly. You are a compound of lies”. (Basavaraj 56) He censures him for his wickedness and for his attempt to tempt the virtuous men and dehumanize them by his shrewd trick, of malfeasance but he meets failure in his malevolent task.

In response to his words of reproach Satan tries to justify his commission of vices but fails to convince Jesus. Afterwards he reappears before Jesus as the city Man and eulogizes his divine qualities and inspires him to disseminate them in the World so as to achieve glory and fame, but Jesus denies his interest in seeking glory covetously or terrestrial success. Satan persists in citing numerous instances to convince Jesus and entice him to pursue for earthly aggrandizement. He again ingratiates with him and induces him to capture kingdoms with a view to winning him over in his favour. With this intention in mind Satan takes Jesus to the top of a mountain from where he demonstratively points out cities, capitals lakes, rivers bay, desert, the city of Babylon, Persepolis and the city of Bactra and the construction of roads and bridges with the objective of motivating Jesus to attempt for enthronement in the position of David by conquering Parthian “Empire and then reigning over it with full authority. All his efforts of inducement to tempt Jesus to crave for a life of grandeur and splendor fall flat upon him and

prove abortive. He is mortified by his futile attempt to mould Jesus as he is rigidly implacable and intractable because of his virtues of righteousness, integrity and rectitude. Despite Satan's persistent failure to seduce Jesus, he still tenaciously persists in his endeavour. He again takes him in the air to the western side of the mountain from where he shows the architectural and sculptural achievements of the architects and sculptors. He points out to him the mount Palatine and imperial places. He further shows him the different races of the World such as the Germans, Ecyntians, Sarmatians and others. As these sights do not fascinate Jesus, Satan again draws his attention to the west of the mountain and points out the City of Athens, and its academy where Plato remained absorbed in philosophical contemplation. As he pleads his indifference and apathy, for all these places he diverts his attention to schools of sages where Alexander was taught. Then he shows the cities where the epic poets like Homer and Greek Playwrights abided. He indicated the house of Socrates, the cities of peripatetic, Epicurean and stoic philosophers. Jesus resists the allurements of these sights. He on the other hand remains unmoved and unimpressed. He reacts sentimentally and states that these sights are mere mirage and illusory. They do not attract his attention at all. When Jesus denies his interest in the sights of these cities, places of historical interest, celebrities and luminaries, his apathetic pronouncement disillusioned Satan and mortified him. He attributes Jesus' lack of interest in these attractive sights to his impervious mind and ascetic attitude.

In the long run Satan is constrained to acknowledge his discomfiture in his attempt to ensnare Jesus. He again states, "You are not attracted by either wealth or honour or Kingdoms or Empires". (Basavaraj 70) He finally tells him "Although I tried my best to tempt you, I found that you are beyond temptation you are like rock of diamond unmoved and unmovable". (Basavaraj 71) With this disappointment he takes him to wilderness in order to subject him to torture in the darkness, rain, thunder, lightning but none these natural catastrophes torment him. Furthermore, he presents before him the dance of apparitions from hell in order to horrify him, but it exerts no impact on him. In the morning Satan is stunned to find Jesus physically comfortable and mentally unworried. All his attempts to subject him to torture by the agencies of nature proved abortive. As he appears once again to tempt him, Jesus takes him to task for having attempted to torture him in the wilderness by deploying inclement natural calamities. With this denouncement he banishes him out. Consequent upon Satan's abortive attempt to beguile him, he acknowledges the futility of his strategy to achieve his target. With a feeling of overwhelming despondency, he submits to Jesus desperately and impels the fallen angels to extol Jesus for his virtues of self-containment, self-restraint, nobleness and magnanimity. The



angels admire Jesus' contribution for having vanquished the arch enemy of God and won victory over him. He damns Satan to suffer eternally for having conspired against God and attempted to shatter His plan of Creation, but he is unable to subvert His plan entirely as God is invulnerable, invincible, unconquerable and undefeatable. Since Jesus is the son of God and he is sent to the earth to redeem mankind, he is therefore supplicated by the fallen angels to devote to the task of extricating mankind from earthly suffering.

In like manner Indian scriptures also focus on clash between two hostile forces and subversion of dominance of Evil. Indian mythological epics deal with such fights between the noble-minded mythical figures and the evil-minded demons. They tend to glorify the victory of the former over the latter. In this context it is relevant to present the picture of mythological war of fight between Ramachandra and Ravana portrayed in the epic *The Ramayana*. 'In this fight Ramachandra the embodiment of all exemplary virtues vanquishes Ravana who emblemizes diabolism with an objective of protecting mankind from the tyranny of the demon'. Similarly, the epic *The Mahabharata* (V.S.) presents the picture of a war between the noble-minded Pandavas and the evil-minded Kauravas who were miserably defeated by the former on account of their diabolic attitude and conspiratorial action. The Kauraveswara temperamentally Satanic in their aims and activities whereas the Five Pandavas were virtuous and morally upright and righteous because of which Lord Krishna sided with them in the war. The vanquishment of the Kauravas is attributable to their vicious attitude and treachery.

Another illustration of victory of Good over Evil is cited of the life of Lord Krishna who killed his arch enemy Kansa. The latter persisted in his efforts to kill the former with a view to safeguarding his life and position. It was on account of his devilish attitude that Kansa was killed by Lord Krishna who wanted to ensure safety to the dwellers of Mathura and protect them from the tyranny of the villain. The life of Lord Krishna also impresses upon us the moral precept of value of goodness and virtues. It further justifies how evil-minded persons are punished for their wickedness and virtuous persons are rewarded for their noble mindedness and magnanimity.

The Chandi Purana also delineates the enormity of atrocities committed by a demon named Mahisasura, who created a reign of terror in the kingdom and oppressed upon the gods and the common subjects. The gods in heaven were persecuted by him in various ways. Since his tyranny became intolerable, they prayed to Parvati to kill this demon as he was predestined to be killed by a goddess. She responded to their grievances and appeals with compassion and

decided to kill him. She equipped herself with arms and rode on lion's back in order to encounter him. She fought with demon and killed him with her spear and sword. She relieved the gods and the common people of his oppression and ensured safety to them. Thus, this story also depicts the subversion of Evil forces. Thus, these mythological stories recount the victory of Goodness over Evil by dramatizing the clash between the virtuous personalities and the mischief mongers. They authenticate the prevalence of law of life that contributes to humanity the divine dispensation.

Victory of Christ as a play is built upon the foundation of Milton's Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained the theme of which has been borrowed from the Christian mythology that delineates the clash between God and Satan. The play tends to focus on the saintly life of Jesus and highlight his triumph over Satan who persistently attempts to ensnare him by way of beguilement but fails miserably in executing his premeditated conspiracy that results in his damnation. Whereas Jesus represents Goodness Satan, on the other hand, symbolizes diabolism. The war between Jesus and Satan is a tug of verbal war of altercation between Good and Evil. This altercation results in the victory of Goodness over Evil.

The play Victory of Christ thematically bears considerable similarities with the scriptural stories of The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, (Rajgopalachari) The Krishna Lila (Kulamani) and The Chandi Purana (Prabhakar) mentioned above. The pivotal themes of all these stories including that of Victory of Christ are based upon the theme of perennial conflict between Good and Evil. These scriptures emphasize the victory of the former over the latter.

The play further impresses upon the readers the cosmological concept of prevalence of cosmic law that prescribes divine punishment on wrongdoers and reward to the virtuous. This law enlightens us with the conspectus that evil forces may predominate over human life for a short time but eventually they submit to good forces which annihilate diabolism and overshadow them. From this angle of vision, the birth of Jesus is divinely predestined for redemption of suffering of humanity that necessitates the destruction of evil forces. Thus, the play Victory of Christ by Basavaraj Naikar is theologically illuminating and inculcative, and it, therefore, accentuates its spiritual significance and augments its acknowledgement and popularity particularly in the Christian community. It needs to be assessed and evaluated in the dramatic perspective for glorification of Naikar's dramatic craftsmanship.

Although according to Bharata's Natyasastra, the playwrights were supposed to select their themes from the epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, no dramatist dared to dramatize



the entire epics by compressing them into stage-worthy plays. But Basavaraj Naikar's creative adventure lies in compressing the entire epic of Milton consisting of its two uneven parts by removing the descriptive and narrative element but concentrating on the dramatizable element and highlighting Milton's essential religious vision. This is not an easy task at all. Obviously, it enriches the emaciated realm of Indian English religious Drama. Such Morality plays are conspicuous by their absence in Indian English drama. In India Indian English Stage is almost dead for a variety of reasons. Hence the absence of able, talented and willing directors of drama to stage such Morality plays. But the students of English Literature benefit a lot by reading this play as profitably as reading Plato's Dialogues.

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