

MY CHILDHOOD

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

DR. A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM was born in 1931. He specialized in Aeronautical Engineering from Madras Institute of Technology. After working for two decades in ISRO and mastering launch vehicle technologies, Dr. Kalam took up the responsibility of developing Indigenous Guided Missiles at the Defence Research and Development Programme. He was responsible for building indigenous capability and critical technologies through networking of multiple institutions, development and operationalization of Prithvi and Agni missiles. From July 1992 to December 1999, he was appointed Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister and was Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development from July 1992 to December 1999. Pokhran II nuclear tests, which made India a nuclear weapon state, was carried under him. He took up academics as a Professor of Technology and Societal Transformation in Anna University, Chennai in 2001. He has won many awards including the Padma Bhushan (1981), the Padma Vibhushan (1990) and the Bharat Ratna (1997). He became the eleventh President of India on 25 July, 2002 and successfully completed his five - year term as the President of India.



In 'My Childhood', taken from his autobiography 'Wings of Fire', he focuses on his childhood days.

A. Answer these questions orally:

1. Who is the only scientist to have become the President of India?
2. Name any three scholars who have been the President of India.
3. Who is called the 'Missile Man of India'?
4. Do you remember any childhood experience of your own? If yes, narrate your experience.

MY CHILDHOOD

- 1 I was born into a middle-class Tamil family in the island town of Rameswaram in the erstwhile Madras State. My father, Jainulabdeen, had neither much formal education nor much wealth; despite these disadvantages, he possessed great innate wisdom and a true generosity of spirit. He had an ideal helpmate in my mother, Ashiamma. I do not recall the exact number of people she fed every day, but I am quite certain that far more outsiders ate with us than all the members of our own family put together.
- 2 I was one of many children – a short boy with rather undistinguished looks, born to tall and handsome parents. We lived in our ancestral house, which was built in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was a fairly large *pucca* house, made of limestone and brick, on the Mosque Street in Rameswaram. My austere father used to avoid all inessential comforts and luxuries. However, all necessities were provided for, in terms of food, medicine or clothes. In fact, I would say mine was a very secure childhood, both materially and emotionally.
- 3 The Second World War broke out in 1939, when I was eight years old. For reasons I have never been able to understand, a sudden demand for tamarind seeds erupted in the market. I used to collect the seeds and sell them to a provision shop on Mosque Street. A day's collection would fetch me the princely sum of one anna. My



Jainulabdeen Iyer's wife took me inside her kitchen and served me food.



*I always sat in the front row next
to Ramanaatha Sastry.*

brother-in-law Jallaluddin would tell me stories about the War which I would later attempt to trace in the headlines in *Dinamani*. Our area, being isolated, was completely unaffected by the War. But soon India was forced to join the Allied Forces and something like a state of emergency was declared. The first casualty came in the form of the suspension of the train halt at Rameswaram station. The newspapers now had to be bundled and thrown out from the moving train on the Rameswaram Road between Rameswaram and Dhanus Rodi that forced my cousin Samsuddin, who distributed newspapers in Rameswaram, to look for a helping hand to catch the bundles and, as if naturally, I filled the slot. Samsuddin helped me earn my first wages. Half a century later, I can still feel the surge of pride in earning my own money for the first time.

B.1.1 Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:

1. Kalam was born in a high-class family.
2. Kalam was eight years old when the Second World War broke out.
3. India joined the Allied Forces.
4. Jallaluddin helped Kalam earn his first wages.
5. Kalam is now ashamed of how he earned his own money for the first time.
6. Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam was born in a Tamil family at Rameswaram in Madras.

B.1.2. Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. Who were the parents of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam?
2. When was his ancestral house built?
3. When did the Second World War break out?

- 4 Every child is born, with some inherited characteristics, into a specific socio-economic and emotional environment, and trained in certain ways by figures of authority. I inherited honesty and self-discipline from my father; from my mother, I inherited faith in goodness and deep kindness and so did my three brothers and sister. I had three close friends in my childhood – Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan. All these boys were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families. As children, none of us ever felt any difference amongst ourselves because of our religious differences and upbringing. In fact, Ramanadha Sastry was the son of Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry, the high priest of the Rameswaram temple. Later, he took over the priesthood of the Rameswaram temple from his father; Aravindan went into the business of arranging transport for visiting pilgrims; and Sivaprakasan became a catering contractor for the Southern Railways.
- 5 During the annual Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony, our family used to arrange boats with a special platform for carrying idols of the Lord from the temple to the marriage site, situated in the middle of the pond called Rama Tirtha which was near our house. Events from the *Ramayana* and from the life of the Prophet were the bedtime stories my mother and grandmother would tell the children in our family.
- 6 One day when I was in the fifth standard at the Rameswaram Elementary School, a new teacher came to our class. I used to wear a cap which marked me as a Muslim, and I always sat in the front row next to Ramanadha Sastry, who wore the sacred thread. The new teacher could not stomach a Hindu priest's son sitting with a Muslim boy. In accordance with our social ranking as the new teacher saw it, I was asked to



go and sit on the back bench. I felt very sad, and so did Ramanadha Sastry. He looked utterly downcast as I shifted to my seat in the last row. The image of him weeping when I shifted to the last row left a lasting impression on me.

- 7 After school, we went home and told our respective parents about the incident. Lakshmana Sastry summoned the teacher, and in our presence, told the teacher that he should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children. He bluntly asked the teacher to either apologise or quit the school. The teacher did not regret his behaviour, but the strong sense of conviction Lakshmana Sastry conveyed ultimately reformed this young teacher.

B.2. 1. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements:

1. Kalam had three close friends: Ramanandha Sastry, Aravindan and Siva Prakasan.
2. All the three boys were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families.
3. The ancestral business of their family was cooking.
4. Events from the Ramayana and from the life of the Prophet were the bedtime stories that his mother and grandmother used to tell the children.

B.2.2. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words from the text:

1. Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry was the high Of Rameshwaram Temple.
2. During the annual Ceremony our family used to arrange boats for special platform for carrying idols from the temple to the marriage site.
3. Kalam used to wear which marked him as a Muslim.
4. He used to sit in front next to Ramanadha Sastry.

B.2.3. Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. What qualities did he inherit from his parents?
2. What was the occupation of his family?
3. How did the new teacher behave with Kalam and what did he do?
4. What profession did his three friends adopt on growing adult?
5. How many brothers and sisters did Kalam have?

- 8 On the whole, the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of the segregation of different social groups. However, my science teacher Sivasubramania Iyer, though an orthodox Brahmin with a very conservative wife, was something of a rebel. He did his best to break social barriers so that people from varying backgrounds could mingle easily. He used to spend hours with me and would say, "Kalam, I want you to develop so that you are on par with the highly educated people of the big cities."

- 9 One day, he invited me to him for a meal. His wife was horrified at the idea of a Muslim boy being invited to dine in her ritually pure kitchen. She refused to serve me in her kitchen. Sivasubramania Iyer was not perturbed, nor did he get angry with his wife, but instead, served me with his own hands and sat down beside me to eat his meal. His wife watched us from behind the kitchen door. I wondered whether she had observed any difference in the way I ate rice, drank water or cleaned the floor after the meal. When I was leaving his house, Sivasubramania Iyer invited me to join him for dinner again the next weekend. Observing my hesitation, he told me not to get upset, saying, "Once you decide to change the system, such problems have to be confronted." When I visited his house the next week, Sivasubramania Iyer's wife took me inside her kitchen and served me food with her own hands.
- 10 Then the Second World War was over and India's freedom was imminent. "Indians will build their own India," declared Gandhiji. The whole country was filled with an unprecedented optimism. I asked my father for permission to leave Rameswaram and study at the district headquarters in Ramanathapuram.

B.3.1. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words from the text:

1. Kalam's father Jainulabdeen possessed great wisdom and a true of spirit.
2. The Second World War broke out in
3. Rameswaram, his birth place, is an
4. He had a very secure, both materially and emotionally.
5. Samsuddin helped Kalam to his first wages.
6. Kalam's ancestral house was built in the middle of century.

B.3.2. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Point out the modes and manners of Sivasubramania Iyer, Kalam's Science teacher?
2. Who was the eleventh President of India?
3. Who was the man whose projects in space, defence and nuclear technology guided India into the twenty first century?
4. Where did Kalam go for his higher studies after leaving Rameswaram?

B.3.3. Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. Why did Sivasubramania Iyer invite Kalam to his house? What was the reaction of Iyer's wife?
2. When was India's freedom declared imminent?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

- accent** (n): emphasis given to a syllable or word by means of pitch or stress.
- intonation** (n): rise and fall of the pitch of the voice in speaking, esp as this affects the meaning of what is said.
- innate** (adj): (of quality, feeling, etc. in one's nature) possessed from birth.
- casualty** (n): thing that is lost, damaged or destroyed in an accident
- inheritance** (n): property received from ancestors.
- authority** (n): power to give orders and make others obey
- apologise** (v): make an apology, say one is sorry for having done wrong or hurt sb's feelings.
- impression** (n): (on sb) deep lasting effect on the mind or feelings of sb.
- imminent** (adj): about to happen; likely to happen very soon.
- perturb** (v): make very worried; disturb
- segregation** (n): state of being placed away from the rest; separating from the rest of the community and treat them unfairly.
- confront** (v): make sb face or consider sb/sth unpleasant, difficult, etc.

C.1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Elucidate the circumstances leading to a materially and emotionally secured childhood of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam.
2. Describe the circumstances which helped Kalam in earning his first wages during the outbreak of the Second World War.
3. What relationship did Kalam have with his three friends - Ramanandha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan.
4. Describe the circumstances that led to Kalam's punishment by his new teacher when he was in standard fifth.
5. How was the teacher compelled to withdraw the punishment inflicted on A. P. J. Abdul Kalam?
6. How did Kalam's science teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer, try to break social barriers in the small town of Rameswaram?

C. 2. DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups or pairs:

1. Should there be discrimination on the basis of caste and creed?

C. 3. COMPOSITION

1. Write a letter to your friend describing Kalam's childhood and how it inspired you to the path of success.

D. 1. WORD STUDY

Correct the spelling of the following words:

rabel	marriage	pilgriem	tample
luk	allide	wajes	bussines

E. GRAMMAR

E.1. Synthesis means the combination of two or more simple sentences into one new sentence - simple, compound or complex.

Ex. Study the following sentence in the lesson.

My father, Jainulabdeen, had **neither** much formal education **nor** much wealth.

The words in bold letters in the sentence given above are co-relatives. With the help of co-relatives or sentence connectors or sentence linkers or conjunctions you can connect or link the words or sentences.

The following words are Conjunctions which are used to combine sentences:

As, since, while, than, until/till, just/ then, because, unless, lest, before, after, when, but, so/ therefore, if, as soon as, as long as, also/ or/ otherwise, although/ though

The following are some pairs of words which are used to combine sentences:

either	or	neither	nor
not only	but also	not	but
though	yet	as/so.....	as
so	that	as	so
I hardly	when/before	scarcely	when/before
no sooner	than		

E. 2. Find out some Conjunctions in the lesson.

E.3. With the help of Conjunctions make five sentences.

Learn this also:

A clause is a group of words forming a part of a sentence and containing a Subject and a Predicate of its own.

- Ex.1.** Give examples of simple, compound and complex sentence.
- Ex.2.** How many kinds of clauses are there?
- Ex.3.** Write the types of clauses and their definitions.
- Ex.4.** Write the definition of Simple Sentence, Compound Sentence and Complex Sentence and give at least two examples of each.
- Ex.5.** We can change Simple Sentences into a single Compound Sentence by using Participles, Absolute Phrases, Prepositions with Nouns or Gerunds, Infinitives etc.

E. 4. SYNTHESIS

Ex.1 Combine the following pairs of sentences using appropriate Conjunctions:

1. He worked hard. He felt tired.
2. He drew his sword. He rushed at his enemy.
3. The agreement was signed. All were satisfied.
4. The creditors were ruined. The bank was locked.
5. He made a promise. He kept it also.
6. He has lost his health. It has added to his difficulties.
7. He is a wise man. This is well known.

Ex. 2. Fill in the blanks with suitable Sentence Connectors / Conjunctions:

She can run faster her brother.

*She can run faster **than** her brother.*

1. She sang she danced.
2. He cannot walk he is very weak.
3. he is poor, he is honest.
4. He cannot buy a flat, he has no money.
5. She is afraid to go out alone, the streets are unsafe at night.
6. I would rather die beg.
7. Milk is more wholesome bread.
8. Let us wait the rain stops.
9. Many stars are larger the sun.
10. He fell asleep he was doing his homework.

F. ACTIVITIES

1. Do a project work on the relationship that Kalam had with his three intimate friends - Ramanadha Shastri, Aravindan and Shivaprakasan. Point out what light does it throw on Abdul Kalam's personality?
2. Write a report on the social barriers in your locality village.

G. TRANSLATION

Translate the following sentences into English:

1. ज्यों ही मेरे पिताजी आये वर्षा शुरू हो गई।
2. यदि वर्षा होगी तो मैं बाहर नहीं जाऊँगा।
3. सुबह में टहलो नहीं तो बीमार पड़ जाओगे।
4. हमलोग जानते हैं कि सुबह की हवा दिनभर की दवा है।
5. सुभाष चन्द्र बोस को अब तक लौट जाना चाहिए था।
6. डा० कलाम मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार में जन्मे थे।
7. वह पढ़ना चाहता है लेकिन उसकी आर्थिक स्थिति संतोषप्रद नहीं है।
8. मैं चल भी नहीं सकता लेकिन तुम दौड़ जाते हो।
9. यद्यपि उसे सब कुछ है तथापि वह पढ़ नहीं सकेगा।
10. यद्यपि तुम तेज हो तथापि गृह कार्य नहीं करते।

