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### The Toys- Coventry Patmore

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes  
 And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,  
 Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,  
     I struck him, and dismiss'd  
         With hard words and unkiss'd,  
 His Mother, who was patient, being dead.  
 Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,  
     I visited his bed,  
         But found him slumbering deep,  
 With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet  
         From his late sobbing wet.  
         And I, with moan,  
 Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;  
     For, on a table drawn beside his head,  
         He had put, within his reach,  
 A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,  
     A piece of glass abraded by the beach  
         And six or seven shells,  
         A bottle with bluebells  
 And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,  
         To comfort his sad heart.  
         So when that night I pray'd  
         To God, I wept, and said:  
 Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
         Not vexing Thee in death,  
     And Thou rememberest of what toys  
         We made our joys,  
         How weakly understood  
     Thy great commanded good,  
         Then, fatherly not less  
 Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,  
     Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,  
     "I will be sorry for their childishness."

Coventry Patmore was born in the year 1823 and he died in 1896. He was a famous poet and a critic. He was a religious man and his poems establish his religious beliefs. His publications are *The Angel in the House* and *The Unknown Eros and Other Odes*. The poem *The Toys* talks about a father's love for his son and about the fatherly relation of God to man. *The Toys* is one of the beautiful poems composed by Coventry Patmore. The poem conveys the idea of the mercy of God through an incident in the Poet's house. The verses of this poem are different from other poems. The lines are uneven and are rhymed in an irregular manner.

The poem opens with the words, "My little son". Poet's son had spoken like a grown-up man, so the father has scolded and hit his son. The father regrets and feels bad for his behavior. The son is motherless. The mother dies as a patient. The poet uses the word patient as a pun. If the mother had been alive, she would have been patient but she died of illness. The father sends his son to bed without a kiss. The son spoke like a grown-up man was the crime, but the father calls him a little son, this shows that the father is sad for punishing his son.

The father goes to his son's room. The son is in the bed. He is asleep. The father could see the eyelashes of the son as wet. His son has cried for a long time. The father cries in return. Beside the bed, the father finds a box of counters, red-veined stone, a piece of glass, six or seven shells, a bottle with bluebells, and two French coins. All these toys are arranged in proper order.

The father prays to God. He realizes the truth that every human being is a product of God. God has created human beings in his own image. The father says that God has molded man from clay. God will never punish a man even after his death. God is great. He forgives everyone. Man does not understand the good qualities of God. Man behaves childishly on this earth. God is a better father than a human being is. Through this simple poem, Coventry Patmore conveys the greatness of God. He uses simple language and vivid images to convey his thought.

The poet tells us how he punished his son for disobedience. The child acted and talked just like a grown-up man. He made noise. His father asked him to keep quiet but the son did not obey him. At the seventh time, the father punished his son and sent him away without the usual kisses. The child was much grieved. He left his father and went to bed. After some time, the poet realized that he had made a mistake, as his son was lonely since his mother had died. He feared that the child might not be able to sleep due to his grief. He went to his bedside, but he found the child asleep. His eyelids were swollen due to weeping. His eyelashes were still wet with the drops of tears.

The father became more emotional when he found that his son had very neatly arranged some pieces of glass, a red-veined stone, some shells and a bottle of bluebells, and two French copper coins on the table. They were simple but enough to comfort him. He noticed that the boy had sought consolation in small ordinary objects to comfort his sad heart. It was a touching scene for the father whose wife was dead and there was no one to console the child. He felt sorry for his attitude. The father bent over the child and kissed away the tears from the boy's cheeks, but tears from his own eyes dropped on his son's face. In this poem, the poet points out that God is always kind and merciful to man but man often fails to follow the commands of his creator. He provides man with all the simple joys of life. Yet there are some who do not fear God even on their deathbed. God knows that though we had been disobeying His commands and enjoying ourselves with worldly things, He forgives us. The father hopes that as he has forgiven his son God would pardon him for his childishness. He prayed all night with the feeling that God is merciful and He would forgive him.

### **Questions & Answers-**

#### **What is the significance of the toys in the poem?**

In this poem, the toys act as a metaphor. Firstly, it refers to the simple things that make a child happy. Then, the poet uses it as a metaphor of worldly "toys" that adults take pleasure in. By this reference, he contrasts the innocence of children with the

worldliness of adults. In this way, the “toys” become an important element that helps readers to know the difference between spiritual need and mental greed.

**Do you justify the father’s action in the poem “The Toys”? Why?**

To judge another person’s fault, even after being aware of the fact we also do make mistakes, is nothing but a way to show hypocrisy. In this poem, the father’s action can be justifiable on three terms. Firstly, he was kind to the child when he made mistakes. Secondly, it is a father’s duty to guide his child. Thirdly, he was there to console his son. Even though he had to rebuke his son for his attitude, he realized that he was too harsh with him. This realization justifies the fact that he did the right thing.

**What is the substance of the poem “The Toys”?**

This poem describes an incident that happened to the poet. One day, he rebuked his son for disobeying him. His sad son’s face brought about pathos in him. It reminded him of the faults humans commit by not listening to God’s commandments.

**What was the child’s mistake in the poem “The Toys”?**

The child disobeyed his father. It seems his father had some issues regarding the toys he collected. He might have warned him not to waste his time in finding such meaningless items.

**What message does Coventry Patmore give us in the poem “The Toys”?**

Through this poem, Patmore advises grown-up readers to focus on the things God, the father of all, told them to do. He commanded men to follow his path for their good. Besides, this piece also conveys the message of being kind to children and forgiving their silly mistakes.

**What religious ideas does the poem “The Toys” convey to its reader?**

This poem conveys the spiritual ideas of mercy, forgiveness, and benevolence to the readers.

**How did the little child get himself consoled?**

The child kept his toys within his reach in order to console himself.

**What is the poet’s character in “The Toys”?**

In this poem, the poet’s character is that of the father.

**How many times does the son disobey the father in the poem “The Toys”?**

The son disobeyed his father seven times.

**What religious idea does the poem “The Toys” convey to its readers?**

The religious idea presented in the poem is that God is benevolent and merciful Who forgives man despite his disobedience. It is the Christian belief that God is the father of all men. He loves all His children deeply and forgives their mistakes out of love, although a man disobeys Him throughout his life and does not understand His commands. This religious idea is conveyed to the readers through an incident in the poet’s life.

**What everyday incident is narrated by the poet to convey the idea?**

He narrates an everyday incident of a young boy who disobeys his father. The young child disobeys his father for the seventh time and invites his anger. The father loses his temper and punishes his son severely. Later, overcome by paternal love, he goes to his son’s room to find him sleeping. In his grief at being scolded by his father, he has turned for comfort in his toys. The father is deeply touched by the sight and forgives his son. This incident makes the writer realize the relation between man and his Creator. According to Christian belief, God is the father of all human beings. Therefore, He, like a father, will forgive all our sins when we lie in eternal sleep.

**Why did Coventry Patmore’s little son behave in a “grownup wise”?**

His little son behaved like a grown-up because he did not have a mother who would have protected him from the harsh realities of life. Being a motherless child, he learned to bear/endure people’s cruel attitudes with a calmness like the grownups.

**How many times did the child disobey his father?**

He disobeyed his father six times and it was for the seventh time that he disobeyed. On his seventh mistake, he was punished by his father.

**Why did the father visit his son’s room?**

The father visited his room to see if his son was asleep. He feared that he might be awake due to grief, so he went to his room to console him, as there was no one else.

**How did the son react to his father’s scolding?**

The son took his father’s scolding like grownups. He did not complain or cry; he just looked at his father in a grown-up manner and then went to his room.

**What moved the poet?**

The sight of the sleeping child with swollen eyes, wet lashes, and surrounded by toys moved the writer.

**Why was he moved to tears?**

He was moved to tears because he loved his son deeply. His suffering and grief made his heart ache and he left a few tears of his own while kissing away the tears of his son.

**What did the writer do that night?**

The writer that night when praying to God admitted that a man makes God angry by disobeying His commands and running after unimportant things, but God showers His mercy upon man and forgives him for all his mistakes.

**What was the writer reminded of, by this mundane (ordinary, everyday) incident in his life?**

This small incident between the father and his young son reminded the writer of the relationship between God and man. He realized that as he had forgiven his son for his mistake, God would also forgive man's mistakes because He is merciful. According to Christian belief, God is the Father of all humanity. So as a father forgives his son's mistakes God, the father of all men will forgive His children out of the love that He has for them.

**When will God leave His wrath?**

He will leave His wrath when He sees His children suffering at the time of death.

**Why will God leave His wrath?**

He will leave His wrath because He loves His children (all men) dearly. He has created them from clay, and molded them into the best shape with love and affection. He cannot see them suffering as a father so that is why He gives up His anger and forgives man.

**What will God say while pardoning man?**

He will say that He is very sorry for the way we behaved, which was very childish. Then He will have mercy upon us and forgive us for our sins and misdeeds.

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