



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH- (2023-24)

QUESTION BANK - CHILDHOOD by Markus Natten

Class: XI

Subject: ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

In this poem the poet thinks deeply over the question of his lost childhood. Childhood is a stage of innocence in which the child believes others and loves unconditionally. The poet has tried to identify some stages of his life when his thoughts and perceptions of the world changed. The poem describes the first step to maturity or loss of childhood when one is able to think logically and rationally. Forming one's own opinion and not getting influenced by others is also a sign of maturity or loss of childhood. The poem also hints at the hypocrisy prevalent in our society, where people pretend to be nice to each other but in reality, they do not like each other.

SUMMARY

The speaker pondered deeply upon the spiritual questions of life and ultimately realized the fact that his childhood days were finally gone down into the past for good and would never return. Childhood would now only remain in his memories.

He wondered if the end of childhood was the day, he ceased to be eleven years old. The time when he realized that Heaven and Hell could not be found in Geography and never could be. Where did his childhood go? Was it the time he realized that adults were not all they seemed to be? They talked of love and they preached of love, but did not act so lovingly nor practiced what they preached. Was that the day. Where did his childhood go? Was it when he found out that his mind was really his? To use it whichever way he chose? To produce thoughts that was not those of other people but his and his alone. Was that the day? Where did his childhood go? It went to some forgotten place that is hidden in a baby's face. That was all that he knew and that was all that he remembered.

The poet feels that heaven and hell are not real places because they could not be located in geography. In the poem 'Childhood, the poet is trying to realise the age when he lost his childhood, when he became mature enough to understand the worldly things. So, he keeps saying, "when did my childhood go?" He finally realises that his childhood is gone to "some forgotten place". "that is hidden in an infant's face. Markus Natten in his poem 'Childhood' has tried to explain the thought. It is child who is noble and pure in her/his thoughts and heart. A child appreciates the nature's beauty and the innocence in the world.

POETIC DEVICES

1. **Personification:** It is the attribution of human characteristics to non-human things and animals. In this poem, childhood is personified. “It went to some forgotten place”.
2. **Alliteration:** It is the occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of closely connected words. e.g. “Hell, and Heaven”, “Was that the day!”, “Was it when I found my mind was really mine”, “whichever way”.
3. **Antithesis/ Oxymoron:** This poetic device pairs opposite or contrasting ideas adjacent to each other. e.g. “Hell, and Heaven”.
4. **Enjambment:** It is the continuation of a sentence to multiple lines. e.g.
“Was it the time I realised that adults were not All they seemed to be, they talked of love and preached of love, but did not act so lovingly, Was that the day!”
5. **Repetition:** It is the repetition of a word or phrase in the poem for poetic effect. e.g. the phrases “When did my childhood go?”, “Was that the day!” have been repeated several times.

I. Answer the following questions in brief.

Q1: Identify the stanza that talks of each of the following:

Individuality, rationalism, hypocrisy

Ans: The stanzas that talk of each of the quality in questions are given below:

- individuality: Third stanza
- rationalism: First stanza
- hypocrisy: Second stanza

Q 2: What according to the poem, is involved in the process of growing up?

Ans: According to the poem, the loss of childhood is involved in the process of growing up. This loss is compensated by some gains which come with adolescence. These are: increase in understanding, power of rationalising and discrimination as well as a sense of individuality and self-confidence.

Q 3: What are the poet’s feelings towards childhood?

Ans: The poet regards childhood as an important stage in the process of growing up. Childhood is a period of make-believe. Children readily accept whatever the elders say. The poet considers childhood as a period of innocence. He sincerely feels that a child is free from all evils and that for a child there is really a Hell and a Heaven. A child knows no hypocrisy. There is no difference between his thoughts and actions. In short, childhood is a state of innocence and purity of heart.

Q 4: Which, do you think are the most poetic lines? Why?

Ans: The following lines in the poem are most poetic:

It went to some forgotten place

That's hidden in an infant's face,
That's all I know.

These lines beautifully sum up the process of growth and the disappearance of a particular stage of life. These lines have a figurative or metaphorical meaning also. The infant's innocent face hides many things behind its smiles. Perhaps the childhood lies hidden in some forgotten place lying buried deep inside a child's consciousness or maybe buried deep within each of us is a child who was forgotten and left behind as we grew. It is the image of the infant face that makes these lines so appealing.

Q5: What did the speaker learn about the existence of Heaven and Hell?

Ans: As the speaker grew to be mature, he acquired reasoning power. He realized that Hell and Heaven could not be found in Geography books or Atlas. Since they could not be located anywhere in the world map, he concluded that they did not exist. He would believe only what he could see and find.

Q6: How did the speaker realise the hypocrisy of the adults?

Ans: The speaker noticed a wide gulf between what adults appeared to be and what they actually, were in real life. There was apparent contradiction between their words and deeds. They talked of love and advised others to love, but they never acted lovingly.

Q7: How did the realization of being the master of his own mind help him?

Ans: The realization that he was the master of his own mind, and could use it in any way he liked, filled him with self- confidence. He could now think independently and need not repeat parrot like thoughts of others.

Q8: What happened when Markus Natten completed eleven years of age?

Ans. At eleven years the poet Markus Natten understood the difference between fact and fiction. He understood that the things such as hell and heaven are only figments of human imagination.

Q9: Does the poet think that at eleven years of age he had become an adult?

Ans. Yes, the poet seems to think that it was his first step towards adulthood. This is so because then he had become a rational human being.

Q10: Does the poet think that his mind belonged to him all the time?

Ans. No, the poet thought that in childhood and till now, his mind did not belong to him. It was occupied by thoughts infused by other on his mind. It was the final step towards adulthood when he realized that he was the master of his own mind and need not be guided by any other thought.

Q11: Which one do you think is the most important step toward adulthood? Why?

Ans. Having an independent mind free from any outside influence is the most important step

towards adulthood. That is why, the poet mentions it as the third and the final step. Other steps like being rational or learning hypocrisy show an outside influence while this step shows an internal awakening which is the chief quality of human and separates them from other animals.

Q12: Where has his childhood gone according to the poet?

Ans. The poet cannot exactly remember where his childhood has gone. However, he thinks, that some glimpse of it can be seen in an infant's innocent face.

Q13: The first stanza of the poem Childhood begins with the question "When did my childhood go" But the last stanza begins with "Where did my childhood go?" Do you think that change is significant?

Ans. Yes, the change from 'when' to 'where' is certainly significant. It shows that in the third stanza the poet has got his answer to the question 'when.' Now, in the final stanza he wants to know where the childhood has gone.

II. REFERENCE TO CONTEXT: Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

Q1. *"When did my childhood go?*

*Was it the day I ceased to be eleven,
Was it the time I realised that Hell and Heaven,
Could not be found in Geography,
And therefore, could not be,
Was that the day!"*

- (a) How did the poet realise his being grown up?
- (b) What does the Hell and heaven stand for?
- (c) What kind of phase of his life does the stanza reveal?
- (d) What is the poet asking for?

- (a) Ans. The poet realised his being grown up, when he was able to differentiate between truth and fiction.
- (b) Ans. It stands for the world of imagination that fascinates only small children. These are nothing but the product of our imaginative mind that make the person escape from reality.
- (c) Ans. The stanza reveals the phase of rationalism where he is using his seat of reasoning.
- (d) Ans. He is asking for the time when he lost his childhood.

Q2. *"When did my childhood go?*

*Was it the time I realised that adults were not
all they seemed to be,*

*They talked of love and preached of love,
But did not act so lovingly,
Was that the day!"*

- (a) What does the stanza expose?
- (b) According to the poem when did his childhood go?
- (c) What contrast did he find in adult's behaviour?
- (d) How did he find the hypocrisy in adult's behaviour?

- (a) Ans. The stanza exposes the hypocrisy of the adults.
- (b) Ans- It might have gone when he was able to analyse the contrast of adult's way of thinking and way of life.
- (c) Ans. They talked of human values but did not practice it in their day to day life.
- (d) Ans- He found that they pretend to have certain belief that they do not really have.

Q3. "When did my childhood go?

*Was it when I found my mind was really mine,
To use whichever way I choose,
Producing thoughts that were not those of other people,
But my own, and mine alone
Was that the day!"*

- (a) What do the words "My own" and "mine" stand for?
- (b) When did his childhood go?
- (c) Which phase of life does this stanza show?
- (d) Why did he choose his way?

- (a) Ans. It shows the independent way of thinking of a grown-up. It reveals the development of his own seat of reasoning. It means that his mind was not influenced by others.
- (b) Ans. It might have gone when he realised his self-thinking. When he was able to take his own decision. He realised that his mind was his and he had his own individuality.
- (c) Ans. Individuality, transitional period - between childhood and mature stage.
- (d) Ans. He chose his way to express his own views, which gave him self-confidence.

Q4. "Where did my childhood go?

*It went to some forgotten place,
That's hidden in an infant's face.
That's all I know."*

- (a) What does the first line suggest?
- (b) What would the 'forgotten place' stand for?
- (c) What does he know about his childhood?
- (d) What is the rhyme scheme in the given stanza?

- (a) Ans. It suggests the place where his childhood disappeared.
- (b) Ans. 'Forgotten place' stand for the childhood that cannot be regained or restored.
- (c) Ans. He knows that childhood is the state of mind of a person it will reside in an infant's face only.
- (d) Ans. abba.

III. Answer the following questions in detail.

Q 1: 'Childhood is an essential state in the process of growing up, but it can't go on forever'. Discuss.

Ans: Childhood is an important stage in the process of growing up of every person. The human infant is totally dependent on others, but during childhood he gains physical, emotional and mental strength. As the tiny baby grows bigger in size, other faculties also develop. This stage is an important landmark in man's growth, but it can't go on forever.

Childhood being a stage, must give way to another stage. It is followed by adolescence or early youth. Now all the faculties are fully developed. The person acquires reasoning power. His rationalism helps him to decide truth or falsehood, fact and fiction. He acquires a fine capability of analysis and discrimination. Now he can see through persons and things. He begins to understand the hypocrisy of adults. He gains confidence and becomes an independent thinker.

Q 2: Individuality make us what we are? Elaborate in the context of the poem 'Childhood'.

Answer: Of course, independent thinking, is a step towards adulthood. As a child, one is not able to make one's, own decisions and one's thinking is, always influenced and directed by, adults. A child is so innocent that he, cannot distinguish between truth and, imagination. As a child's thinking is influenced by others, it has no, individuality. Moreover, it is prone to manipulations which lead to fickle mindedness.

Independent, thinking makes us what we are. It shapes our personality, and we are known among people through what our mind thinks and what decisions we take. If we want to stay away from people who try to influence our thoughts for their selfish purposes, then only independent thinking can help us. We cannot claim to be an individual if we cannot take decisions ourselves.

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