

# My Childhood.....

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

## □ About the author

Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam(1931-2015), who served as the 11th President of India from 2002 to 2007, was a renowned Indian aerospace scientist and statesman. He was born and brought up in Rameswaram, Tamilnadu. He was a significant believer of 'Simple Living High Thinking'.

## □ Introduction

"My Childhood" is an excerpt from A. P. J. Abdul Kalam's autobiography "Wings of Fire". It gives a brief but vivid account of Kalam's early years. In this chapter Kalam speaks about the people, the events and the experiences during his childhood which moulded his later life.

## □ Summary of the chapter

A P J Abdul Kalam was born in a middle-class Tamil 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. His father, Jainulabdeen, was not highly educated but he was a generous and kind person. He was not rich but provided a secure childhood to Abdul and his siblings. Abdul inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father, and faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother.

Kalam earned his first wages by working as a helping hand to his cousin, Samsuddin, who distributed newspapers in Rameswaram. In his childhood, he had three close friends-

Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindam, and Sivaprakash. 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 weeping as he went to the last row. This made a lasting impression on Abdul.

Abdul was also greatly influenced by his science teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer. He learned the lesson of breaking social barriers from him. Iyer invited him to his home for a meal. His wife refused to serve food to a Muslim boy in her pure kitchen. Iyer served him with his own hands and sat down beside him to eat his meal. He convinced his wife to serve the meal with her own hands and thus was successful in changing her conservative attitude.

For higher education, Abdul Kalam sought permission from his father to leave Rameswaram and study at the district headquarters in Ramanathapuram. His father said that Abdul had to go a long way in life just like a seagull bird that flies long distances. He calmed down Abdul's reluctant mother by quoting Kahlil Gibran's poem "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for

itself. They come through you but not from you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts. For they have their own thoughts."

## पाठ का सारांश

ए.पी.जे. अब्दुल कलाम का जन्म 1931 में तमिलनाडु के रामेश्वरम के द्वीप शहर में एक मध्यमवर्गीय तमिल परिवार में हुआ था। अपने बचपन में, वह अपने माता-पिता, अपने शिक्षकों और अपने दोस्तों से बहुत प्रभावित थे। उनके पिता, जैनुलाब्दीन, उच्च शिक्षित नहीं थे, लेकिन वे एक उदार और दयालु व्यक्ति थे। वह अमीर नहीं था लेकिन अब्दुल और उसके भाई-बहनों को एक सुरक्षित बचपन प्रदान किया। अब्दुल को अपने पिता से ईमानदारी और आत्म-अनुशासन; और अपनी माँ से अच्छाई में विश्वास और गहरी दया विरासत में मिली।

कलाम ने अपनी पहली मजदूरी अपने चचेरे भाई, समसुद्दीन की मदद करके अर्जित की, जो रामेश्वरम में समाचार पत्र वितरित करते थे। बचपन में उनके तीन करीबी दोस्त थे- रामानंद शास्त्री, अरविंदम और शिवप्रकाश। एक बार जब वे पाँचवीं कक्षा में थे, तो एक नए शिक्षक ने उन्हें उच्च जाति के ब्राह्मण लड़कों के साथ आगे की पंक्ति में न बैठने के लिए कहा। अब्दुल ने रामानंद शास्त्री को रोते हुए पाया क्योंकि वह आखिरी पंक्ति में गया था। अब्दुल पर इसका गहरा प्रभाव पड़ा।

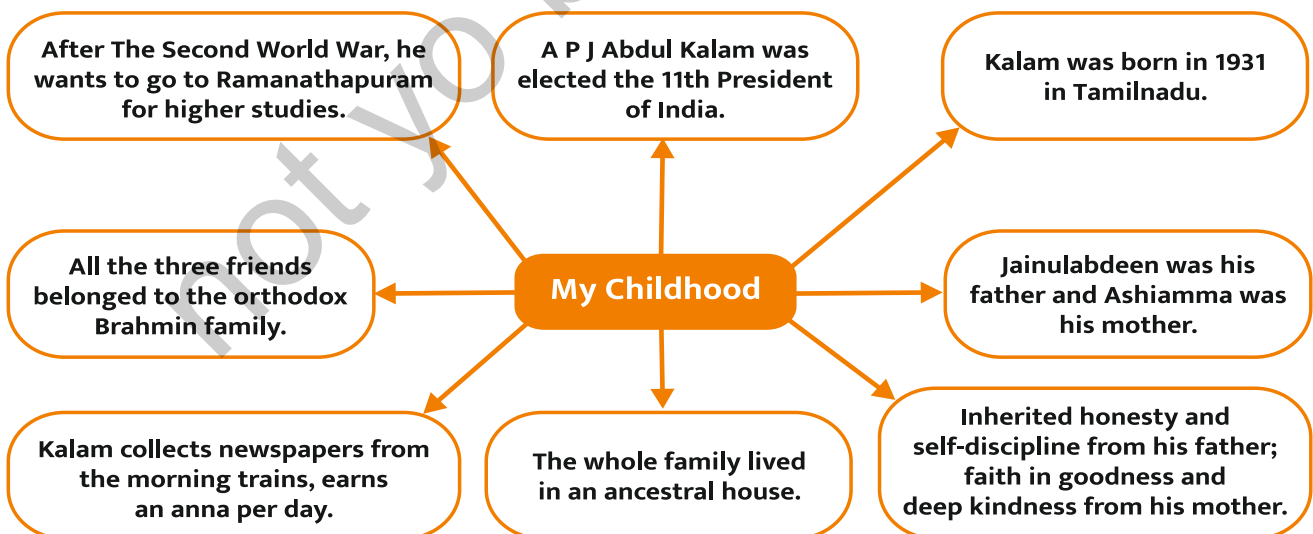
अब्दुल अपने विज्ञान शिक्षक शिवसुब्रमण्यम अय्यर से भी काफी प्रभावित थे। उन्होंने उनसे

सामाजिक बंधनों को तोड़ने का सबक सीखा। अय्यर ने उन्हें अपने घर भोजन पर आमंत्रित किया। उसकी पत्नी ने एक मुस्लिम लड़के को उसकी शुद्ध रसोई में खाना परोसने से मना कर दिया। अय्यर ने अपने हाथों से उसकी सेवा की और उसके पास भोजन करने के लिए बैठ गया। उन्होंने अपनी पत्नी को अपने हाथों से भोजन परोसने के लिए राजी किया और इस तरह अपने रूढ़िवादी रवैये को बदलने में सफल रहे।

उच्च शिक्षा के लिए, अब्दुल कलाम ने अपने पिता से रामेश्वरम छोड़ने और रामनाथपुरम में जिला मुख्यालय में अध्ययन करने की अनुमति मांगी। उनके पिता ने कहा कि अब्दुल को लंबी दूरी तक उड़ने वाले सीगल पक्षी की तरह जीवन में बहुत आगे जाना है। उन्होंने खलील जिब्रान की कविता “आपके बच्चे आपके बच्चे नहीं हैं” का हवाला देकर अब्दुल की अनिच्छुक माँ को शांत किया। “आपके बेटे और बेटियाँ जीवन के उद्देश्य को पूरा करने के लिए ही जन्म लिए हैं। वे आपके माध्यम से आते हैं लेकिन आपसे नहीं। आप उन्हें अपना प्यार दे सकते हैं लेकिन अपने विचार नहीं। क्योंकि उनके अपने विचार हैं।”

## □ Important Word Notes

Words	Meanings
Erstwhile	Former, भूतपूर्व
Despite	In spite of, के बावजूद
Disadvantage	Problem, असुविधा
Innate	Inborn, जन्मजात
Generosity	Benevolence, उदारता
Recall	Remember, याद करना
Undistinguished	Not very attractive, मामूली
Ancestral	Inherited, पैतृक
Austere	strict and serious, कठोर
Secure	Safe, सुरक्षित
Break out	Erupt, अचानक शुरू होना
Princely sum	Large amount, बड़ी रकम
Isolated	Remote, अलग-थलग
Orthodox	Traditional, वादी
Upbringing	Rearing, परवरिश
Downcast	Sad or depressed, उदास





## Multiple Choice Questions With Answers

1. What bedtime stories did Abdul's mother and grandmother tell the children of the family?

- (a) Ramayana
- (b) Mahabharatha
- (c) Life of the Prophet
- (d) Both (a) and (c)

**Ans : (d) Both (a) and (c )**

2. Abdul's friend Sivapraasan became

- (a) A teaching assistant
- (b) A newspaper distributor
- (c) A scientist
- (d) Catering contractor of Southern Railways

**Ans: (d) Catering contractor of Southern Railways**

3. The science teacher promoted

- (a) A sense of religious unity
- (b) Hatred
- (c) Luxury and comfort
- (d) Oppression of poor

**Ans : (a) A sense of religious unity**

4. Abdul's father \_\_\_\_\_ Abdul for higher studies

- (a) Encouraged

(b) Restricted

(c) Gave money

(d) Didn't support

**Ans : (a) Encouraged**

5. Abdul Kalam took his father's permission to study at the headquarters of

- (a) Rameswaram
- (b) Kanyakumari
- (c) Ramanathapuram
- (d) Kochi

**Ans : (c) Ramanathapuram**

6. When Sivasubramania Iyer invited Abdul for the second time

- (a) His wife took Abdul to the kitchen and served him food
- (b) His wife asked him to go outside the house
- (c) Abdul was deeply disappointed
- (d) Abdul refused to accept the invitation

**Ans : (a) His wife took Abdul to the kitchen and served him food**

7. Who was Sivasubramania Iyer ?

- (a) Abdul Kalam's new teacher in 5th standard
- (b) Abdul Kalam's science teacher
- (c) Both (A) and (b)

(d) None of the above

**Ans : (b)** Abdul Kalam's science teacher

8. Which symbol represented Abdul Kalam as a Muslim boy?

(a) He spoke Urdu

(b) he wore black clothes

(c) he wore a cap

(d) all of the above

**Ans : (c)** he wore a cap

9. Where was Kalam's house?

(a) near a cinema hall

(b) near a park

(c) on a mosque street

(d) none of the above

**Ans : (c)** on a mosque street

10. Why did Kalam's father say Khali Gibran's words: Your children are not...?

(a) to boast

(b) to ask his wife not to stop their young son from going out

(c) to be generous

(d) all of the above

**Ans : (b)** to ask his wife not to stop their young son from going out

## Subjective Questions with Answers

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

**Ans :** Dinamani is the name of a newspaper. Abdul Kalam attempts to trace the news of The Second World War in the headlines of this newspaper.

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

**Ans :** Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan were his school friends. Ramanadha Sastry became a priest of the Rameswaram temple. Aravindan went into the business of arranging transport for visiting pilgrims. Sivaprakash became a catering contractor for the Southern Railways.

3. How did Abdul Kalam earn his first wages?

**Ans :** Abdul Kalam earned his first wages by distributing newspapers.

4. Had he earned any money before that? In what way?

**Ans :** Yes, he had earned money before. He used to collect the

tamarind seeds and sell them to a provision shop on the Mosque Street. A day's collection would fetch him the princely sum of one anna.

## No Men Are Foreign

James Kirkup

### Introduction

The title- 'No men are Foreign' means that no men belong to another country. The poet wants to say that all men are the same, all men are equal. He wants to promote the concept of universal brotherhood. In this poem, the poet wants to tell us that everyone in this world is the same. All people, all men are the same – they eat, live, die in the same way. Everyone gets the bounties of nature like sunshine, land etc in equal measure. We can also say that it is a peace poem.

### Summary of the poem

**Stanza 1 :** The poet says that no men are strange, and no country is foreign. So, he is attempting to remove the borders from the Earth which have been erected to separate different countries. Then only, no country will be foreign. We will consider every country as our own land when there will be no borders, everyone will be free to move around. The poet wants to say that the entire Earth is one and all the

people who live on this Earth belong to one human race. Then he says that inside the uniforms worn by soldiers of different countries, the human being is the same. God has made all of us in a similar way. All breathe in the same way. Then he says that all the soldiers are our brothers – we all walk upon the same 'Mother Earth' and upon our death, shall lie in the grave on the same Earth.

**Stanza 2 :** 'They' refers to those people who belong to other countries. We call them foreigners and discriminate against them and fight with them also. The poet says that nature has given all the bounties to all people like he has given to us. Everyone gets sunlight, air and water in equal measure which means that God does not differentiate between people from different countries. We all do farming during the time of peace, when there is no war. We live a relaxed life and eat the things given to us by nature. Further, he adds that the way we starve during wars and winter time is the same for those belonging to other countries. They don't get food at that time. So, he wants to say that foreigners who belong to another country and we, both are the same. And then the poet says that even though their hands are the same as ours, they work very hard just like we do. He is giving all these examples to convey to the reader that

there is no difference in us and the people belonging to another country.

**Stanza 3 :** The poet asks the reader to remember something. He says that we should keep in mind that the people of another country, whom we think to be our enemies, have been bestowed by God with similar appearance like us. God has given them eyes like ours which open when awake and close when we are asleep. Similarly, he has given them strength which we can win through love. Then he says that in every country, in every land there is one common thing, that is life. Life means all the things that are living. And if we can recognize them and if we can understand their feelings and realise that they are like us, then there will be no fights.

**Stanza 4 :** The poet says that we should remember that whenever someone tells us to hate a person from another country, to think of him as our enemy, and whenever we think someone to be our enemy, then we deprive ourselves, we cheat ourselves, and we condemn ourselves. He says that we should stay away from such negativity. We should not consider anyone to be our enemy. During a war, both the parties must bear the loss. And that is why the poet says that war is not in our favour. He says that whenever we pick any weapon against someone, we should remember one thing.....

**Stanza 5 :** We should keep in mind that whenever we pick weapons against any person, we make the Earth dirty because weapons kill people and their bodies which fall on the Earth make it filthy. Whenever war happens, it leads to a lot of bloodshed, fire and death. These dead bodies accumulate on the Earth and it makes it impure. The fire of war which erupts, the smoke which comes out, the dust which fills the air - it is so dirty that it pollutes and outrages the purity of the air. With all these things the poet wants to give us a message that we should not indulge in war. Finally, he ends the poem by writing the first line in reverse and saying that Remember, no men are foreign, and no countries are strange.

## पाठ का सारांश

**Stanza 1 :** कवि कहता है कि कोई भी आदमी अजीब नहीं है, और कोई भी देश विदेशी नहीं है। इसलिए, वह पृथ्वी से उन सीमाओं को हटाने का प्रयास कर रहा है जो विभिन्न देशों को अलग करने के लिए बनाई गई हैं। तभी कोई देश विदेशी नहीं होगा। हम हर देश को अपनी जमीन समझेंगे जब कोई सीमा नहीं होगी, हर कोई घूमने के लिए स्वतंत्र होगा। कवि कहना चाहता है कि पूरी पृथ्वी एक है और इस पृथ्वी पर रहने वाले सभी लोग एक मानव जाति के हैं। फिर वह कहता है कि अलग-अलग देशों के सैनिकों द्वारा पहनी गई वर्दी के अंदर इंसान एक जैसा होता है।



भगवान ने हम सभी को इसी तरह बनाया है। सभी इसी तरह सांस लेते हैं। फिर वह कहता है कि सभी सैनिक हमारे भाई हैं - हम सभी एक ही 'धरती' पर चलते हैं और हमारी मृत्यु पर, एक ही पृथ्वी पर कब्र में लेटे रहेंगे।

**Stanza 2 :** 'वे' उन लोगों को संदर्भित करता है जो दूसरे देशों के हैं। हम उन्हें विदेशी कहते हैं और उनके साथ भेदभाव करते हैं और उनसे लड़ते भी हैं। कवि कहता है कि प्रकृति ने भी सभी मनुष्यों को वैसे ही सभी वरदान दिए हैं जैसे उसने हमें दिए हैं। सभी को सूर्य का प्रकाश, वायु और जल समान मात्रा में मिलता है जिसका अर्थ है कि ईश्वर विभिन्न देशों के लोगों के बीच अंतर नहीं करता है। हम सब शांति के समय में खेती करते हैं, जब युद्ध नहीं होता है। हम आराम से जीवन जीते हैं और प्रकृति द्वारा हमें दी गई चीजों को खाते हैं। इसके अलावा, वह कहते हैं कि जिस तरह से हम युद्धों और सर्दियों के समय में भूखे रहते हैं, वही दूसरे देशों के लोगों के लिए भी होता है। उस समय उन्हें खाना नहीं मिलता। तो, वह कहना चाहता है कि विदेशी जो दूसरे देश के हैं और हम दोनों एक ही हैं। और फिर कवि कहता है कि भले ही उनके हाथ हमारे जैसे ही हैं, फिर भी वे हमारी तरह ही बहुत मेहनत करते हैं। वह ये सारे उदाहरण पाठकों को यह बताने के लिए दे रहे हैं कि हममें और दूसरे देश के लोगों में कोई अंतर नहीं है।

**Stanza 3 :** कवि पाठक से कुछ याद करने को कहता है। उनका कहना है कि हमें इस बात का ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि दूसरे देश

के लोग, जिन्हें हम अपना दुश्मन समझते हैं, भगवान ने हमें समान रूप दिया है। भगवान ने उन्हें हमारी तरह आंखें दी हैं जो जागते समय खुलती हैं और जब हम सोते हैं तो बंद हो जाती हैं। इसी तरह, उसने उन्हें ताकत दी है जिसे हम प्यार से जीत सकते हैं। फिर वह कहता है कि, हर देश में एक आम बात है, वह है जीवन। जीवन का अर्थ है सभी चीजें जो जी रही हैं। और अगर हम उन्हें पहचान सकते हैं और उनकी भावनाओं को समझ सकते हैं और महसूस कर सकते हैं कि वे हमारे जैसे हैं, तो कोई लड़ाई नहीं होगी।

**Stanza 4 :** कवि कहता है कि हमें यह याद रखना चाहिए कि जब भी कोई हमें किसी दूसरे देश के व्यक्ति से घृणा करने के लिए कहता है, उसे अपना दुश्मन समझने के लिए, और जब भी हम किसी को अपना दुश्मन समझते हैं, तो हम खुद को वंचित करते हैं, हम खुद को धोखा देते हैं, और हम निंदा करते हैं हम स्वयं। उनका कहना है कि हमें ऐसी नकारात्मकता से दूर रहना चाहिए। हमें किसी को अपना दुश्मन नहीं समझना चाहिए। युद्ध के दौरान दोनों पक्षों को नुकसान उठाना पड़ता है। और इसलिए कवि कहता है कि युद्ध हमारे पक्ष में नहीं है। उनका कहना है कि जब भी हम किसी के खिलाफ कोई हथियार उठाते हैं तो हमें एक बात याद रखनी चाहिए...

**Stanza 5 :** हमें इस बात का ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि जब भी हम किसी व्यक्ति के खिलाफ हथियार उठाते हैं, तो हम पृथ्वी को गंदा करते हैं क्योंकि हथियार लोगों को

मारते हैं और उनके शरीर जो पृथ्वी पर गिरते हैं, उन्हें गंदा करते हैं। जब भी युद्ध होता है, यह बहुत रक्तपात, आग और मृत्यु की ओर ले जाता है। ये मृत शरीर पृथ्वी पर जमा हो जाते हैं और इसे अशुद्ध कर देते हैं। युद्ध की आग जो भड़कती है, जो धुआँ निकलता है, वह धूल जो हवा को भरती है - यह इतनी गंदी है कि यह हवा की शुद्धता को दूषित और अपमानित करती है। इन सब बातों के साथ कवि हमें संदेश देना चाहता है कि हमें युद्ध नहीं करना चाहिए। अंत में, वह पहली पंक्ति को उल्टा लिखकर कविता समाप्त करता है और कहता है कि याद रखना, कोई भी पुरुष विदेशी नहीं है, और कोई भी देश अजीब नहीं है।

### Important Word Notes

Words	Meanings
Aware	conscious, जागरूक
harvest	reaping corn, फसल एकत्र करना
starve	die with hunger, भूख से मरना
recognise	know, पहचानना
Dispossess	to put out of possession, अधिकार मुक्त कर देना

betray	To cheat, धोखा देना
condemn	criticise, निंदा करना
Defile	To make dirty, to pollute, दूषित करना
Strange	Unusual, अजीब
Peaceful	Calm, शांतिपूर्ण

### Multiple Choice Questions With Answers

1. What does the title of the poem convey?

- (a) all the people belong to the same earth
- (b) people belong to one country
- (c) all people should live in one country
- (d) none

**Ans: (a)** all the people belong to the same earth

2. "To hate our brothers,..." Who are "brothers" here?

- (a) Fellow citizens
- (b) Poet's acquaintances
- (c) Natives of Ireland
- (d) People from other countries

**Ans: (d)** People from other countries

3. Beneath all uniforms, a single  
— breathes.

- (a) Body
- (b) Head
- (c) Heart
- (d) Nose

**Ans : (c) Heart**

4. What should be discouraged  
according to the poem?

- (a) the practice of love and brotherhood
- (b) equality
- (c) ill practice of hatred and discrimination
- (d) None

**Ans : (c) ill practice of hatred and discrimination**

5. Who is the poet of the poem 'No  
Men Are Foreign'?

- (a) James Kirkup
- (b) W B Yeats
- (c) Robert Frost
- (d) Phoebe Cary

**Ans : (a) James Kirkup**

6. What are we doing to human  
earth?

- (a) defiling
- (b) saving
- (c) decorating

(d) sustaining

**Ans : (a) defiling**

7. They have — like ours that wake.

- (a) Eyes
- (b) Hair
- (c) Dream
- (d) Legs

**Ans : (a) Eyes**

### Subjective Questions With Answers

1. What message does the poet  
want to convey?

**Ans :** The poet wants to say that there should be no discrimination between people on the basis of their appearance, religion or region. It is inhuman to tease one because of one's different background. The poet wants that the people should discourage this malpractice and love their fellow human beings from the bottom of their heart.

2. How does the poet prove that  
there are no foreign countries?

**Ans :** The poet proves it with the help of nature. Everyone shares the same sun, earth and air. They have the same body structure and its functioning elements. So

there should be no biased attitude towards anyone.

3. How are we responsible for war?

**Ans :** Everyone is responsible for war. If we start hating our brethren, we will become the cause of tension. And the tension is converted into war one day. So nobody should hate and despise anyone. Our biased and impolite behaviour towards fellow human beings becomes the cause of unnecessary wars.

4. How do we defile and outrage the 'human earth' that is ours?

**Ans :** Hate breeds hatred. Narrow ideas pollute and defile this earth which belongs to all mankind. 'Hells of fire and dust' are our own creations. They pollute and outrage the 'innocence of air that is our own'. We should remember that the mother earth belongs to all lands and all people.