

CHAPTER

06

My Childhood

by APJ Abdul Kalam

Chapter Sketch

This lesson is an extract from the book 'Wings of Fire', the autobiography of APJ Abdul Kalam. It talks about his childhood, during which he earned his first wages. During this time, he faced religious discrimination and was able to overcome it with the support of others who were not like traditional people. He was motivated by the science teacher to undertake higher studies.

Meet the Characters

Abdul Kalam As a child he earned his first wages and faced religious discrimination.

Sivasubramania Iyer He was the science teacher who reformed his wife by setting an example.

Ramanadha Sastry Kalam's close friend during childhood who was upset when he could not sit beside him in the class.

Summary of the Chapter

Birth, Childhood and First Earning of Abdul Kalam

Abdul Kalam was born in a middle-class Muslim family in 1931 in the island town of Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. In his childhood, he was greatly influenced by his parents, his teachers and his friends.

Abdul's father, Jainulabdeen, was not much educated but he was a very generous and kind person. He was not rich but provided a secure childhood to Abdul and his brothers and sisters. Abdul's mother's name was Ashiamma. Abdul inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father and faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother.

Abdul earned his first wages by working as a helper to his cousin, Samsuddin, who distributed newspapers in Rameswaram. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Abdul was only eight years old. There was a great demand of tamarind seeds at that time. Abdul used to collect these seeds and sell them in market.

Incidents of Abdul Childhood

In his childhood, he had three close friends - Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindam and Sivaprakashan. All these boys were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families. Once when he was in the fifth standard, a new teacher asked him not to sit in the front row along with the high caste Brahmin boys. Abdul found Ramanadha Sastry crying when he got up and went to the last row. This made a lasting impression on Abdul. This matter was brought to the knowledge of Lakshmana Sastry (Ramanadha Sastry's father). He was the head priest of the Rameswaram temple. He told the teacher that he should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children. The teacher accepted his mistake.

Anti-Casteist Action of Abdul's Science Teacher

On the other hand, Abdul was greatly influenced by his science teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer. He learnt the lesson of breaking social barriers from him. Iyer invited him to his home for a meal. His wife was an orthodox Brahmin who refused to serve food to a Muslim boy in her so-called 'ritually pure' kitchen. Iyer served him with his own hands and sat down beside him to eat his meal. He convinced his wife to serve Abdul with her own hands next time he came, thus, successfully changing the conservative attitude of his wife.

Abdul gets Permission for Higher Education

For higher education, Abdul asked permission from his father to leave Rameswaram and study at the district headquarters in Ramanathapuram. His father happily gave permission, so that Abdul could develop his own career. His father convinced his hesitant mother by quoting Khalil Gibran, who had said that parents are a means for children to become independent from them - they don't belong to the parents themselves.

Chapter Highlights

- 1 Abdul Kalam was born into a middle-class Tamil Muslim family in 1931 at Rameswaram.
- 2 The family, though was middle-class but his father provided all the basic necessities and Abdul Kalam had a secured childhood both materially and emotionally.
- 3 Abdul earned his first wages by helping his cousin Samsuddin in his business of distributing the daily newspapers in Rameswaram.
- 4 Abdul was much influenced by the qualities of his parents, teachers and friends. He was very friendly with three Hindu boys, one of whom, a Brahmin, always sat next to him in class in the front row.
- 5 Once a new teacher asked Abdul to sit in the last row in class because he was a Muslim. This made his Brahmin friend cry which made a lasting impression on Abdul.
- 6 When the Brahmin boy's father came to know about this, he scolded the new teacher for spreading communal intolerance.
- 7 Abdul learnt the lesson of breaking social barriers from his science teacher, a Brahmin. The teacher invited Abdul home for a meal but the teacher's wife, being orthodox, refused to serve Abdul in her kitchen.
- 8 Then the teacher himself served Abdul and also sat with him to eat. This convinced his wife to serve Abdul herself when Abdul visited them next.
- 9 When Abdul was grown up and the Second World War had ended, Abdul took his father's permission to go to the district headquarters for higher studies. His father joyfully permitted him to 'go and grow'.

Word Meanings

The given page nos. correspond to the pages in the prescribed textbook.

Word	Meaning
PAGE 68	
erstwhile	former
innate	in one's nature
helpmate	wife
undistinguished	ordinary
austere	simple, strict and severe
inessential	those which are not necessary
PAGE 69	
princely sum	large amount of money (actually he means the reverse)
anna	an old Indian coin, worth about six paise
<i>Dinamani</i>	the local Tamil newspaper
Allied Forces	the armies of UK, USA and USSR during the Second World War
suspension	temporary cancellation
slot	vacancy
surge of pride	satisfaction / happiness
figures of authority	powerful people
orthodox	traditional
priesthood	job of a priest
PAGE 71	
sacred thread	religious thread worn by Hindus
could not stomach	could not tolerate
downcast	sad or depressed
communal intolerance	not tolerating another community
bluntly	directly
PAGE 72	
segregation	separation
minge	gather together
on par with	equal to
perturbed	disturbed
PAGE 73	
confronted	faced
imminent	about to take place
unprecedented	never seen before

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NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Thinking about the Text Activity (Page 75)

- I. Answer these questions in one or two sentences each.

1 Where was Abdul Kalam's house?

Ans. Abdul Kalam's house was on Mosque Street in Rameswaram. It was a fairly large pucca house made of limestone and brick.

2 What do you think *Dinamani* is the name of? Give a reason for your answer.

Ans. The fact that Abdul Kalam used to read headlines to know about the World War and the fact that he assisted his cousin in collecting newspaper bundles thrown from the train indicate that *Dinamani* is the name of a daily newspaper.

3 Who were Abdul Kalam's school friends? What did they later become?

Ans. Abdul Kalam's friends were Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindam and Sivaprakashan. One of his friends Ramanadha Sastry became a priest in Rameshwaram. Another friend Aravindan went into the business of arranging transport for visiting pilgrims. The third friend Sivaprakashan became a catering contractor for the Southern Railway.

4 How did Abdul Kalam earn his first wages?

Ans. When stoppage of trains was suspended at Rameswaram because of the World War, his cousin asked him for help in collecting newspaper bundles which were thrown from the moving train. This task helped Abdul Kalam earn his first wages.

5 Had he earned any money before that? In what way?

Ans. Before the newspaper episode there was suddenly an unusual huge demand of tamarind seeds in the market. Abdul Kalam used to collect tamarind seeds and sell the day's collection to a provision shop for one anna every day.

II. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).

1 How does the author describe: (i) his father, (ii) his mother, (iii) himself?

Ans. The author has described his father as a man practising austerity but giving due care to all needs of his family. He has described his mother as a

large-hearted and generous woman who used to feed everyone visiting the household. Abdul Kalam has described himself as a short and thin boy descended from tall and handsome parents.

2 What characteristics does he say he inherited from his parents?

Ans. He inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father. From his mother, he inherited a sense of kindness and faith in goodness.

III. Discuss these questions in class with your teacher and then write down your answers in two or three paragraphs each.

1 "On the whole, the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of the segregation of different social groups," says the author.

(i) Which social groups does he mention? Were these groups easily identifiable (for example, by the way they dressed)?

(ii) Were they aware only of their differences or did they also naturally share friendships and experiences? (Think of the bedtime stories in Kalam's house; of who his friends were; and of what used to take place in the pond near his house.)

(iii) The author speaks both types of people who were aware of the differences among different people and those who tried to bridge these differences. Can you identify such people in the text?

(iv) Narrate two incidents that show how differences can be created and also how they can be resolved. How can people change their attitudes?

Ans. (i) Kalam has mentioned Hindus and Muslims as two distinct social groups living in Rameswaram. They had their different dress codes and rituals. e.g. Kalam used to wear a cap while his friend Ramanadha Sastry used to wear the sacred thread.

(ii) Kalam has mentioned three childhood friends and all of them had Hindu names, so their friendship is evident. Kalam has also mentioned about bedtime stories from the *Ramayana* and the life of the Prophet being told by his mother. Moreover, Kalam's family used to arrange boats

for carrying idols of Hindu gods. This explains the natural Hindu-Muslim cooperation in most parts of India. They were aware of their different identities but they were living harmoniously as people do in any normal society.

- (iii) The first person mentioned was Ramanadha's father who was high priest of Rameswaram temple. He, after hearing that the new teacher tried to segregate pupils on the basis of religious divisions, called the teacher and convinced him to revert his decision.

The second person was Sivasubramania Iyer, the science teacher. He invited Kalam to have meal in his house. By this gesture, he was able to change his conservative wife's mindset.

- (iv) The first incident was when differences were created by the new teacher in Kalam's school who tried to create communal feeling among students. Another incident was when the science teacher's wife did not want to serve food to Kalam as he was a Muslim boy. In both the incidences, the persons who tried to change the mindsets stood firm on their ground. They talked straight and practised what they preached. This created a change of attitude among people with traditional thinking.

- 2** (i) Why did Abdul Kalam want to leave Rameswaram?
 (ii) What did his father say to this?
 (iii) What do you think his words mean? Why do you think he spoke those words?

Ans. (i) Kalam wanted to get a better/higher education which was available in the city. So, he wanted to leave Rameswaram.

- (ii) His father encouraged him to leave Rameshwaram. He gave Abdul the example of young seagulls who leave their parents' nest to learn to fly.

- (iii) The father's words had a very deep meaning. Unlike human beings, most animals grow on their own after a certain age. This makes them more independent. Even in the plant kingdom, most of the seeds cannot germinate if they are left lying under the mother tree. They get spread by various means and then only are they able to sprout to become a new plant and ultimately a tree.

In humans also, after a certain age, a certain degree of responsibility and independence is always helpful in making a better adult.

Thinking about Language (Page 75)

- I. Find the sentences in the text where these words occur:

erupt, surge, trace, undistinguished, casualty

Look these words up in a dictionary which gives examples of how they are used.

Now answer the following questions.

- 1** What are the things that can erupt? Use examples to explain the various meanings of erupt. Now do the same for the word surge. What things can surge?

Ans. (a) **Erupt** A few things that can erupt are anger, volcano, tooth, rash, riots, unrest etc. Erupt has several meanings. Their explanation, with examples, is given below

- (i) Start unexpectedly. *Example:* Riots erupted in the city.
 - (ii) Start to burn or burst into flames. *Example:* The spark soon erupted into flames.
 - (iii) Become active and throw out lava and rocks. *Example:* The active volcano erupted suddenly.
 - (iv) Forceful and violent release of something pent up. *Example:* The difference in their views soon erupted into a fight.
 - (v) Sudden appearance on the skin. *Example:* On the day of the party, a pimple erupted on her face.
 - (vi) Break out. *Example:* Eruption of the wisdom tooth gives a lot of pain.
- (b) **Surge** Things that can surge are pride, anxiety, waves, boats, army etc. The different meanings it has can be explained with the following examples:
- (i) Sudden forceful flow. *Example:* The boy drowned in the surging waves.
 - (ii) Rise and move forward. *Example:* The army surged towards their enemy.
 - (iii) Heave upward under the influence of a natural force. *Example:* The boat surged in the high tide.
 - (iv) A sudden or abrupt strong increase. *Example:* The surge in the stock market left people in shock.
 - (v) Rise rapidly. *Example:* As time passed, her worry surged, as her lost child had not been found.

- (c) **Trace** The following are the meanings of the word trace:

- (i) Follow, discover, or ascertain the course of development of something. *Example:* Kalam traced the developments in the War by reading the newspapers.

- (ii) Make a mark or lines on a surface. *Example:* Ravi traced the drawing on the tracing paper.
- (iii) To go back over again. *Example:* Savita traced her footsteps in the forest to find her way out.
- (iv) Make one's course or travel along a path; travel or pass over, around, or along.
Example: Many famous explorers have traced the routes of people who have gone before:
The closest meaning of the word 'trace' in the text is 'to find or discover through investigation'.
- (d) **Undistinguished** This word is not a root word and so is not directly mentioned in the dictionary. But some of its meanings are:
- (i) Ordinary. *Example:* Ashok had an undistinguished career till he became forty years old.
- (ii) Commonplace. *Example:* Vinod had an undistinguished look.
- (iii) Nothing special. *Example:* Dinesh was an undistinguished student in his school.
- (e) **Casualty** The following are some meanings of this word:
- (i) Victim. *Example:* Vinod was a casualty of the pranks played by others.
- (ii) Martyr. *Example:* Lance Naik Abdul Hamid was a casualty of the battle.
- (iii) Wounded Person. *Example:* Many Indian troops were casualties in the Bangladesh liberation operation.

II. Match the phrases in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

A	B
(i) broke out	(a) an attitude of kindness, a readiness to give freely
(ii) in accordance with	(b) was not able to tolerate
(iii) a helping hand	(c) began suddenly in a violent way
(iv) could not stomach	(d) assistance
(v) generosity of spirit	(e) persons with power to make decisions
(vi) figures of authority	(f) according to a particular rule, principle or system

Ans. (i) – (c), (ii) – (f), (iii) – (d), (iv) – (b), (v) – (a), (vi) – (e)

III. Passive Voice

Study these sentences :

My parents *were regarded* as an ideal couple.
I *was asked* to go and sit on the back bench.
Such problems have to *be confronted*.

The italicised verbs in these sentences are made up of a form of the verb *be* and a past participle. (e.g. *were* + *regarded*, *was* + *asked*, *be* + *confronted*)

These sentences focus on *what happens*, rather than *who does what*. Notice that the doer of the action is not included in the sentences.

If necessary, we can mention the doer of the action in a *by-phrase*. e.g.

The tree *was struck by lightning*.

The flag *was unfurled by the Chief guest*.

IV. Rewrite the sentences below, changing the verbs in brackets into the passive form.

- 1** In yesterday's competition, the prizes (give away) by the Principal.

Ans. In yesterday's competition, the prizes were given away by the Principal.

- 2** In spite of financial difficulties, the labourers (pay) on time.

Ans. In spite of financial difficulties, the labourers were paid on time.

- 3** On Republic Day, vehicles (not allow) beyond this point.

Ans. On Republic Day, vehicles are not allowed beyond this point.

- 4** Second-hand books (buy and sell) on the pavement every Saturday.

Ans. Second-hand books are bought and sold on the pavement every Saturday.

- 5** Elections to the Lok Sabha (hold) every five years.

Ans. Elections to the Lok Sabha are held every five years.

- 6** Our National Anthem (compose) Rabindranath Tagore.

Ans. Our National Anthem was composed by Rabindranath Tagore.

- V. Rewrite the paragraphs below, using the correct form of the verb given in brackets.

1 How Helmets Came To Be Used in Cricket

Nari Contractor was the Captain and an opening batsman for India in the 1960s. The Indian cricket team went on a tour to the West Indies in 1962. In a match against Barbados in Bridgetown, Nari Contractor (seriously injure and collapse). In those days helmets (not wear). Contractor (hit) on the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. Contractor's skull (fracture). The entire team (deeply concern). The West Indies players (worry). Contractor (rush) to hospital. He (accompany) by Frank Worrell, the Captain of the West Indies Team. Blood (donate) by the West Indies players. Thanks to the timely help, Contractor (save). Nowadays, helmets (routinely use) against bowlers.

Ans. Nari Contractor was the Captain and an opening batsman for India in the 1960s. The Indian cricket team went on a tour to the West Indies in 1962. In a match against Barbados in Bridgetown, Nari Contractor got seriously injured and collapsed. In those days helmets were not worn. Contractor was hit on the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. Contractor's skull had fractured. The entire team was deeply concerned. The West Indies players were worried. Contractor was rushed to hospital. He was accompanied by Frank Worrell, the Captain of the West Indies Team. Blood was donated by the West Indies players. Thanks to the timely help, Contractor was saved. Nowadays, helmets are routinely used against bowlers.

2 Oil from Seeds

Vegetable oils (make) from seeds and fruits of many plants growing all over the world from tiny sesame seeds to big, juicy coconuts. Oil (produce) from cotton seeds, groundnuts, soya beans and sunflower seeds. Olive oil (use) for cooking, salad dressing etc. Olives (shake) from the trees and (gather) up, usually by hand. The olives (ground) to a thick paste which is spread onto special mats. Then the mats (layer) up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

Ans. Vegetable oils are made from seeds and fruits of many plants growing all over the world from tiny sesame seeds to big, juicy coconuts. Oil is produced from cotton seeds, groundnuts, soya beans and sunflower seeds. Olive oil is used for cooking, salad dressing etc. Olives are shaken from the trees and gathered up, usually by hand. The olives are ground to a thick paste which is spread onto special mats. Then the mats are layered up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

Writing (Page 79)

Think and write a short account of what life in Rameswaram in the 1940s must have been like. (Were people rich or poor? Hard working or lazy? Hopeful of change, or resistant to it?).

Ans. (sample) The residents of Rameswaram during the 1940s were quite orthodox, but were also tolerant of other communities. It has been mentioned in the story, '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.' The environment in Rameswaram at that time did not allow communal intolerance. They were following their religion seriously and also lived simply without craving for luxuries. The members of families were emotionally attached and helpful to each other.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[4 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and Choose the correct option.

1 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. My austere father used to avoid all inessential comforts and luxuries.

- (i) Where did Kalam's family live?
 - (a) In a slum
 - (b) In a rented house
 - (c) In the school
 - (d) In ancestral house
- (ii) How did 'Kalam have a secure childhood'?
 - (a) Protected by parents
 - (b) Kept inside the house
 - (c) All necessities like food, medicine or clothes were provided
 - (d) All were sent to school
- (iii) Which word in the passage will be antonym of the word 'extravagant'?
 - (a) Undistinguished
 - (b) Short
 - (c) Inessential
 - (d) Austere
- (iv) How was Kalam's father?
 - (a) Very practical
 - (b) Highly sensitive
 - (c) Austere
 - (d) Good human being

- Ans.** (i) (d) In ancestral house
(ii) (c) All necessities like food, medicine or clothes were provided
(iii) (d) Austere
(iv) (c) Austere

2 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 Shastry, Aravindan and Siva Prakasan. All these boys were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families.

- (i) Who is 'I' in these lines?
 - (a) Kalam's teacher
 - (b) Kalam's father
 - (c) Abdul Kalam
 - (d) Ramanadha Shastry

(ii) What did Kalam inherit from his father?

- (a) Honesty and self-discipline
- (b) Wisdom to save money
- (c) How to be self-sufficient
- (d) How to achieve your goals

(iii) Close friends of Abdul Kalam belonged to

- (a) highly educated families
- (b) highly orthodox Hindu Brahmin family
- (c) his own Muslim caste
- (d) highly religious families

(iv) What will be antonym of word 'forfeit' from the passage?

- (a) Specific
- (b) Inherit
- (c) Trained
- (d) Environment

Ans. (i) (c) Abdul Kalam

(ii) (a) Honesty and self-discipline

(iii) (b) highly orthodox Hindu Brahmin family

(iv) (b) Inherit

3 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 and the island. Not only did the teacher reject his behaviour but the strong sense of conviction Lakshmana Sastry conveyed ultimately reformed this young teacher.

(i) What was the incident that the children narrated to their parents?

- (a) Kalam was punished
- (b) Teacher sent him to back seat
- (c) He was not allowed to play
- (d) He could not eat with his friends

(ii) What did Lakshmana Sastry tell the new teacher?

- (a) Be pleasant to children
- (b) Beat the children
- (c) Not to spread communal intolerance
- (d) Quit the school

(iii) Which word from the passage means the same as 'fath' or 'creed'?

- (a) Reject (b) Respective
(c) Reformed (d) Conviction

(iv) What did the young teacher decide?

- (a) To quit the school
(b) To punish the 'students'
(c) To ask forgiveness
(d) Spread poison

- Ans.** (i) (b) Teacher sent him to back seat
(ii) (c) Not to spread communal intolerance
(iii) (d) Conviction
(iv) (c) To ask forgiveness

4 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.

(i) What was clear after Second World War?

- (a) India's freedom
(b) India's slavery
(c) Poverty of India
(d) India's development

(ii) What request did Kalam make to his father?

- (a) Leave India and study abroad
(b) Join Indian Army
(c) Leave Rameshwaram and study at district headquarter
(d) build his own school

(iii) Find the word from the passage which means, "soon to happen".

- (a) Filled (b) Optimism
(c) Declared (d) Imminent

(iv) There was optimism or hope in the country why?

- (a) Indians will be free
(b) Indians will be educated
(c) Could develop their own resources
(d) All will live happily

- Ans.** (i) (a) India's freedom
(ii) (c) Leave Rameshwaram and study at district headquarter
(iii) (d) Imminent
(iv) (a) Indians will be free

5 One day, he invited me to his home 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.

(i) Why was Science teacher's wife horrified one day?

- (a) She was not allowed to cook
(b) Not allowed to pray
(c) A muslim boy was invited to have food in her kitchen
(d) Her husband wanted to cook food

(ii) What was Mrs Iyer's reaction when Kalam was invited to have lunch at their house?

- (a) Very angry
(b) Very happy
(c) Refused to serve food to Kalam
(d) Refused to eat food

(iii) Which word in the passage means the same as 'shocked'?

- (a) Refused (b) Eat (c) Perturbed (d) Horrified

(iv) What was Mr Iyer's reaction towards his wife's refusal?

- (a) He was angry
(b) Very disturbed
(c) Calmly served food himself
(d) Stopped talking

Ans. (i) (c) A muslim boy was invited to have food in her kitchen

(ii) (c) Refused to serve food to Kalam

(iii) (d) Horrified

(iv) (c) Calmly served food himself

6 "Kalam, I want you to develop so that you are at par with the highly educated people of big cities."

(i) Who is 'I' in these lines?

- (a) Kalam's father
(b) Kalam's friend's mother
(c) Kalam's Science teacher
(d) Kalam's friend

(ii) What did the Science teacher want Kalam to do?

- (a) To leave school (b) To be well-educated
(c) To go abroad (d) To respect elders

(iii) What does the expression 'at par' mean?

- (a) Upto a given standard (b) Below standard
(c) Equal (d) Unequal

(iv) As per the speaker what is the quality of the people of big cities?

- (a) Greedy (b) Money minded
(c) Highly educated (d) Quarrelsome

- Ans.** (i) (c) Kalam's Science teacher
(ii) (b) To be well-educated
(iii) (a) Upto a given standard
(iv) (c) Highly educated

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 What characteristics does Abdul Kalam say he inherited from his parents?

Ans. APJ Abdul Kalam says that he inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father. He also says that he inherited kindness and faith in goodness from his mother. Both these virtues were proved to be significant in his life and he shaped himself into a good person.

2 Kalam had a secure childhood. Do you agree / disagree? Give reasons.

Or Kalam's childhood was a secure one, both materially and emotionally. Illustrate this fact.

Ans. I agree, because, although he was one of many children, they had a pucca house and all necessities were provided for in terms of food, medicine and clothes. However, his father avoided all inessential luxuries and comforts. Thus, he had a materially and emotionally secure childhood in terms of emotion and materials both.

3 How did Second World War give an opportunity to Kalam to earn his first wages?

Ans. During the days of the Second World War, Kalam helped his cousin to collect bundles of newspapers thrown on the road from the running train. He was given wages for this task. Also, there was an unexpected demand of tamarind seed which he sold and got money in exchange of it. This way, the Second World War gave an opportunity to him to earn.

4 What did Abdul Kalam's family do during the annual Shri Sita Ram Kalayanam ceremony?

Ans. During the annual Shri Sita Ram Kalayanam ceremony, Kalam's family would arrange for boats with a special platform for carrying the idols of the Lord from the temple to the marriage site situated in the middle of the pond called as Rama Tirtha.

5 How does Abdul Kalam describe his mother?

Ans. His mother was an ideal wife who taught him to be gentle and kind. She was generous and fed many outsiders at their home every day. She was a lady

with a generous heart and true kindness which Kalam himself learnt from him and kept it with himself throughout life.

6 What was the difference in the attitudes of the science teacher and his wife towards APJ Abdul Kalam?

Ans. Though the science teacher was an orthodox Brahmin, he broke social barriers and mixed with other religions and communities. Once, he invited Abdul to his home and served him food besides sitting and eating with him. His wife was very conservative and refused to serve Abdul that time. However, her attitude changed on seeing her husband's behaviour and, next time, she served Abdul herself.

7 Do you think the new teacher deserved the treatment meted out to him? Why/ why not?

Ans. Yes he deserved it. Spreading poisonous thoughts of communal intolerance in children's minds is a serious crime. If a teacher indulges in such mean acts, he deserves no sympathy. Therefore, he was given a good amount of scolding from one of the parents which put him on the correct path.

8 How did Abdul come to know about the progress of the World War?

Ans. Abdul came to know about the progress of the War from the stories about the War narrated to him by his brother-in-law Jallaluddin. Later on, he tried to find these events in the headlines in the local Tamil newspaper *Dinamani*. These were the ways in which Kalam used to get the news of the war.

9 Describe the child Abdul's house in Rameswaram.

Ans. Abdul's house in Rameswaram was their ancestral house 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. It accommodated all the members of his family. Kalam loved his ancestral house very much.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

- 1** How did Abdul Kalam feel when he earned his 'first wages'?

Ans. Earning one's first wages is always special. It doesn't matter how much you earned but what matters is the self-respect you earned from it. This feeling is cherished throughout one's life and it keeps on reminding the pride one has when one does it for the first time. When the Second World War broke out, emergency was declared and the train halt at Rameswaram station was suspended. Abdul's cousin, who distributed newspapers in Rameswaram, needed help to collect the newspapers being thrown from the running train. Abdul fulfilled this requirement, thus earning his first wages to carry out this task. At that time, he felt 'very proud' on earning his first wages. Another time, during the Second World War, there was an unexpected and a sudden demand of tamarind seeds. He used to collect the seeds and sell them to a provision shop on Masque street.

- 2** How was the science teacher Siva Subramania Iyer, though an orthodox Brahmin with a very conservative wife, be a friend of Abdul Kalam? Give incidents to support your answer.

Ans. Science is what we see based on reasons and rationale. There is no room for anything that is without proper logic and rationality. The barriers of religion and the likes of it are nothing but irrationality. Iyer, who was a science teacher, believed the same way. The science teacher wanted to break social barriers.

The first incident of friendship was when he exhorted Kalam to be highly educated, as he recognised the intelligence of the child. His friendly advice gave inspiration to Kalam for further studies, as later on Kalam asked his father's permission to go to the district headquarters for higher studies.

The other incident which showed that the teacher was Kalam's friend occurred when he invited Kalam to his house for a meal. His orthodox wife was horrified at the idea of a Muslim boy dining in her 'ritually pure' kitchen but his wish prevailed ultimately. These two incidents were enough to show that the science teacher was a rebel and he was determined to break these barriers which prevent the people from growing rationally in any way.

- 3** "In fact, I would say mine was a very secure childhood, both materially and emotionally." In what way was the speaker's childhood secure? Explain this statement in context of the lesson 'My childhood'.

Ans. A childhood must be secure, safe and sound. This ensures the proper growth of a child and let him foster positively. The statement of Kalam is much indicative of the same thing when he said that his childhood had been secure. Kalam, the speaker, lived in his ancestral house, a pucca house of brick and mortar, which was very large. His father, a man of innate wisdom and real generosity of spirit, provided all necessities to his children while avoiding all inessential comforts.

Food, medicine and clothes were adequately provided. Besides, his mother taught him faith in goodness and deep kindness which gave him emotional security. He learnt all the values in his childhood from his mother. A childhood is not just about growth but it is all about getting the right values at the right time which Kalam did get. Therefore, it can be said that Kalam had a secure childhood to claim.

- 4** What incident took place at the Rameswaram elementary school when a new teacher came to the class?

Ans. A new teacher joined the school in Rameshwaram. He was a believer in the religion and wanted it to apply on the students of the school.

The day he came to the class, he saw students sitting close to each other without the marked distinction of religion. Kalam used to wear a cap, showing that he was a Muslim. His best friend, Ramanadha Sastry, wore a sacred thread which identified him as a Brahmin. The new teacher could not tolerate a Hindu priest's son sitting next to a Muslim boy in the front row of the class. He ordered Kalam to sit on the back bench. This was ordered so that he could stop the mixing of the students of different religion sitting close to each other in the classroom. Ramanadha became sad when Abdul started to sit in the last row. All this left a bad impression on Abdul.

- 5 What happened in Abdul's school when a new teacher asked Abdul to sit at the back of the class? What values was the teacher lacking? What values did Lakshmana Sastry display at the conclusion of this incident?

Ans. Abdul used to wear a cap which identified him as a Muslim. His close friend, Ramanadha Sastry wore a sacred thread which marked him as a Brahmin. The new teacher, being communal-minded, could not tolerate a Hindu priest's son sitting beside a Muslim boy and ordered Kalam to sit on the back bench. Ramanadha became sad at this.

After school, both these boys informed their families about this matter. Ramanadha Sastry's father, Lakshmana Sastry, summoned the teacher, and in the presence of the boys, scolded the teacher for spreading thoughts of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children.

Here, the teacher was lacking the value of considering all children equal, whatever faith they may follow. Here Lakshmana Sastry displayed the values of considering people of all religions as equal, besides showing that he could change people's traditional thinking which had no relevance in society.

- 6 "Once you decide to change the system, such problems have to be confronted." What system is being referred to in the sentence from the chapter 'My Childhood'? What are such problems?

Ans. Every society has a system which forms the basis of the operations of the society. It is a set of rules, regulations, ethics and the principles to be followed by the members of the society. The system referred to here is the system of discrimination on the basis of religion. It is narrow-mindedness based on the feelings of social inequality between communities and religions and communal intolerance.

For instance, the Brahmin lady did not allow a Muslim to enter her kitchen because she felt that the purity of the kitchen would be spoilt. The science teacher, a rebel by nature, invited Kalam to his home for a meal. It proved that if one is determined to face problems and change the system, one will succeed. Society doesn't accept the change so easily. It takes time in accepting the changes which are very old and established. Problems would not be that much easy so that they could be eradicated from the society completely.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1 "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, Sivasubramaniam invited me to join him for dinner against 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 next week, Sivasubramaniam Iyer's wife took me inside her kitchen and served me food with her own hands.

- (i) What did the narrator wonder while eating food?
- (a) Mrs Iyer's reaction
 - (b) Observing eating of non-Hindu boy
 - (c) Will she be angry with Mrs Iyer
 - (d) Will she not cook food
- (ii) Why was Mrs. Iyer standing behind the kitchen door?
- (a) Refused to serve food to a Muslim boy
 - (b) Refused to serve food to her husband
 - (c) She was irritated
 - (d) She was not well

- (iii) Why was the narrator hesitate to eat food with a Hindu family?
 (a) Quarrel between husband and wife ✓ (b) Due to Mrs Iyer's reaction
 (c) Did not like the food (d) Did not want to trouble Mr Iyer
- (iv) What change did Kalam notice on his next visit to Mr. Iyer's house?
 (a) Mrs Iyer smiled at him (b) Did not let anyone enter the kitchen.
 ✓ (c) Served food to him with her own hands (d) Shouted at Kalam
- 2** 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 seat row left a lasting impression on me.
- (i) What did the young teacher not like in the class?
 (a) Children not paying attention to studies ✓ (b) Muslim boy sitting next to Hindu boy
 (c) Children eating together (d) Children's enjoyment
- (ii) What did the teacher do?
 (a) Sent Muslim boy out of the class (b) Reprimanded him
 ✓ (c) Shifted him to back bench (d) Did not say anything
- (iii) How did the Hindu boy react to this decision?
 (a) Protested ✓ (b) Cried with tears
 (c) Fought with teacher (d) Was very happy
- (iv) What was the young teacher asked to do?
 (a) To carry on (b) To throw Muslim boy out
 ✓ (c) Apologise to the students or quit (d) To shift seats of all children

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 3** What did Abdul tell about his days during the World War?
- 4** What lesson did the priest Lakshmana Sastry teach the new teacher?
- 5** How was Abdul treated by the science teacher's wife when he was invited to have a meal the first time? What was different in her behaviour the second time?
- 6** Why was the science teacher called a rebel?
- 7** What did Abdul do after the Second World War was over?

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

- 8** What does Kalam tell about his parents, his house and comforts he had in his childhood?
- 9** Abdul Kalam's science teacher and the 'new teacher' were different in each and every respect. Explain this statement in context of the lesson, 'My Childhood'.
- 10** Once you decide to change the system, such problems have to be confronted. What system in this sentence is referring to? What value did Iyer want to teach Abdul by saying this?