



## PROMINENCE OF TIME AND RHETORIC OF TIME MANAGEMENT – A STUDY OF TIME IN JOHN MILTON'S *ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF 23*

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### ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview for those interested in the current state-of-the-art in time management skills and importance of time in human life with general perspectives in reference with John Milton's *On his Having Arrived at the age of 23*". The paper demonstrates that time management behavior relates positively to perceived control of time, job satisfaction, and health, and negatively to stress. The relationship with work and academic performance is not clear. Time management training seems to enhance time management skills, but this may not automatically transfer to better performance. On the literary plane, Milton's ardent faith in the will of the Providence is critically studied.



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### INTRODUCTION

Time is a common element from a great millionaire to a beggar. Hence, it is an unbiased element in the world irrespective of caste, creed and anything else. Moreover, depends on the importance its' utilization varies from person to person. Everybody knows the famous phrase that *Time and Tide waits for none*. This quote gives a complete idea

that time is unique to all; it is unbiased and given by God to all unanimously. But, it is in the hands of the individual to utilize the time.

Managing time is an art and it is a skill. Maintain and do things in the first-cum-first order or in the order of priority is the elementary technique of maintaining time in a smarter way. If one is able to control the life it means he or she is able to control



the things in life easily in a systematic way. That is the power of time management.

During the last two decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of time in the organizational literature. According to Orlikowsky and Yates (2002), the temporal dimension of work has become more important because of expanding global competition and increased demands for immediate availability of products and services.

However the importance of time and the usage of time towards the achievements of goal were told by John Milton in 1631. In his poem *On his Having Arrived at the age of 23*, Milton is thought to have written the sonnet shortly after graduating from Cambridge University, and the poem is very consistent with the thoughts of a young man who has completed the early phase of his life and is about to move into a wider world. The poet laments at the death of time:

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth?  
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!  
My hasting days fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

He says that the time is a subtle thief, which takes the whole valuable age of us. He bothers that time is taken his valuable time where he couldn't spend his time for God where he wanted to pray to God for the rest of his life. He wanted to spend most of his time to God and spend in search of God's miracles. He regrets for not spending much of his time for the sake of God and he cries out:

Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,  
That I to manhood am arrived so near,  
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th.

In it, he also assesses himself in terms of his personal maturity, suggesting that he doesn't appear to be as mature as others of his age, but that he may be more mature than he appears. Here "ripeness" (maturity) can be interpreted in terms of achievement and accomplishment, as well as in personal growth and understanding.

The poet knows that Time will march on, God will perform his will in the Universe, and that the

young man of twenty-three will, either slowly or quickly, become a productive and proper individual as intended by his Creator, if he uses what God has given him in pursuing his dreams.

The crisis created by Milton's awareness of the passage of time is one that can be resolved by the poet's choice to put his future in God's hands. In the first eight lines, the "octave" of the sonnet, Milton worries that time has passed too quickly. He has been at Cambridge studying, but has had little time to fulfill what he sees as his destiny. Milton is aware that he is a talented poet, but instead of writing poetry, he has been studying. This precipitates a crisis of faith for the poet, who worries he has wasted precious time. But maybe the poet's talent, which "be it less or more," will be less when he is mature. He worries, although he is still confident of his future. In the final six lines, the "sestet" of the sonnet, Milton acknowledges that time, whether "soon or slow," will still inevitably lead him to God. This is the same future that all men will face, "however mean or high." Time will lead Milton to God, if he can accept the limitations of earthly time. In these final lines, Milton finds the answer to his problem in giving control over his life to God and, as a result, his crisis of faith is resolved.

Milton uses this sonnet to symbolize the poet's journey from doubt to self-discovery. He feels guilty about his time spent studying when he has not published anything and laments at the loss: "late spring no bud or blossom shows". But later in line nine the pronoun "it" is used to project the poet's talents which will be ripen soon with the growing age. As he nears age twenty-four, the poet feels that he is at the border between youth and manhood, a time to which he has "arrived so near." He worries that when he reaches maturity his talent may be less, rather than more.

As an ardent follower of God's Mercy, Milton is quite optimistic of the will of the Providence:

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
It shall be still in strictest measure even  
To that same lot, however mean or high,  
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of  
Heaven,  
All is, if I have grace to use it so,



As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

He has firm faith on God, the great Task-Master who can allot some noble jobs for him. Really Milton's optimism is highly solicited. "The peculiar blending of the sublime and the familiar which he achieves is unique in the history of the English sonnet" (John 52).

As a common middle class man Milton expresses his sorrowful ideas of wasting his time unknowingly as he wanted to spend his valuable time for the purpose of praising God. He realizes that the time was wasted and from then he wanted to get use of it properly. In my opinion this is the thing which happens to every man's life, not only in Milton's life. His arguments can be generalized to all the human beings in day-to-day life. His realistic approach towards the time resembles every one's attitude towards the management of time. Many of the people take New Year resolutions, where majority of the cases they fail to keep up their near promises. Once after the completion of the year they come to know that the year completes. The same happens again and again in everybody's life unless they keep a time setter and manage the time in a systematic way.

In this way the famous and well known poet Milton expresses his feelings on time. In the same manner, all the human beings knowingly or unknowingly waste their time irrespective of any reasons. Sometimes people innocently waste the time later they regret for it. However, there will be no use of that regression once the time is passed away.

I would like to conclude my topic of time management with an anecdote. A woman who is a retired lady alone at home with no other work to do except to look after her own routine spends the whole day to write a letter to his son who is abroad from morning till evening by drafting, searching for address, planning for writing and searching for pen, spectacles and so on. If the same letter is supposed to be posted by the young employee he or she reaches the post office on the way to the work, takes the letter and jots down and immediately drops in the post box. Hence, with the above anecdote one can identify the utilization of time depends on person to person. With this I would like to conclude the time is common to all but the way of utilization depends

on the mindset of individuals. So if any person comes with the answer of no time in his or her life to do a particular task it means he or she is unable to maintain time in a systematic way.

Based on the literature, I suggest a definition on time management as, "behaviors that aim at achieving an effective use of time while performing certain goal-directed activities". This definition highlights that the use of time is not an aim in itself and cannot be pursued in isolation. The focus is on some goal-directed activity, such as performing a work task or an academic duty, which is carried out in a way that implies an effective use of time. The following aspects require pivot attentions:

First of all, time management has been defined and operationalized in a variety of ways. Some instruments were not reliable or valid, which could account for unstable findings. Second, many of the studies were based on cross-sectional surveys and used self-reports only. Third, very little attention was given to job and organizational factors. There is a need for more rigorous research into the mechanisms of time management and the factors that contribute to its effectiveness. The ways in which stable time management behaviors can be established also deserves further investigation. This paper makes clear which aspects may be expected of time management, which aspects may be most useful for which individuals, and which work characteristics would enhance or hinder positive effects. Its outcomes may help to develop more effective time management practices.

## CONCLUSION

This paper on time management studies gives an impression of how useful time management may be. Although some appear to be skeptical about the results of implementation of time management in practice, scientific studies have demonstrated that the popularity of time management is justified in as far as it has some favorable effects on people's perceptions and feelings. Results of past studies were consistent in showing evidence of positive effects of time management on perceived control of time, job satisfaction, and negative effects on job-induced tensions. Additionally, perceived control of time was found to be associated with higher self satisfaction,



and to mediate the relation between time management and several other outcome variables. As for the effects of time management on job performance, results were inconclusive.

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