A Comparative Study of Ved Vyasa’s *Garuda Purana* and Dante Alighieri’s “Inferno” in *The Divine Comedy*

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Abstract

Religions and cultures across the globe believe in the idea of divine judgement resulting in punishment or eternal life after death. The *Book of the Dead* belonging to the ancient Greeks contains two hundred spells and illustrations that are believed to help the dead journey through the perils of the ‘Netherworld’, a place where all souls go after death, and face judgements based on their earthly doings. The African folks also believe in the afterlife which is associated with the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ of one’s actions and how it affects the afterlife of an individual. Likewise, many religions and cultures believe in the afterlife where an individual is judged based on earthly actions which results in reincarnation or paradise or damnation. The researcher attempts to study the similarities and differences in the ideas of punishments portrayed in Ved Vyasa’s *Garuda Purana* and Dante Alighieri’s “Inferno” in *The Divine Comedy*. The researcher intends to study the types of punishments depicted in both works and on what basis the punishments are decided. Detailed textual analyses have helped to understand the conceptual mirroring of both works to comprehend the similarities and the contextual mirroring in the works to understand the differences in ideas.


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Garuda Purana: An Introduction

Researchers do not have an exact date but they estimate that the sage VedVyasa composed the *Puranas* around 3rd BC to 5th AD and he also wrote the Mahabharata, which he is a part of. The *Puranic Encyclopedia* defines the word “Purana,” as “old, yet new.” i.e “things which are as good as new though existing from olden times” (PuranicEncyclopedia617). The *Garuda Purana* is part of the *Vishnu Purana* which is one of the three *Puranas*. The *Puranas* collectively reflect the Hindu trinity of gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. So, the other two *Puranas* are by Brahma and Shiva. In the *Garuda Purana*, Lord Vishnu answers Garuda’s questions on various subjects including the afterlife.

The *Garuda Purana* depicts eighty four thousand hells with twenty-two *narakas* (hells)⁴. According to the *Garuda Purana*, all souls after leaving the physical body journey to *Yamaloka*⁵ guided by Yama’s messengers. Each soul obtains a *Jatana Deha*⁶ through the various rituals the family members perform after the death of the person. The soul on reaching the place of judgement is sentenced by Yama based on the crimes committed which are recorded by ‘Chitragupta’, and is then sent to different appropriate *narakas*. The soul is tortured for a specific duration which is also decided by Yama.

The *Garuda Purana* was originally written in Sanskrit and so translations of the work have been used. Several translations of the *Garuda Purana* are available in print and online in English and other languages. So, various sources have been read and analysed in order to get an authentic idea of the essence of the work. Since the research paper aims at studying the content of the *Garuda Purana*, using multiple sources gives a better idea.

Dante Alighieri’s “Inferno” in *The Divine Comedy*: An Introduction

*The Divine Comedy*, which is arguably the greatest poem of the Middle Ages was written in the early fourteenth century. Dante started writing this poem in c. 1308 and completed it around 1321. The corrupt political situation of Florence forced Dante and his party into exile. He did a series of jobs while writing the *Commedia* and other minor works. His last refuge was an asylum where he completed the *Commedia* and it was honoured in 1321.

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⁴ *Sacred Books of the East, Viṣṇu Smṛti*, pp. 140-141, verse 22, Lohachâraka
⁵ *Yamaloka* is the place or province of Yama according to the Hindu beliefs where all souls necessarily go after their death to be judged for their virtues and vices. It is only from there that the souls go to either hell or heaven.
⁶ *JatanaDeha* refers to the soul clothed in a body which is made of a subtler matter and is a replica of the former physical body. It is this *JatanaDeha* that experiences the tortures inflicted throughout the journey in *Yamaloka* and in the various *narakas*(hell).
Comedy is translated from Italian, La Divina Commedia firstly by Cary, first English translator of Dante followed by Longfellow publishers (Professor of Modern Languages) and then by C.H. Sisson for the Oxford Press. Sisson states in his “On Translating Dante” in the introduction to The Divine Comedy, that “the translator has to be able to find both a metric and a tone in which he can give the matter of his author so that a readable English work is made out of it.” Sisson has attempted to present the matter most effectively in English even though he has chosen not to use the rhyme scheme used by Dante to provide more clarity to the content and because the terza rima in Italian rhymes are very different from the English rhymes. So, even though, the original style and rhythm of Dante’s La Divina Commedia cannot be experienced in Sisson’s translation, it is still the most appropriate translation available in English focusing on the matter of the work. Since, this research paper focuses on the content of the Commedia; Sisson’s translation is best suitable.

Dante’s The Divine Comedy is a classic that gives detailed description of hell, purgatory, and paradise. This elaborate image is seen in three parts: “Inferno”, “Purgatorio” and “Paradiso” in The Divine Comedy. “Inferno” consists of thirty four cantos while “Purgatorio” and “Paradiso” consists of thirty three cantos each, narrated in the form of a journey taken up by a living Dante who is guided by the poet, Virgil. Dante who is “full of sleep”(Canto 1:11) as if in a dream or a vision makes his way through inferno, to purgatory and then, lastly makes his last stand at paradise where he seeks the sight of God. Dante’s hell or inferno is made of nine circles named after a type of sin. The first circle is “Limbo of unbaptized worthy pagans” and the ninth circle is “Pit of cocytus treachery”. Each of the sinners are punished in the circles depending on the sins they committed during their earthly life.

Conceptual Mirroring

Both texts have similar ideas of justice which could be seen in the punishments enforced on the sinners that are thrown in Dante’s hell and Vyasa’s Yamaloka. Punishments enforced on the sinners are based on the sins committed by them during their earthly life. The punishments given according to the crimes done are similar in both texts. The punishments

have been divided in this research paper into five categories based on the sins: Thieves, Adulterers, Avarice, Liars, and Corrupt Politicians.

I. Thieves

The *Garuda Purana* has four kinds of punishments given to those who rob others of their wealth, seize and spend others’ properties, steal gold and jewels or thieving of any kind and proportion. The sinners are thrown into different *narakas* where they will be punished accordingly:

a) In *Rauravam* (torment by snakes), the sinners are tormented by a dreadful serpent ‘Ruru’. The people who were cheated take the shape of ‘Ruru’ and inflict constant torments on the sinners.

b) In *Maharauravam* (death by snakes), ‘Ruru’ and other serpents coil and tighten around the sinners, constantly biting them till they die.

c) In *Taptamurti* (burnt alive), the sinners are cast into the eternal fire blazing in this *naraka*.

d) In *Tamisram* (heavy flogging), the sinners are bound by ropes and cast into ‘Tamisram’ where they are thrashed till they bleed and faint. Once they recover, the beating continues.

Dante’s “Inferno” in *The Divine Comedy* portrays similar concepts of punishments inflicted on robbers. This can be seen through the cry of a character, Vanni Fucci from among the mass of sinners who tells that he was “put so far down here”(137) because he “robbed(137) the sacristy of its furnishings”(138) and pinned the blame on someone else. Canto XXIV draws a picture of “a terrifying heap”(82) of poisonous darting serpents and snakes that stretch upright. The sinners run naked “without hope of refuge and cure”(92) and “their hand are tied behind them with snakes”(94) with the heads and tails of the serpents piercing the backs while the rest of the serpents coiled in front of them. The serpents transfix the sinners and torment them. Then, the sinners are lit with fire and made to burn, after which the ashes gather on the ground and return “to the same shape”(105).

The torment and death by serpents in *Rauravam* and *Maharauravam*, and the burning of the sinners in *Taptamurti* in the *Garuda Purana* is very similar to the sinners being tormented and bitten by serpents, and burnt to ashes in the “Inferno” in *The Divine Comedy*.

II. Adulterers

The *Garuda Purana* has six kinds of punishments given to those who use others for physical pleasure, those who have unnatural intercourses, and those who commit any form of adultery
including cheating on spouses and impregnating a woman without any intention of marrying her.

a) In Salmali (embrace hot object), the sinners are forced to embrace a figure made of heated iron while Yamadoots\textsuperscript{10} whip the sinners’ backs.

b) In Vaitarani (river of filth), the sinners are cast into the river Vaitarani which is filled with excreta, blood, hair, bones, nails, flesh and any decaying repulsive substance. The sinners are forced to feed on the contents of the river and they are mauled by beasts.

c) In Puyodakam (well of hell), the sinners wander about irresponsibly like animals in a well filled with excreta, urine, blood and phlegm. This punishment is given to those who have intercourse without any intention of marrying or cheating the other. Since, they behave like animals; they are treated like animals in the well.

d) In Vajrakantakasali (embrace sharp object), the sinners are forced to embrace objects made of sharp diamond needles that pierce through their bodies. This punishment is enforced on those who have intercourse with animals.

e) In Lalabhaksam (river of semen), the sinner lies in a river of semen and feeds on it. This is enforced on lustful men and those who practice oral sexual activities.

f) In Krimibhojanam (death by insects), the sinners are eaten alive by worms, serpents, and other insects. Once the bodies are eaten up, the sinners are given new bodies and the process is repeated.

Dante’s “Inferno” tortures adulterers in a similar manner for similar concepts such as using one another for pleasure, cheating on spouses, and impregnating a woman and abandoning her.

a) Canto V describes a constant “infernal gale”\textsuperscript{31} that harasses the sinners with “turning and buffeting”\textsuperscript{33}.

b) Canto XVIII describes Malebolge\textsuperscript{11}(1) that is made of stone and has the colour of iron. The sinners are made to walk naked and as they pass through two dismal rocks, “horned devils with great whips”\textsuperscript{36} standing on both sides of the rocks, lash them cruelly from behind. The sinners are subjected to constant insults by the devils, who

\textsuperscript{10}Yamadoots: Messengers/ Servants of Yama.

\textsuperscript{11}Malebolge is the eighth circle of hell. The term ‘malebolge’ means ‘evil ditches’ and is roughly translated from Italian. Malebolge is a huge funnel-shaped well which is divided into ten distinct circular valleys or trenches. Each trench is called by an Italian word ‘bolgia’, which means ditch. At the center of Malebolge is the final circle of hell which is seen as the throne of Satan.
address them as pimps and scream out, “You’ll make no money from women here”(66). Prostitutes are made to dwell in excreta which can be seen through “Thais, the harlot”(133), who was found scratching herself “with shit in her nails”(131) because she was a “filthy and dissolute bag”(130) during her earthly life.

c) Canto XXX exposes the “criminal Myrrha” (38) who sinned with her father by disguising herself as someone else. She was bitten and dragged by another sinner.

Those who impregnate women and abandon them (94), pimps (60) and “those who sin in the flesh”(38) are punished in the first ditch of Malebolge. The Garuda Purana also specifies the same ideas behind the punishments and casts the sinners into Puyodakam. The horned devils whipping the sinners from behind in Canto XVIII is a parallel to Yamadoots lashing the sinners at the back in Salmali. Thais scratching herself with shit in her nails is similar to the sinners cast in Vaitarani and Puyodakam where they lie and feed on excreta. Myrrha, being bitten and dragged is also similar to the concept of sinners being mauled by beasts in Vaitarani.

III. Avarice

The Garuda Purana has four kinds of punishments for those who are spendthrift, proud of their wealth, do not return the money they borrow, and who are monetarily sound yet deny financial help to those in need.

a) In Visasanam (bashing from clubs), the sinners are bashed continuously by Yamadoots.

b) In Ksharakardamam (hanged upside-down), the sinners are tied upside down and tortured by Yamadoots.

c) In Sucimukham (tortured by needles), the sinners are constantly pricked and pierced by needles.

d) In Andhakupam (attack of animals), the sinners are pushed into a well where they are constantly attacked by poisonous and carnivorous beasts.

Dante’s “Inferno” in The Divine Comedy also shows how those sinful of avarice are tortured.

a) Canto XIX shows an “unhappy spirit”(46) held upside-down, “stuck in like a stake”(47) with flames “cooking”(79) his feet because he possessed “ill-gotten money”(98) and his “avarice”(104) resulted in “oppressing the good and helping the wicked”(105).

b) Canto VII reveals how the once fortunate “clergy”(46) “in whom avarice does its best”(48) “get rough with one another”(63) and do not get a moment’s rest. The
people are placed in a dark circle and they roll heavy weights against each other’s chests. They roll the stones back up the semi-circle and continue to run against each other “to all eternity” (55).

The sinners being kept upside-down in Ksharakardamam for oppressing the good is a parallel to the soul held upside-down in Canto XIX. The idea of sinners being attacked inside a closed space (well) in Andhakupam is similar to the souls attacking each other while stuck in a semi-circle as shown in Canto VII.

IV. Liars and Deceivers

The Garuda Purana has two kinds of punishments for liars, falsifiers, flatterers, and murderers.

a) In Sulaprotam (torture by Trident), the sinners are impaled on a trident while tortures are inflicted on them. They suffer from intense hunger and thirst. This punishment is given to those who take other’s lives and those who deceive others by treachery.

b) In Avici (turned to dust), the sinners are thrown down from great heights so that they turn into dust upon reaching the ground. The bodies are restored to life and the process is repeated.

Dante’s “Inferno” tortures those whose “testimony by the mouth” (38) was cold and those who instigate scandal and discord.

a) Canto XXX- The sinner longed “for a drop of water” (63) because he forged coins “stamped with John the Baptist” (74). The wife who falsely accused Joseph (97) was stricken with “high fever” (99) that lets out a stench and also makes her intensely thirsty (2).

b) Canto XXXII- As a result of the cold testimony the liars gave, the souls were made to suffer “eternal cold” (75) in a frozen lake. Their shadows were tortured in ice with teeth chattering and one head forming the “headgear for other” (126). The people suffer intense hunger (127) as well.

c) Canto XXIII shows “painted people” (58) who were weeping and looking exhausted. They were forced to wear a heavy “gear for all eternity” (67) because of the “lies” (144) that made them hypocrites. The souls wore gilded and dazzling “cloaks with hoods drawn down” (61) which was “all lead” (65) inside and very heavy which made the “scales to creak” (102). A man who misguided the Pharisees was “crucified on the ground with three stakes” (111) and he lay naked so that he could feel the weight of everyone who passes.
d) Canto XVIII deals with punishments enforced on those who sunk low “by flatteries” (125) which their tongues were “never tired of saying”(126). The people were “plunged in excrement”(113) where they mourned, snuffed around and “hit themselves with the palms of their hands” (105). The embankment that surrounds them was covered with a mould resulting from the exhaled breath of the people, which attacked their eyes and noses.

e) Canto XXIX presents punishments enforced on “falsifiers” (57). The souls let out a stench from the “limbs that had gone putrid”(51). The people were struck down from the air itself which was “full of sickness”(60) and they lay in foul heaps. The souls were “spotted with scabs”(75) resulting from “insane itching”(80) and “leprosy”(124).

f) Canto XXVIII provides a descriptive image of the sinners being “ripped open from the chin to where he farts”(24) so that his guts hang out. A devil stands behind and hacks the sinners with swords. When the wounds close-up, the process is repeated. This form of punishment is given to “instigators of scandal and schism”(35).

The impaling of sinners on a trident in Sulaprotam for deception is similar to the man crucified on the ground with three stakes for misguidance and false directions in Canto XXIII. The sinners tortured and impaled in Sulaprotam are similar to the shadows being tortured in Canto XXXII and ripped open in Canto XXVIII. The intense thirst suffered in Canto XXX and the intense hunger felt in Canto XXXII is parallel to the intense hunger and thirst suffered by the sinners in Sulaprotam.

Corrupt Politicians

The Garuda Purana has three kinds of punishments for rulers who neglect their duties, rulers who oppress the people by abandoning their duties and misruling.

a) The Vaitaraninaraaka is also for law enforcers and authoritative people who subject themselves to corruption.

b) In Sukaramukham (tormented and crushed), the sinners are crushed to a pulp by constant and heavy beating.

c) In Asitapatram (sharp flogging), the sinners are flogged by Yamadoots with whips made of Asitapatra (sharp-edged sword-shaped leaves) and as they run, they trip over stones and thorns and fall on their faces. They are tortured more by stabbing with knives till they are rendered unconscious and when they recover, the process is repeated.
Dante’s “Inferno” shows punishments enforced on those who were “expert in corruption” (53) and the sinners settled “accounts in this heat” (54) because of which the sinners suffer in a boiling pitch.

a) Canto XXI- The devils “boil up the sticky pitch” (8), “boiled an inspissated pitch” (17) which was stuck to the banks on both sides. There was nothing in the pitch except for the bubbles caused by the boiling. The devils with “wings open” (33) carry sinners, inverted on the shoulders and throw them “over the hard rock” (43). The sinner is chased immediately by a “guard-dog” (44) which forces the sinner to plunge into the boiling pitch (124) and jump back up, convulsed. Canto XXII continues describing the punishments where the devils insult the sinners and hook them up with prongs if they try to come up or come out. The sinners are tormented by the devils that dig their nails on the back of the sinners and skin them off (40-41). They can hold their noses up or move inside the pitch.

The sinners falling on stones and Yamadoots stabbing them with knives and the Asitapatra, constantly in Asitapatramis similar to the devils throwing the sinners on hard rocks, and hooking the souls with prongs and the devils using their nails to sink in on the backs of the spirits in Canto XXI and Canto XXII, respectively. The sinners are thrown into the Vaitaraniriver which is filled with excreta, blood, and other substances where the sinners are forced to lie and feed on the contents of the river while Canto XXVIII depicts sinners being thrown into a boiling pitch where the sinners are forced to stay inside the pitch.

Both works include characters that keep a record of the earthly doings of people. In Garuda Purana, ‘Chitragupta’ keeps an account of people’s actions. In The Divine Comedy, ‘Minos’ examines “the faults of new arrivals” (Canto V:5), “judges them, and sends each to his place” (Canto V:6). The river ‘Vaitarani’ in Garuda Purana is parallel to the rivers ‘Acheron’ and ‘Styx’ portrayed in “Inferno”. Yamadoots torment the sinners in Vyasa’s Garuda Purana while demons torture sinners in Dante’s “Inferno”. The other similarities are dogs and serpents used to torture sinners; concepts of wells, ditches and trenches; movement from one hell to the other when the specified time is up, and torments inflicted till the sinners fall unconscious followed by repetition of the process.

So, the similarities in the punishments depicted in both works lie in the ideas associated with justice than the similarities of the physical appearance of the torture and the objects used in the punishments. The meanings of the images depicted in both works can be interpreted with
understanding and acceptance of the “justice of the punishments.” Allan. H. Gilbert in his work, *Dante’s Conception of Justice*, discusses how “Dante’s vision is morally and intellectually acceptable only when the justice of the punishments he describes is accepted; if their justice be denied, the poem is chaos or burlesque (67).” *Garuda Purana* and “Inferno” aim to achieve divine justice by showing how the wicked are punished for their vices which in turn proves the righteousness with which the punishments are enforced. So, the similarities in the concepts of both works convince the readers that the penalties are a reasonable result of the sins committed.

**Contextual Mirroring**

Ved Vyasa’s *Garuda Purana* and Dante Alighieri’s “Inferno” in *The Divine Comedy* are similar but also different based on the socio-cultural, political and religious contexts. Each work presents other punishments that reflect an influence of the religious background the works are written in. The context in which each work exists is mirrored through the type of sins and punishments enforced.

**Hindu Context in the Garuda Purana**

The *Garuda Purana* discusses other punishments depending on the customs and beliefs of Hinduism. The trident is a very sacred symbol as it is seen in the hands of god Shiva and goddess Durga. The trident is used as an object of torture in *Sulaprotam* which shows how the punishments are rooted in a socio-cultural context. Similarly, the following punishments are based on the beliefs and rituals of those who believe and follow Hinduism. Animals are considered sacred to Hindus since many serve as a *vahana* (vehicle) to gods and goddesses while some are associated with physical appearance. The monkey is associated with Hanuman, elephant with Ganesha and Indra, peacock with Murugan and Saraswati, lion with Durga or Kali, bull with god Shiva, serpent with Vishnu, and swans with Brahma. The cow is sacred to Hindus and it is forbidden to kill or eat cows according to any of the Hindu religious texts. The BBC has also discussed the Hindu ways of treating animals well because of the doctrine of *ahimsa*. This is the reason why several punishments are associated with animal torture.

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*13http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/hinduethics/animal.shtml*

*14Ahimsarefers to compassion and tolerance and is an antonym to *Himsa* which means to injure or harm.*
a) In Kumbhipakam (cooked by oil), the sinners are thrown into huge vessels containing boiling oil. Those who kill animals for pleasure are sent to this naraka.

b) In Pranarodham (piece by piece), Yamadoots gather around the sinners and hack them limb-to-limb while subjecting the souls to constant insult. People who hunt animals for pleasure or kill animals for food are subjected to this form of punishment.

c) In Rakṣobjaksam (revenge attacks), those who made animal and human sacrifices are mauled and attacked by the same animals who were killed by them.

d) Dandasukam (eaten alive) is given to those who persecute others like animals are eaten alive by beasts.

e) In Vatarodham (weapon torture), the sinners are tortured with fire, poison, and various weapons. Those who persecute animals that live in forests, mountain peaks and trees.

Bhagavad Gita\textsuperscript{15} talks about the importance of staying true to Dharma\textsuperscript{16}.

f) In Kalasutram (unbearable heat), the sinners run around in unbearable heat and drop down exhausted from time to time. Those who do not respect their elders are given this form of punishment.

g) In Paryavartanakam (torture from birds), the eyes of the sinners are pierced and plucked by birds such as crows and eagles. Those who deny food to a hungry person and thus abuse him is thrown into this naraka.

h) In Ayahpanam (drinking of burning substances), those who consume alcohol or other intoxicating substances are thrown in this naraka. The women are forced to drink molten iron in liquid form while the men are forced to drink molten lava.

\textbf{Christian Context in Dante’s “Inferno”}

Dante’s “Inferno” follows Christian Catholic ideas and so, other punishments listed below are seen as sins that are committed against the beliefs and teachings of the Bible and the Church.

\textbf{1. Baptism}

Baptism is the first most important step for Christians who believe that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, one should be baptised as it marks God’s forgiveness of the

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\textsuperscript{15}The \textit{Bhagavad Gita} is a 700-verse Hindu scripture in Sanskrit that is part of the Hindu epic \textit{Mahabharata}. The \textit{Gita} is seen as one of the most treasured Indian text of spiritual wisdom because it consists of Lord Krishna’s spiritual advice and guidance to his disciple, Arjuna about Dharma.

\textsuperscript{16}Dharma does not have a single definition even though it is the most significant idea not only in Hinduism but also in Buddhism and Jainism. In simple terms, Dharma means to follow a path of righteousness in actions and thoughts.
original sin\textsuperscript{17} that each child is born with: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me (Psalm 51:5).” Baptism is one and the first of the seven sacraments\textsuperscript{18} that should be necessarily followed by all Catholics\textsuperscript{19}. The Bible (John 3:5-6) shows Jesus’ teaching about the importance of being baptised:

\begin{quote}
Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”
\end{quote}

So, those who are not baptised bear the mark of the original sin and hence, cannot move ahead from hell to purgatory or paradise.

a) Canto IV: The souls are “suspended”\textsuperscript{(45)} in a “limbo”\textsuperscript{(45)} in the first circle around the abyss where they suffer “sadness, without torment”\textsuperscript{(28)}. Souls “of infants and of women and of men”\textsuperscript{(30)} live “without hope, but with desire”\textsuperscript{(42)}. Those who have “deficiencies”\textsuperscript{(40)} resulting from not being baptised and “no other sin”\textsuperscript{(34-36)} undergo this punishment.

\section*{2. Seven Deadly Sins}

Dante’s “Inferno” in \textit{The Divine Comedy} punishes sinners for committing the seven deadly sins. The seven sins as per the Bible\textsuperscript{20} and the “Purgatorio” in \textit{The Divine Comedy} (198) are: pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, promiscuity. The

\textsuperscript{17} The doctrine of the original sin was put forth by the Bishop of Lyans in the second century. The Bible does not mention the ‘original sin’ but holds hints suggesting the concept which can be seen in Deuteronomy 1:39 and Psalm 51:5. The Church believes that Adam’s disobedience of God and consequently, Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden would affect their descendants and hinder their path to heaven. So, baptism was seen as means to cleanse one’s original sin.

\textsuperscript{18} The Seven Sacraments were first compiled by Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1160). The Roman Catholic Church honors these rituals as means of attaining God’s grace. The following are verses from The Bible commonly cited to validate the belief concerning the sacraments: 2 Timothy 1:6, John 3:5, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 5:26, John 20:23, James 5:15, Acts 8:17, John 6:54-55.

\textsuperscript{19} Pope Francis states that “baptism is enough to evangelize” http://www.news.va/en/news/vatican-pope-francis-to-evangelize-baptism-is-enough

\textsuperscript{20} Seven Deadly Sins is not listed on a single page or place in the Bible but is scattered across various chapters. The term and ideas associated with it was compiled by Pope Gregory 1 in the year 600. The chapters and verses that validate the concept of the seven deadly sins are: Proverbs 6:16-19, Galatians 5:19-21, Colossians 3:8, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:3, Revelation 22:15, James 1:20, Hebrews 13:5, and Matthew 6:24.
Catholic Church strongly teaches its people to refrain and overcome these sins. So those who indulge in these sins are also punished in Dante’s “Inferno”.

b) Canto VI: Those souls sinful of “gluttony” are flattened by the rain and hailstones. The place is eternally icy and the sinners “rot and stink” here. The demon “Cerebrus” scratches and skins the spirits to bits.

c) Canto VII: “The spirits of those overpowered by anger” are thrown in a swamp naked. “With anger on their faces”, they strike each other with their hands, chests and heads, and bite each other to pieces. People sigh underneath the water which make the water “bubble on top” because their hearts are “smouldered with sullen smoke”. They gurgle in their throats but words do not come out properly.

d) Canto VIII: Those sinful of “arrogance” are subjected to “infamous horrors” where the shadows lie furious and “wallow in the mire like pigs” in “eternal fire”. The spirit of Filippo Argenti charged of arrogance “turned upon himself and bit into his flesh”.

3. Sorcery

Christianity shuns paganism and any form of rituals that reflect pagan worship. The Bible (Revelation 22:15) states the position given to sorcerers:

“Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

So, those sinful of performing “charms with herbs and images” and “tricks of magical deception” are also punished in Dante’s “Inferno”.

e) Canto XX: The sinners have their head “twisted round” “between the chin and the point where the thorax begins”. This causes the sinners to walk backwards and is not able to look the other way.

Conclusion

The contextual mirroring in Garuda Purana and The Divine Comedy sets them apart but the extent to which the concepts are mirrored shows that the works are greatly similar than different. Both works present a similar concept of tortures being imposed on the body

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21 The official Catechism of the Catholic Church, which consists of 2,865 numbered sections, was first published in 1992 by order of Pope John Paul II, wherein the seven deadly sins are dealt with.
allowing the souls to experience the pain and in turn suffer, even though the situations are placed in the afterlife where the physical body of the person is dead and only the soul moves on. The Garuda Purana explains the formation of the Jatana Deha that allows for the souls to experience the punishments while The Divine Comedy does not explain this phenomenon. The rituals followed by the Hindus after the death of a person are linked to the formation of the Jatana Deha. The Bible, from which Dante derives his ideas, does not state any such ritual or formation of the body in the afterlife and hence, there is no idea based on this even though Dante’s work presents souls experiencing the pain. However, the conceptual mirroring of the souls being punished for their sins is the same in both works.

The commonality of the idea of justice dealt in both works reveal the vast extent to which the works are similar, even though they are written across space and time. They both attempt to justify the form of punishments based on the sins committed. The rudimentary ideas of what is evil or wrong are very similar in both texts, suggesting a universal human preoccupation with wrongdoing and the necessity to prevent it. Dante’s work states the existence of one God and the inverse, Satan while there is no singular concept of God and Satan in Garuda Purana which brings out the contextual differences where Christianity is based on One Almighty Lord\textsuperscript{22} while Hinduism paves way for a unified yet diverse belief in gods, respectively. But, the idea of souls saved in paradise or damned in hell remains the same for both texts. Dante’s conception of hell presents an uncompromising approach towards moral priorities. Similarly, the Garuda Purana also, depicts the inevitable Judgement Day from which no one is exempted. Both works discuss the notion of judgement and portray explicit pictures of punishment which are meant to deter evil doers.

Afterlife judgement has always been an acceptable mode of punishment as it helps people to overcome the angst of seeing evil going unpunished in earthly life. So, both works represent justice through justified judgements in the afterlife. Allan H. Gilbert entitles the third chapter of his work, Dante’s Conception of Justice as “The Commedia as a Poem of Justice” and he states that “the three parts of the Commedia represent justice under three aspects (25)”. Dante believed that “a punishment or a reward cannot exhibit merely a clever outward appropriateness; it must exemplify also the principles of Aristotelian and Thomistic justice\textsuperscript{23}.”

\textsuperscript{22}Dante’s belief in one God stems from the singular concept of God in The Bible: Exodus 20:1–17, Isaiah 48:17 and 65:16, Revelations 1:8.

\textsuperscript{23}Aristotelian and Thomistic justice deals with the concept of the ‘common good’ which is closely associated with the Catholic tradition. In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle explains his views on the common good which is “the good of the polis is apparently greater and more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it is
because the divine wisdom behind rewards and punishments of the afterlife need to be justified. The ideas of the common good in Aristotelian and Thomistic justice are similar to the ideas of righteousness which includes caring for one’s self and others’ interests in the Garuda Purana. Ved Vyasa’s Garuda Purana and Dante Alighieri’s “Inferno” in The Divine Comedy differ in context but are very similar in the concepts explored, namely: Judgement, Punishment, and Justice.

Even with such works and religious beliefs about the divine judgement, there is a propensity to relegate ideas of punishment to the past. Among Hindu believers, there is this tendency to relegate divine retribution in the afterlife to the backburner by suggesting that divine retribution is to be met with in this life with a probable equal amount of physical and mental pain without the gory details. In Christian circles, there is arising belief in the active forgiveness of God to the repentant and therefore the afterlife pain is lessened or even cut out altogether. Complimenting this is the belief that suffering has a healing and refining power on earth itself. Human beings go through physical and mental pain in order to be fit to enter heaven and escape all pain in the afterlife. Such recent trends and beliefs pave way for new questions: Can someone escape punishment in the afterlife if he/she has done penance for their sins in their earthly life itself? Does the legal and judicial punishments given to perpetrators and time served account for in the afterlife? In such a scenario, there is a tendency for the moral credibility associated with Vyasa’s Garuda Purana and Dante’s The Divine Comedy to fade away and be looked at as fictional creations than wise divine codes to be considered.

satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good even for an individual, it is finer and more divine to preserve it for a people and for poleis [the plural form of polis]” (NE 1094b). Thomas Aquinas in his work, QuestionesDisputatae de Veritate (Truth) expands on the divinity of the common good as a cause which is very divine as it shows a likeness to God.
Bibliography


