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Subsidiary

John Milton's poem "**On His Blindness**" is a well known autobiographical sonnet. It is written in the style of Petrarchan sonnet. Petrarchan sonnets consist of 14 lines: the first 8 lines (octave) introduce a problem and the remaining 6 lines (sestet) find a solution. The poem differs from the Petrarchan sonnet in its theme and construction. Generally Petrarchan sonnets deal with love where as this poem deals with spiritual/ physical pain of the writer. The poem is written in the first person narration, where the poet laments about his loss of sight. Milton lost his eyesight in 1652 when he was 44 years old. He wrote this poem in 1655 when he completely lost his vision.

The poem begins with a subordinate clause 'When' which leaves the readers in suspense. The poet talks about his blindness. He has become blind in the middle of his life. He has to live in the dark and wide world for the rest of his life. He feels that God has gifted him with the greatest talent: writing poetry. He expresses his desire to serve God by using the ability which God has given him. Unfortunately he is unable to fulfill his wish to write because of his blindness. Due to the pain of being blind, Milton starts the poem in bitter and hard tone.

Milton feels that God might scold him for not using his talents. Milton asks whether God needs man's service. He foolishly questions, If God wants man to serve him, why did God take away the light from his eyes? He wonders whether he will be able to produce great works being blind.

As Milton laments about his blindness and God's criticism, Patience, a guardian Angel, arrives with the reply that God never need man's service. Whoever is ready to bear the burden of life will serve the God well. God has servants all over the world who are all the time serving him over the land and the ocean without any rest. The poet realises the fact that God does not need man's service, and does not take away the talents He has given to man. He is the supreme power and has countless servants. The people who accept all the struggles of life without questioning God serve him the most. Thus the poem ends with a positive note. The Octave of the poem starts with the pain and the problem of blindness. The Sestet concludes with a positive note that accepting the entire struggle without lamenting is serving God. The poem describes Milton's philosophy of life. This is his pure experience of physical life.