

Tender Heart High School

Sector 33 B, Chandigarh

Subject: English Literature

Class : VI

Chapter – 8

My Childhood

Good morning, Students

Let us understand the chapter “My Childhood” with the help of the summary for a better understanding.

Summary of the Chapter

The lesson is an extract from **Dr. Abdul Kalam's** autobiography '**Wings of Fire**'. He recounts his childhood experiences in this particular extract. He narrates interesting incidents from his own life that paved the way to shape his life. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam reflects on his early years growing up in Rameswaram, a small town in Tamil Nadu, India. He describes his family background, childhood experiences, and formative events that shaped his values and character.

Kalam begins by introducing his family and home life. Born into a modest Tamil Muslim family, his father Jainulabdeen, though not wealthy or formally educated, was known for his wisdom and generosity. His mother, Ashiamma, was a kind and selfless woman who frequently fed strangers. Kalam describes his childhood as secure and nurturing, despite the family's limited means.

He recounts a vivid memory from World War II when a sudden demand for tamarind seeds led him to earn his first money by selling seeds. This small but significant experience left a lasting sense of pride in his ability to contribute to his family's income.

The chapter highlights the strong sense of community and friendship in Kalam's early life, where he had close friends from different religious backgrounds. His friendships transcended religious differences, and they

shared experiences like participating in local religious ceremonies together.

A pivotal moment in his childhood was when a new teacher at his school unfairly segregated him from his Hindu friend Ramanadha Sastry due to religious differences. The episode left a deep impact on Kalam, and the intervention of Ramanadha's father, Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry, who challenged the teacher's prejudiced behavior, reinforced Kalam's belief in equality and justice.

The chapter also describes the progressive influence of *Sivasubramania Iyer*, a Brahmin teacher who defied social norms to foster inclusivity. Iyer invited Kalam to his home and served him food, despite initial reluctance from his wife, demonstrating his commitment to breaking down social barriers. Over time, Iyer's wife came to accept Kalam, symbolizing a shift towards greater communal harmony.

As the Second World War ended and India approached independence, Kalam felt a strong desire to leave his hometown for further studies. His father's poignant words, quoting Khalil Gibran, expressed the importance of growth and independence for one's personal development. This moment of departure marked the beginning of Kalam's journey beyond Rameswaram.

Overall, the chapter provides a glimpse into the early influences in Kalam's life that helped shape his values of inclusivity, self-discipline, and the pursuit of knowledge.