

Q: Explain the following with reference to the context:

(B.A.English Subsidiary.Part-1. Paper-1)

**“But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed**

**And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."**

The sonnet **On His Blindness** is perhaps one of the best and most popular of Milton's sonnets. It is a great sonnet of lofty tone and noble theme. It was written in 1655. Milton had started losing his eyesight from the year 1645. After some years he lost his eyesight completely. He was about 44 years at that time, when we remember that his great works "Paradise Lost" and "Samson Agonists" has not yet been written.

Strength of mind, power of will and determination, patience; all these traits stood him in good stead when blindness slowly creeped up on him.

What made him so sad was that the gift of poetry which had been given to him could not be used to advantage when he was suffering from blindness.

In these concluding lines of his sonnet "On His Blindness", Milton's faith in God sets at rest the doubt which arose in his mind earlier. Milton feared that God would take him to task for his failure to make use of his poetic talent due to his blindness. This was the most unreasonable stand. God could never be so unreasonable as to ask a blind man to compose poems or do any other work for which eyesight was necessary. As a result of the first shock of his blindness, Milton had lost his balance of mind. It gave rise to a fear for which there was no justification. No sooner than doubt arose in his mind, he again recovered his poise. His faith in God, his spirit of calm endurance returned to him. It told him that God had no need of the labours of any individual nor did God expect a return for his gifts. He is the Master of the Universe. The world is too vast. A man's labour was quite insignificant in this vast world. Moreover, God had

no dearth of agents to do His work. Countless angels were ever ready to travel the whole universe and to carry out His orders at His slightest hint. Therefore, his(Milton's)own work did not deserve the undo importance which he himself had attached to it. All that God wanted from man was a meek submission to His will. Those who bore the burden of life in a spirit of calm endurance rendered best service to God. God did not want only active service from man. Even those who did nothing, but kept themselves ready to obey God's order, whatever it might be - rendered true service to God.

Here Milton bows down in humble submission to the will of God. The tone of patience and humility has perfectly mingled with that of great dignity. The poem is a human document, a revelation of the struggle in Milton's own soul. It starts with a note of regret. Then there is a mood of doubt and questioning which however melts in the final

attitude of complete resignation. The beauty and exaltation of moral feeling raise the poem to a great height. The poem is full of allusions to the Bible.

The extreme simplicity of the language is its peculiar attractiveness. Two lines are wholly, several others are nearly, monosyllabic. It is a sonnet of Petrarchan type.

So we find how logically the poet argued his case; he was in a doubtful state of mind and was not at all happy at first but ultimately he regained his lost faith. This sonnet is thus a valuable document of faith. The elevating thought finds an equally sublime style. The Biblical references add grace and majesty to the poem.

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