

Milton's *Samson Agonistes*: A Renaissance Image of Man

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Abstract— John Milton is a poet more than a dramatist, hence, his poetry is plentifully studied, examined, analyzed, and/or criticized but his drama is sparsely done. This study tries to shed light on *Samson Agonistes* as drama. It is an analytical, philosophical and literary approach of one important figure in The Puritan age, John Milton, and his play as an image of the Renaissance man. The study takes up the theme of knowledge—divine or human knowledge and man's reaction apropos that. The current study tries in its aim to highlight the frequent remarkable demerits such as misfortunes and suffering, unfortunate wife, unsuccessful mission, and plight between Milton and Samson. It is a pursuing process for Milton's age, and thoughts reflected in his work, *Samson Agonistes*. The study also attempts to shed light on how Milton employs his genius literary techniques in this verse play. The study starts with an introduction followed by the concept of the Renaissance man. The paper deals with views of misfortunes and suffering thereafter, it depicts Milton's views concerning women as a result of his hatred to his wife. The research pursues analytically the concepts of ineffective mission, and plight imaged by Milton about himself and Samson, his main character of the play.

Keywords— Drama, Image of Man, literature, John Milton, Renaissance, seventeenth century.

I. INTRODUCTION

John Milton (1608-1674) is a great poet and dramatist who prominently contributed to the English literature at the end of the Renaissance Age. "The most permanent literary accomplishment of the Seventeenth Century was in poetry. John Milton 1608 – 1674 is definitely the most remarkable poet of the century after Shakespeare" (Dahami, 2017, p. 45). He presented a different force and technique to literature through adding to the Renaissance culture, love of beauty and moral solemnity in the Puritan age. Puritans are "English Protestant religious group who called for change in the Church of England during the 16th and 17th centuries. Despite the fact that the church had broken its ties to the pope during the reign of Henry VIII" (Fix, 2005, p. 61).

In all of his writings, Milton had the usual attendance of great talents, a lofty and solid confidence in him. Moreover, Milton was a student of languages, mastering at an early age Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and a number of modern languages. Instead of becoming a minister in the Anglican Church, he resolved to become a poet and spent five years at his family's country home, reading. His attacks against the monarchy secured him a position in Oliver Cromwell's Puritan government as Latin secretary for foreign affairs" (Barnet, et al. 2006, p. 1139).

Milton is a Puritan poet who has left an opulent legacy behind him. Milton's "career is a complex bridge between Shakespeare and Dryden" (Dobranski, 2010, p. 59). He was a person of imaginative influence and a master of magnificent style.

With one illustrious exception, no poet of the first order of merit flourished during this epoch [between the accession of James I and the Restoration]; but that illustrious exception was John Milton, who, by common consent, occupies a place in the brilliant galaxy of English poets second only to that of Shakespeare" (Nicoll, 2006, p.89).

John Milton is estimated as a star and a symbol of the hour, has superhuman gift and skills, incarnated in his dramatic piece *Samson Agonistes*. He is often known as the last great Renaissance verse composer in the Tudor and Jacobean folklore. He wrote in an age in which current science had succeeded in altering the model viewpoint of intellectuals from the constant cosmology of the Ptolemaic method towards the heliocentric interpretation such as that the sun and moon were revolving around its centre - the earth- and not the opposite.

Samson Agonistes appeared in 1671¹ and deals with the theme of temptation, dramatizing how a strong man yielded to lust and seeming selfishness. It is a drama of fortune and misfortune, of bravery and meekness. It can be also of the fate of a folk and the menace of seduction. There are several critics maintain that this dramatic piece of poetry is flat, meaningless, and artificial because it deals with a personal event. However, from the point of view of the eighteenth-century critics, if the work of literature is read as a page of contemporary history, it becomes human, pregnant with real despair. If fiction is truer than fact, fact is more tragic than fiction.

There is no definite date for writing the understudy play, *Samson Agonistes*. It may be hypothetically stated that *Samson Agonistes* was completed before 1667 but it was published possibly in 1671. Raymond supports (2010), the idea saying, "When Milton did compose a tragedy, *Samson Agonistes*, probably written in the mid-1660s and published in 1671, he was careful to distinguish himself from the fashionable drama of the day" (p. 331). In this dramatic form, Milton returned to an ancient manner and stating that he never intended it for the theatre.

The drama is measured with three segments or forms. The first form can be Greek. Euripides, Sophocles and Aeschylus played a part in its formation. The second segment can be

¹ Rufus Wilmot Grisword in his book *The Prose Works of John Milton* states that the play *Samson Agonistes* was published in 1672.

measured as Hebrew through its characters but there is another emphasis, which is Christian. The work presumably is mixed with all the mentioned segments with different dominance from one to another. It is the greatness of Milton in combining three cultures together, the Greek form, the Hebrew subject and the Christian echoes.

II. THE CONCEPT OF THE RENAISSANCE MAN

The Italian renaissance has greatly influenced the European Renaissance because of many thinkers, philosophers, poets and artists whose literary works contributed to the dignity of man which led to exuberant and intellectual achievements of humanity. The renaissance literary figures tried to achieve a suitable syncretism between the Greek classical philosophy and the church to reconcile the religions of the ancient civilizations with Christianity. They attempted to expound religious teachings and exploring other philosophical fields at the same time trying to reach the concept of attributing the whole thing to the responsibility of god. Such ideas formed a certainty that man is not fully in charge or he does not have the wish to be responsible. Thus, the absence of private responsibility was an existing thought during the Renaissance. "In a memorable passage in Book IV (238-284) [of *Paradise Regained*] Milton gives the most eloquent of pleas for ancient culture. He speaks in his own person as a man of the Renaissance" (Hanford 1918, pp. 176-194).

The Renaissance is a period of concentrating all considerations on human capability and perspective. Intellectuals dedicated their thinking on the relation of human beings to the divine, seeing in human being the pinnacle and purpose of creation. God has put man in the middle of the world. Their interest was to define the human place in the Creator's plan of creation. John Milton is a late English Renaissance dramatic poet, political figure, and an intellectual sort of people. "Milton was an exception. He was the greatest literary genius of this era [during the Puritans]. In his finest works he combines the moral and religious influences of Puritanism with the generous culture of the Renaissance" (English Renaissance. pdf. p. 34).

The perception of knowledge covers a key element of Milton as an image of Renaissance subjectivity. The Renaissance marked an alteration in observations of God's relation to humankind. God has seen as the absolute holder of vision. In the Renaissance, knowledge, as for Milton, was no longer regarded as an absolutely divine privilege. The humankind came to be considered as that one who knows – so to speak, a subject in place of an object. "It is Milton's complete assimilation of Ovid that ... Milton is consciously trying to make himself into Ovid's image" (Kilgour, 2014). In addition, the notion of knowledge caused to experience suddenly the defined terms of awareness of the world in addition to the self, so that subjectivity was grasped via self-consideration and self-representation as it is in the case of Samson. Man is the most fortunate and excellent of all creatures because man does not have a fixed or firm location or position like angels. In the scale of the great chain life, man can go up to the highest position in Devine even more than an

angel or else he may range the scale to reach the most abhorrent position where no one wishes to go. God has given Man the thorough will to go through. According to his will, his longing and judgment he can behave as his desire leads him. The Creator has placed his fate in his hands and it is his choice and will to guide him. Because man has no fixed standing like angels, he possibly will transcend over them according to the free will is given to him by his Creator.

Milton in his early poem, *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, presents a feature of the Renaissance style of writing. He expresses the gods in exile, the gods of older world who have taken flight and scattered themselves in diverse places in earth, some gods hid themselves in Egypt where they found benign and appropriate places. This occurred because, in that time, the third century, Christianity was in its powerful triumph. In this poem, a reader can find youthful enthusiasm of the flight pagan gods as a hint of the Renaissance poetry. Milton believes in certain hypothesis such as believing in God, the availability of evil and the hope of Heaven support. John Milton is shown in most of his works as a spiritual humanist and as a man of both contemplation and deed that could easily be felt in his sonnets. He had charmed in the art of Ovid and then turned to the perfectionism of Dante and Petrarch. Milton's poetry in his earlier years was opulent, decorative and beautiful, showing attractive features derived from the energetic literature of Renaissance age. "Generally, poetry has several reasons on the one hand it instructs, enlightens and trains, and on the other, it entertains, gratifies, and creates a sort of pleasure" (Dahami, 2018b).

Renaissance poets developed the medieval view of Samson as a great man brought inferior by his faith in a faithless woman. His weakness was lust, passion or imprudence. Milton added to his treatment of the theme his own experience and his own interest in the temptation of the dedicated man and in the conflicting claim of public and private life.

Samson, "An individual who does not have the strength and skill to control his own desires will not have the skill needed to rule others" (Varghese, 1999, p. 205), resists temptation, but he is a human sinner facing heavy odds and the processes of resistance bemoan the subjugation of despair. Like Eliot's Becket, Samson faced a sort of temptation although the result was different in which Samson failed but Becket thrived over his tempters. "The tempters expose the hidden ambition in his [Becket] mind reminding him of his inner secular grandeur" (Dahami, 2018a). Samson is isolated, even from the sympathizers, alone with god in inward struggle. In *Samson Agonistes*, the reader can find a strong sense of controlling and spiritual effort. The fate of man is ordained by the god. "Nobody can shield himself or his city without the backing and patronage of God" (Dahami, 2020). People "find a strong sense of both spiritual effort and controlling grace. Man's fate is divinely ordained: it is God who raises man from fall, by laws not only inexplicable to man but perhaps intrinsically irrational" (Sukauta, 2006, p. 229). God raises man from fall. In addition, there is the theme of better fortitude Samson's lot and fortitude, which cannot be seen by the chorus. He tries to combine the two methods of

deliverance, his death and his sin, which become self-liberation.

III. MISFORTUNES AND SUFFERING

Samson Agonistes is a melodrama tells the story of Samson, a giant who was prophesied that on growing up, he would start to deliver the Jewish people from their rulers. Nevertheless, he was let down by his wife Dalila, who displayed the secret of his power which lay in his hair. His hair was shorn when he was asleep, leaving him ineffective. His rulers, the Philistines, blinded him and took him as a prisoner in Gaza. He had to do very laborious work every day. By the passing of time, his strength came back by growing up of his hair. Then, in feats display by him in a celebration for the Philistines he shook down the two pillars of the Philistines palace. The root of the building fell down upon the heads of all people beneath killing him along with a great number of Philistines.

The play displays three themes. The first is the English activist politician which is a portrait of Milton the Puritan himself, the second is the Greek tragedy when an officer comes to demand Samson's presence at the feast of Dagon that he may amuse the Philistine lords with accomplishments of strength. He at first let the messenger go with a refusal: but, with a premonition of the end which recalls Oedipus at Colonus, he suddenly modifies his mind. Tragedy works at the essential level of feelings, as Aristotle emphasized and Milton pointed out in his pamphlets. The prefatory description of this tragic play emphasizes the centrality of Aristotelian catharsis in deciding the theatrical action by levitating pity and fear to purify the mind of sentiments that is to decrease them to a degree with a sort of enjoyment.

Throughout the play, the language is poetic, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to attract attention. The idea is supported by Bailey in his book *Milton* that Milton decanted his personal feelings and sensations with which the spectacle of his real life is filled and reflected in the life of Samson. It is conspicuous feature to show an insightful effect of Milton's personal experience in life. In 1652, he became utterly blind. He got married to Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powel, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire in his thirty-five years in 1642. He brought his wife to town with him and anticipated advantages of a happy connubial life. His wife seemed not much to be delighted in the desires of extra diet and tough study. She has been used at her father's house to a great company and cheerfulness.

Milton was extremely Republican and opponent to Monarchy. He supported the execution of King Charles I where he was executed in 1640. During the years of the commonwealth in England, Milton worked as a secretary for Oliver Cromwell. The restoration ended in 1660; as a result, Milton has been taken to jail because of his writings against Royalty and his opinions and deeds against monarchy rule. After a long time in jail full of anguish and depression, he has been delivered with great efforts and problems of some of his friends then the environment of his life was full of suffering. He also faced difficulties in blindness, imprisonment, failure in marriage, political persecution, financial stringency and

disease. Such events constituted the misfortunes which faced Milton. Moreover, he wrote *Samson Agonistes* during the period (1667-69). It could be imagined how miserable he must have been feeling at the time of writing this play. It confirmed, "that Milton is liberal if not revolutionary in his politics" (Monnickendam, 1992, pp.181-192).

When *Samson Agonistes* was published in 1671, Milton was not only blind but also, he had been punished by the English Royal government, owing to advocating the Puritan revolutionary leader Oliver Cromwell. *Samson Agonistes* is Milton's last word and, on the whole, his saddest. Yet the final effect of great art is never sad. The sense of greatness transcends all pain. In the preface of *Samson*, Milton alludes to Aristotle's remark that it is the function of tragedy to effect through pity and fear a proper purgation of these emotions.

History here supplies the dramatist with the rudiments of narration. It is looked at as a nobler art animated by dramatic attraction. Morality in such a tragedy, teaches the noble bounds, presenting different shades, of vice and virtue and at the same time shows the tendency of the passions, either single or combined with clear images. In this tragedy, there are much certain attractiveness, many just sentiments and arresting lines; but it lacks that power of attracting the consideration, which a well-connected design fabricates. When John Milton wrote the drama in verse of *Samson Agonistes*, he selected the last period of Samson's life. This period is esteemed as the climax of the play. "Samson ...had carelessly given his 'strength' to the 'Delilahs of the earth' and allowed himself to be 'blinded' by the spoils of power" (Knoppers, 2012, p. 469). Samson is shown as a slave and a prisoner in the jail of Gaza City in Palestine. His wife, Dalila, betrayed him by giving his secret to the Philistines. They arrested him and blinded his eyes.

Samson is so much sadder as Milton himself. The lonely hours of a blind man of prodigy, joined spiritual war and fight for a great cause but utterly defeated. He is often full of hopelessness, half-resigned and half-rebellious broodings. Throughout the play, we hear clearly the voice of Milton himself. Samson "is a prisoner of the Philistines and blind, a phase which many have compared to the assumed circumstances of the blind poet himself, after the collapse of the Commonwealth and his political hopes" (Drabble, 2000, p. 894). Moreover, "Milton ... For nearly a quarter of a century he had been in the van of contemporary history. He had abandoned poetry and polite letters. He had dedicated himself entirely to the service of his country and of his cause" (Churton, 1948, p. 4).

Milton described the sad, disappointed, blind and afflicted Samson as suffering from atrocious misery, from a mental afflict and agony. On the other side, when Milton wrote such a drama, he was blind himself. Samson, because of many other misfortunes, became a victim resembling Milton. It is reasonable that for a writer who is giving a picture of the mind of his protagonist, with whom he himself has a lot in common, to set many of himself in the character of the hero. Many critics confirmed the idea that Milton is the counterpart of his hero. Both of them, Milton and Samson are captive, blind,

helpless, and old. They are mocked by their wives and both are miserable in the disappointment of their ideals.

Knowing about Milton's own circumstances in life and his state of mind, make it much obvious that Milton's description of his hero, Samson, at this point of career is largely corresponding with his own. In the opening soliloquy of Samson can be read as a reflection of Milton's own anguish and blindness. Samson says;

There I am wont to sit, when any chance
Relives me from my task of servile toil,
Daily in the common prison else enjoined me.
Where I a prisoner chained, scarce freely draw
The air imprisoned also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught: but here I feel amends,²

In addition, Milton's own blindness and anguish is clearly depicted by the Chorus and Samson's father Manoa. Samson says that his blindness is the worst calamity for him. He finds himself blind among opponents and this blindness is worse than beggary, dungeon, or even being in chains. He adds that even the dirty useless worm has eyes to see; but Samson does not have this power any longer. Because of being blind, he is only half-alive and more than half dead, he says;

Dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day! p. 17

It is more than possible to read these lines in Samson's lament and to discover then an expression of Milton's own sentiment and sense of loss in his frustration after being blind. After that, The Chorus comes bemoaning the loss of eyesight of Samson. They start asking either to bewail his loss of eyesight or his imprisonment.

They say;

Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark? ...
Imprisoned now indeed
In real darkness of the baby dwells,
Shut up from outward light
To incorporate with gloomy night p. 19

Samson's father, Manoa, gossips that Samson is a prisoner, poor and blind under the mercy of his antagonists. Samson's depression is owing to his being blind and imprisoned.

All Milton's poetical works are intensely passionate and personal: but none so much so as *Samson Agonistes*, where he is fixing all eyes on the tragedy of his own life. The matching between Samson and Milton does not cover all the details. Nevertheless, many of them correspond, such as the loss of sight, the devastating marriage, the old age of a damaged and beaten champion become a gazing-stock to triumphant profanity. More than any special circumstance, it is the entire general position of Samson as a man devoted from his birth to the service of God, and accepting the dedication, yet failing in his task and apparently abandoned by his God, which makes of him a type in which Milton can see himself. In addition, the

²Milton. 1984. *Samson Agonistes*. Ed. Collins, John Churton. Oxford: Oxford Press. p. 15 [all passages on *Samson Agonistes* are quoted from this source; number of pages will be added.]

Cromwellian saints who lay ground under the heels of the victorious Philistines of the Restoration. To him as to Samson the situation is one that makes interrogations on the dark and doubtful ways of God unavoidable: darker to him even than to Samson: for he has no guilty memory of a supreme act of folly to explain, according to Milton, the divine desertion. In *Samson Agonistes*, the Chorus's final speech emphasizes that God's ways remain beyond human comprehension. But once again Milton does not merely imitate one of his classical forebears; instead, he modifies Euripides's idea by also stressing consolation and peace (Dobranski, Stephen B. 2012, p.45), Milton says through the:

All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about, ...
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind, all passion spent pp. 62 – 63.

IV. THE COMMENTS AND VIEWS OF THE CHORUS

The chorus in *Samson* decodes to the spectators and serves as a vehicle for the playwright to communicate his visions as in the Greek chorus. The Chorus interrogates Samson for his choice of selecting a Philistines wife. The comments, at the beginning, indicate that the Israelis reject his leadership. They like better, according to Samson, 'bondage' to 'liberty'. Dobranski confirms the idea saying "The Israelites, he [Samson] complains, had grown corrupt in their servitude and began to 'love bondage more than liberty'" (Dobranski, 2012, p. 193). Here it is a hint to the Royalist British people whom, to an extent, did not support freedom but they, similar to the Israelis, and prefer the bondage of the crown to the liberty of the Cromwellians.

Milton's wife, Mary Powell the daughter of a Royalist squire of Oxfordshire once visited her family and refused to return to her husband. Milton was very anxious and he said in his tracts that, a loveless marriage is a crime against the dignity of human beings. Primarily because of the conduct of his wife Mary, he started to despise woman in general and started to look upon female as a creature second-rate to man. The central reason of human sin, iniquity, depravity and debauchery, according to Milton's *Paradise Lost* is woman. Eve seduced Adam to disobey God and therefore eat from the forbidden tree. In Milton's pamphlets, he insisted and urged that man is created superior to woman. On this basis, all husbands have the right to exercise full domination and authority upon their wives. This perspective of Milton finds similar expression in *Samson Agonistes*. The Chorus comments most unfavorably upon Dalila after she has left and upon woman in general. She cooperated with her people to learn the secret of Samson's power and eventually helped in his imprisonment. Milton's hatred of his first wife has clearly made its imprint on writing *Samson Agonistes* where he formulated it according to his views and feeling. Alexander Raleigh Walter shares the point that in writing *Samson Agonistes*, the power of Milton's moods regarding his wife Dalila affected Milton to diverge from following Greek style and to consign unsuitable matter to the Chorus different from what the chorus is assigned for since the Greek dramatists.

The Chorus asks why woman is worthless and they answer, according to Milton, that because women do not have enough judgment. Women do not have sufficient moral sense to be able to decide what is most desired or to appraise what is best. Women often feel a preference for the wrong, trivial and worthless things. The Chorus declares:

Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish't judgment scant,
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self – love mixt,
Of constancy no root infix't.

That either they love nothing, or not long? pp. 42 - 43

The chorus adds that the wisest men have discovered that women who before their marriage looked diffident, modest, soft and meek completely change to be most violent when they get married. "The circumstances connected with this marriage have never been clearly explained" (Nicoll, 2006, p. 119). After marriage, a woman transforms to be a 'cleaving mischief' obstructing the progress of her husband toward virtue. The last talk of the chorus in this position shows that the universal law of god has bestowed man the despotic power over his wife. This opinion of the chorus regarding the whole conduct, behavior and the general nature of women are Milton's own estimation and perspectives about Milton's views regarding woman. The Chorus states their sympathy with Samson and he replies, severely reproaching his personal foolishness and that of his people who gave him up to their opponents. The last arguments of the Chorus have remarkable burden in their situation and in what they say. They are no longer responding to direct events, but endeavoring to summarize in a familiar mode of wisdom. 'All is best', and lastly, the conflict has been fixed, so that the 'best is found in the close'.

V. THE CONCEPT OF WIFE

It is said that "Milton, with his unhappy first marriage, his campaign for freedom of divorce, and his deliberate subordination of Eve to Adam in Paradise Lost, was and often still is held to be ... what the present age calls a male chauvinist" (Greenblatt, et al. 2006, p. 2151). There are precise references to the circumstances of Milton's life, which are prototypes of Samson's. They are adequate and clear such as his bitter self-condemnation for having chosen his first wife from the group of his opponents, and his shock near the close of an austere life.

Milton, as the same as Samson, had a wife from amongst people who were not pleasant to him. Milton was of Republican views, whereas his wife Mary is related to a royalist family. Samson has picked his wife from amongst his enemies. Dalila is a lady "of the valley of Sorek, loved by Samson; she persuaded him to tell her the secret of his strength and (by cutting off his hair) betrayed him to the Philistines. ... In Milton's version she is Samson's second wife" (Drabble, 2000, p. 270). Samson had been deceived by his wife who was the reason to deprive him of his power. "In

Samson Agonistes, Samson describes his own body as a ship, 'shipwreck't' by his lust for Delilah" (Fenton, 2006, p. 21).

Milton's wife Mary felt that Milton's house is not congenial to her. She refused to live in it and went back to her parents soon after marriage. She had no disposition to return to her husband's habitation, and therefore forgot her promise. He sent her letters, but had no answer. He therefore dispatched a messenger, being by this time so annoyed. His messenger was sent back with some contempt. Like Samson's, the family of the lady were Cavaliers. Milton felt with sorrow and grief of disloyalty of his wife. Mary Powell's case caused considerable mental torture for Milton. He soon decided to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify such inclination. He has put his own personal feeling and sentiment when he wrote the dialogue between Samson and his wife. Milton has showed the mental torture of Samson the time Dalila came to see him. Samson depicts Dalila saying:

Out, out, hyena! These are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every women false like thee,
To beak all faith, all vows, deceive, betray p. 35
How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
That malice, not repentance, brought thee hither p. 37

In the middle of this literary work "is the encounter between Samson and Dalila. Biographers, hungry for insight into Milton's marriages, want to read Milton's intimate feelings for women into Samson's self-reproach" (Forsyth, 2008, p. 195). It is perhaps, that description of Dalila, which is more effective, emphatic and strong because of Milton's own peculiar sensation and emotion against his wife in particular, and women in general however, even if Dalila is a 'serpent', she is by no means symbolic of women in common, and the idea of 'despotic power' is no more adequate for a husband than a sovereign.

VI. UNSUCCESSFUL MISSION OF A DEDICATED MAN

It could be said that Milton chose Samson, the hero, whose massive power was given in order to set his people free, as a proper parallel to Milton himself. Milton's intellectual valor was devoted to achieve faith and truth to his country. In the poetic play, the significant of Milton's personal theme is that of the dedicated man who is selected for a specific mission.

Samson comes to realize two truths that have impaired his divinely given mission to liberate Israel. The first [is] that his own people have failed their divine national calling, have grown 'to love bondage more than liberty' ... Milton had experienced the same abandonment of the revolutionary cause in England where ... the English people, preferring 'bondage with ease', chose to recall the exiled King from France (Danielson, 1997, p. 228).

Samson's knowledge of his failure to have served god is the reason of his agony and torment, "As the lion which would devour Samson is devoured by him, so Samson, in seeking to destroy the philistines, is himself destroyed" (Shawcross, 2001, p. 57) on a similar method could be assumed that it is the same cause for the depression of Milton himself. He was

very dejected and depressed in a time before he wrote this verse melodrama and this dejection was because of bad events of his life from 1642 onward. Milton's blindness, the unworthiness of those for whom he labored, and his overthrow could create deep springs of self-emotions and sensation. There are some lines in which Samson talks regarding the slavery and liberty he says that, when a nation has become corrupted because of being long under slavery, it appears to love bondage more than freedom and liberty. He says;

But what more oft in nation grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty; p. 22

Here Milton refers to his people whose love of slavery had been responsible for coming back of monarchy to England and the rejection of freedom and republicanism.

VII. THE PLIGHT

At the beginning of the drama, Samson is seen struggling with his personal failure in his mission. His burden was to release the Israeli slaves. The concept is greatly similar to the target-dream of Milton, which is to free the British people from the grasp of the Royal Crown. John Milton was a classical republican. He considers and respects the rule by value and excellence. He had little respect for the ruling of the mob. He desired to have his people democratic with great liberty and freedom. Samson's people have themselves failed. They seem to prefer slavery more than freedom. The idea of Milton's own people is similar, that is shown in the failure of the Puritan revolutionists and restoring the Kingdom.

When the commonwealth came to its end in 1660 and replaced again by Kingdome rule in England, Milton suffered a deep distress and frustration. His wishes and hopes regarding the commonwealth wiped out. Charles I became the king of England and the royalists commenced persecuting the previous followers and supporters of Oliver Cromwell as well as the commonwealth. Even Milton was within those who had been mistreated and persecuted. Owing to such happenings, Milton could enter utterly into the emotions of his protagonist, Samson. The idea is supported by Corson H. (n.d.) in which Milton envisaged that the king would be sentenced, and that he ought to take part in the succeeding government. Realizing through experiences and expected sorrows, he made the fortunes of Samson the prototype of his final design exemplifying symbolically his own identical fortunes.

Like Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Milton's Samson is misfortunate with his plight. Samson must have worse agony, anguish and pain because Faustus is an ambitious ordinary learnt man who deserved to be damned because of his irrational lustful ambition for metaphysical power but Samson, according to Milton, is

His god-like presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race? ...
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betrayed, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this Heav'n-gifted strength? P.16

Critics may say that a man such as Samson, given with such grace and power, deserves greater torment because he deviated, as one of the Israelis, from the right path.

Samson fights "so bitterly with the truth primarily because he is not able to take responsibility for his actions, and he is not sure on whom or what he can rightfully place the blame for his plight" (Varghese, 1999, p. 210). He intended to do a grand act and to start to set his people free from being slaves to the Philistines but his hopes and the waited act came to nothing when he became imprisoned in the hand of the Philistines. In his growing up, Samson has been led by his mind to do good deeds that were over the power of ordinary humans. His acts are supposed to be directed to the Philistines. Nevertheless, his present condition is the opposite. He has been ejected to the mercy of his enemies who captured him and kidnapped his most precious thing – eyesight. He is being left to misery and only misery. Samson miserably declares;

I was his nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by heavenly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thrived amain;
He led me on to mightiest deeds
Above the nerve of mortal arm,
Against the uncircumcis'd, our enemies:
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provok't,
Left me all helpless with th' irreparable loss
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless p. 32

These lines of Samson are of great witness that Milton imagined himself in place of Samson. Such lines comprise clear element of autobiography. Milton himself was proud of his parents and at a time, he was the champion and darling of his countrymen. Similarly, like Samson, Milton was betrayed by his people who praised the return of Charles II to the Throne. Samson's plight is the same as Milton's own plight, a plight without desire or hope, a plight shows the agony of a proud and brave man enforced to life of unendurable circumstances. Milton "was sparing in his use of wine. His Samson, who in this as in other things, is Milton himself" (Pattison, 2005, p. 90). Milton has made himself analogue for the component of his drama that he appears to have employed his knowledge to elucidate the elementary meanings of this drama and to manage such meanings universal and comprehensible. Furthermore, "*Samson Agonistes*, a classical tragedy, is the more harrowing for the resemblances between its tragic hero and its author. The deeply flawed, pain-wracked, blind, and defeated Samson struggles... to gain self-knowledge" (Greenblatt, and Abrams, 2006, p. 1789).

Samson is in the polemic and in depicting the Restoration era of his time. There is not a pathetic knowledge than of *Samson Agonistes*. It is knowledge for which every reader of the dramatist needs to be adequately aware. On this basis, the reader may perceive the situation of Samson at the beginning

of the play and at the end. He himself, by his will descended down to the lowest forms of brutish life by disobedience to the instructions of his creed through pursuing pleasure and lust. He could rise up again to the divine life by repentance, resisting all the enticements.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This poetic play argues the concept of a revenge tragedy: such misfortune regularly echoes and mediates in an age full of spiritual controversies. The inner motivation of vengeance, which Samson sought, has done just with his doom. The concept of mind frames things and demonstrates a perceptual predicament of revenge in Renaissance tragedy that the spectators are offered with observable proof of the real existence of the inner stimulus, which at least certain characters recognize.

It has thus been essential first to assess Milton's proclamations of the philosophies, principally those that deal with learning. He frequently lengthened, developed, elucidated, and controlled the concepts and manners of expression of his ancestor pioneers. The poetic drama validates Samson as a fallen man who arrogantly stands against God's orders through surrender to lust that leads him at the end to self-homicide and others. So to speak, Milton's Samson is, as the same as Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, a renaissance image of knowledgeable man but in the wrong side of using such knowledge. The result of such great knowledge and position is suffering and calamity, unsuccessful marriage, ineffective mission, plight led to committing suicide. To conclude, this study attempted to demonstrate that Milton's grander knowledge was basically an extension of the Renaissance pursuing moral grounds as a means of expressing ethical effects. Summarizing the themes understudy point out that Milton's knowledge was truly a continuation of the Renaissance images of knowledge.

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