

CHAPTER - 12

FATHER TO SON

A. Think it Out

Question 1. Does the poem talk of an exclusively personal experience or is it fairly universal?

Answer: The poem is autobiographical in nature and describes the relationship between a father and his son. Beginning on an exclusively personal experience, the poem rises to a fairly universal phenomenon—the growing generation gap and lack of communication.

Question 2. How is the father's helplessness brought out in the poem?

Answer: The father's helplessness is brought about by the existing circumstances. Usually a father is the best friend and advisor of the son. However, there is no bond of affinity or relationship between the two. It seems that the two are not on speaking terms even while living under the same roof. The father feels helpless that he can't share what his son loves.

Question 3. Identify the phrases and lines that indicate distance between father and son.

Answer: The phrases/lines indicating distance between father and son are:

"I don't understand this child."

"I know nothing of him."

"We speak like strangers, there's no sign
Of understanding in the air."

"..What he loves I cannot share."

"Silence surrounds us."

"...see him make and move
His world."

Question 4. Does the poem have a consistent rhyme scheme?

Answer: No, the poem does not have a consistent rhyme scheme. The first two stanzas have the rhyme-scheme ab ba ba whereas the third and fourth have a slight alteration. The third stanza has abc aba whereas the fourth one has abbcba scheme.

MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED

A. Short Answer Type Questions

Question 1. What does the speaker say about father-son relationship?

Answer: Actually, the father-son relationship is non-functional. The father does not understand

the aspirations, longings or cravings of the son. They speak like strangers. Their exchanges, if any, are just formal. Otherwise, silence surrounds them.

Question 2. What do you think is responsible for the distance between father and son?

Answer: The lack of understanding on the part of the older generation (here, father) is the root of the problem. The father wants the young man to stick to home turf. The son, now a young man, seeks fresh avenues and lives in a world of his own. The father finds it hard to adjust to the growing changes.

Question 3. Why, do you think, does the father appear so helpless?

Answer: The father has been unable to understand what his son loves to do. He is not in a position to advise him as there is hardly any intimacy between them. They speak like strangers, otherwise there is silence around them. The son has his own dreams and plans which he does not appreciate.

Question 4. How can you infer that the father wishes his son to remain at home with him?

Answer: The father finds the son's interests quite different. He is home bound, whereas the son is on the look out for fresh avenues. He aspires for a world of his own. The father wants him to return home even if he undergoes losses by his extravagant ventures. He is willing to make up with him if he agrees to live with him.

B. Long Answer Type Questions

Question 1. What sort of father-son relationship has been depicted in the poem 'Father to Son'?

Answer: The poem depicts a father-son relationship which exists in name only. The two have been living together in the same house for years. Even then the father does not understand his son. He confesses that he knows nothing of his son. The bond of affection between them lies broken. They have become formal just like strangers. Although the son resembles his father physically, yet he had his own vision, dreams and aspiration. He is not home bound and is not afraid to venture forth. The protective father is willing to forgive him for incurring loss of material wealth provided he returns home. The painful experience of lack of communication fills the father with utter helplessness, anger and grief. His efforts to restore the relationship fail as there is no response from the other side.

Question 2. How far has the poet succeeded in transforming a purely personal matter to a universal experience prevalent in modern times?

Answer: The poem begins on an autobiographical note. The speaker i.e., the father recounts his own experience. He talks about the non-functional father-son relationship. He neither understands his son nor knows anything about him. In spite of living in the same house, the distance between father and son has increased. There is lack of communication between them. They either talk like strangers or silence surrounds them. The father is unable to share what the son prefers to do. The distance has reached to sorrowful limit. Even then the father is willing to shape a new love and build up a fresh relationship. His grief takes the form of anger and they fail to reach any compromise. This maladjustment or growing break-up of relationships is typical of the modern materialistic age.