

How soon hath time



HOW SOON HATH TIME- JOHN MILTON HOW SOON HATH TIME is a Petrarchan sonnet written by John Milton the famous English poet. It is a sonnet written on the 9th of December 1631. Typical of the Petrarchan sonnet, there is a tonal change as well as a change in the mood and emotions of the poet. The poem has an autobiographical touch. In the Octave, the poet laments the passage of 23 years of his life, especially the 23rd year. The sonnet begins with a tone of frustration and desperation. He suffers from the complex growing youngsters have.

Time is pictured as a subtle thief of youth which has wings and it has carried away the 23 years of his life. His days are hurrying away in a rush. He is growing by age, but the spring of his life has seen no bud nor blossom. He fears that he has not achieved anything in his life despite crossing 23 years. In the second half of the octave, he states that though he has attained manhood, he does not look his age. He has that physical immaturity which has made him look very young and effeminate. He despairs of not only being unmasculine, but also a failure in life as a poet and also as a respectable man of high standing.

Physical immaturity seems to go hand in hand with mental, psychological and intellectual immaturity. Though he is a man now, he does not have the mature looks nor does he find an inward ripeness. He feels sad that some people are so well endowed at the proper time. The word ENDOWED suddenly makes the poet realize the 'one who endows'- God. Eventually the mood changes. There is an introspection and acceptance. He comes to terms with the reality. He feels that all he needs is time and necessarily, along with it, the blessings of God.

He would, one day, sooner or later, in a large amount or small, bless him. It is destiny, he realizes. He would indeed be blessed by God and his fortunes may change for the better. He decides to 'stand and wait' in anticipation of the grace of God. He feels that right now, it is the destiny allotted by God and accordingly, he has to carry out his part of the duty and wait in patience. He dreams of a day when God blesses him in His own strictest measure. He would bless him with a sense of creativity so that he would bloom to be a better poet.

He realizes that human beings are allotted to play their roles, to perform God's will. If he waits with patience, God's grace would be on him eternally. Sometimes less, sometimes more, it may vary, but the Almighty, the Power, would always remain up above, blessing him. So all he needs is Time, Patience and the will of Heaven. In the last line, the poet refers to God as a Taskmaster. A taskmaster's job is to extract work and God will make him strive hard so that one day he would be a greater poet; because that is what, he feels, God intends him to be.

If not today, perhaps someday, he will achieve what he dreamed of, the success he strived for and the glory he anticipated. He would certainly succeed as what he aspired to be. The sonnet ends with a tone of hope and consolation. Milton presents the same theme in ON HIS BLINDNESS. A parallel reference can be made of the lines from Shakespeare's AS YOU LIKE IT where he speaks that we are allotted to play our roles; to perform God's will. -- " All the world's a stage and all men and women mere players