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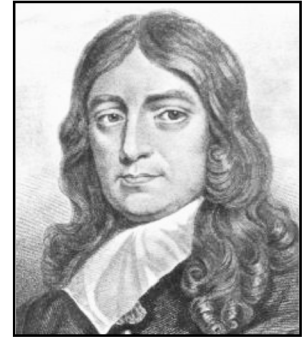
CHAPTER

On His Blindness

John Milton (1608-1674)

➔ About the Poet

John Milton was born in London on 9th December, 1608. His father was a lover of literature and art. Milton was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. He remained in Cambridge for seven years. He took his B.A. in 1629 and his M.A. in 1632. His father wanted him to enter the church but Milton did not like it. From 1637 to 1639 he travelled abroad through France, Switzerland and Italy. He was also appointed Latin Secretary to the Government and held this post till the restoration of monarchy. He became totally blind in 1652. It was a great calamity. Three years later, he married again but his second wife died within fifteen months. On the restoration of monarchy, he was arrested. Two of his works were publicly burnt. But soon he was released. The rest of his life was passed in obscurity, poverty and loneliness. In his later years, his daughters became the eyes and ears of the blind poet.



'*On His Blindness*' is the best known sonnet of John Milton. It reflects his grief at his blindness. His other poetic works are '*Paradise Lost*', '*Paradise Regained*', '*Samson Agonisties*' etc. Indeed, he is a great literary artist and a scholar poet of the world.

➔ About the Poem

'*On His Blindness*' is a personal sonnet. It mirrors firm faith of John Milton in God's omnipotence and generosity. God does not love only those who render Him active service and truthfully carry out His gentle instructions. He also loves those who resign themselves completely to His pleasure by reposing infinite faith in His goodness and justice, so the best service of God is to have faith in Him. In the last, the poet realises the supremacy of God and resigns himself to his fate and to God's will.



*When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning chide;
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ?'
I fondly ask : 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'.*

—John Milton

➔ Appreciation of the Poem

The poem, 'On His Blindness' is a famous sonnet composed by Milton, one of the greatest poets in the world. The sonnets in his hands cover a wider range. The theme of his sonnets is personal or some religious topic. 'On His Blindness' is a personal sonnet. So it reveals his personal life and character. The God had granted the poet the gift of poetry but in spite of his willingness, he is unable to make any use of his blindness. So he is afraid that God might punish him for not serving Him by means of his poetry. But soon he finds comfort in the thought that God judges us not by our actions but by degree of our willingness in obeying His commands. Therefore, the best service of God consists in resigning ourselves the will of God.

The poem is simple in its expression of thought. It is composed in Italian style. Its rhyme scheme is abba, abba, ede, ede. We find a wonderful use of personification when he says "But patience, to prevent that murmur, soon replies".

||Glossary||

Consider	: think of (विचार करना)
How my light is spent ere ere half my days	: how I have become blind (मैं कैसे अंधा हुआ) : before (पहले, पूर्व ही) : before I have spent half of my life. Milton became blind when he was only forty-four of age (मेरी आधी उम्र बीतने से पहले। मिल्टन चवालीस वर्ष की आयु में अन्धा हो गया था)
In this dark world and wide 'talent'	: The world became dark to Milton because he was blind (संसार अंधेरा हो गया क्योंकि मिल्टन अन्धा हो गया था) : The poetic gift. This refers to a story in the Bible, which says that a master before going out to trade, distributed talents (coins) to his three servants and asked them to use those coins cleverly. The two of them used them in business and doubled them and so they were duly rewarded by the master on his return. The third servant who was given only one talent did not use it at all for fear of losing it. He was punished for not using the coin at all. Here Milton compares himself to the third servant because of his inability to use the talent (poetic gift) given to him by God (निपुणता, योग्यता)
which is death to hide	: if the talent is hidden, it is equal to moral death (यदि योग्यता (गुण) छिपा है तो यह नैतिक मृत्यु के समान है)

lodged	:	kept (पड़े रहना)
though my soul more bent	:	though he is more determined to compose poems (फिर भी वह कविता लिखने के प्रति अधिक दृढ़ है)
lest	:	for fear that (कहीं ऐसा न हो)
chide	:	rebuke (फटकारना)
bent	:	inclined, desirous (उत्सुक)
exact	:	except (माँगना या चाहना)
does God—light denied	:	does God expect hard work from him after having made him blind (ईश्वर ने उनसे कठोर श्रम की अपेक्षा के बाद भी उन्हें अन्धा कर दिया)
fondly	:	foolishly (मूर्खतावश)
patience	:	endurance (धैर्यशीलता, अन्तरआत्मा)
to prevent	:	to check (रोकना)
who best—Yoke	:	who cheerfully endure the misfortunes of life and take them as the will of God (जो प्रसन्नतापूर्वक दुर्भाग्य का सामना करते हैं और उसे ईश्वर की इच्छा मानकर स्वीकार करते हैं)
state	:	position (स्थिति)
kingly	:	royal (राजकीय)
bidding	:	command (नियन्त्रण)
speed	:	go fast (तेज गति)
post	:	to travel with speed (गति के साथ यात्रा)
they also serve—wait	:	the best service that one can render to God is to be patient in one's life and wait for some other opportunity for service (व्यक्ति को ईश्वर की सेवा के लिए धैर्यवान होना चाहिए और सेवा के उचित अवसर की प्रतीक्षा करनी चाहिए)

|| Exercise ||

➡ Answer the following questions :

1. Write central idea of the poem 'On His Blindness'.
2. What is the 'talent' to which the poet refers?
3. Find out the Figures of Speech used in the lines :
but patience, to prevent That murmur, soon replies.

➡ Explain the following lines with reference to the context :

1. But patience Him best.
2. His state stand and wait.
- Or** Is kingly stand and wait.
3. To serve there with light-denied.
4. Doth God exact day gifts; who best.
5. When I consider soul more best.

