

My Childhood

Question 1.

Where was Abdul Kalam's house?

Answer:

Abdul Kalam's house was on the Mosque Street in Rameswaram.

Question 2.

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

Answer:

Dinamani is the name of a newspaper. Abdul Kalam attempts to trace the Second World War's news in the headlines of this newspaper.

Question 3.

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

Answer:

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. Sivaprakasan became a catering contractor for the Southern Railways.

Question 4.

How did Abdul Kalam earn his first wages?

Answer:

Abdul Kalam earned his first wages by distributing newspapers.

Question 5.

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

Answer:

Yes, he earned money before also. 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.

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?

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

ANSWER:

1. (i) Kalam's father, Jainulabdeen was not a wealthy or educated person. However, he was an honest and generous man, who possessed great innate wisdom. He was self-disciplined and avoided all inessential luxuries.

(ii) Kalam's mother, Ashiamma was an ideal helpmate to her husband. She believed in goodness and profound kindness, and fed many people everyday.

(iii) The author describes himself as a short boy with undistinguished looks, who had a secure childhood. He is an honest and self-disciplined person, who believes in goodness and deep kindness.

2. The author inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father, and faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother.

Question III:

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

ANSWER:

1. (i) The author mentions the two major religious groups of India—Hindus and Muslims—as the social groups predominant in Rameswaram.

Yes, these groups were easily identifiable. The factors that demarcated these groups from one another were

their dressing sense and the place they lived in. Abdul Kalam wore a cap, which marked him as a Muslim. Besides, he lived on the Mosque Street. On the other hand, his friend, Ramanandha Sastry, wore the sacred thread as he belonged to an orthodox Hindu Brahmin family.

(ii) They naturally shared friendships and experiences. Abdul Kalam was a Muslim while his friends were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families. However, they were tied with a strong bond of friendship. Besides this friendship, during the annual Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony, Kalam's family arranged boats with a special platform for carrying idols of the Lord from the temple to the marriage site. Moreover, events from the Ramayana and from the life of the Prophet were the bedtime stories his mother and grandmother would tell the children of their family. All these incidents show that different social groups co-inhabited in Rameswaram.

(iii) Kalam mentions two people who were very aware of the differences among the two religious groups. One of them was the new teacher of Abdul Kalam's school, who did not let Abdul Kalam and his friend, Ramanadha Sastry, sit together.

The second person was the wife of Sivasubramania Iyer (Abdul Kalam's science teacher). She was very conservative and did not want Kalam to eat in her pure Hindu kitchen.

The people who tried to bridge these differences were Lakshmana Sastry (Ramanadha's father) and Sivasubramania Iyer (his science teacher).

(iv) When Kalam was in the fifth standard, a new teacher came to his class. The teacher was a bigot and could not tolerate Kalam, who was a Muslim, to sit with Ramanandha Sastry, who was a Hindu priest's son. Thus, he changed Kalam's seat. This broke the heart of the two boys. When Ramanandha Sastry's father came to know about it, he rebuked the teacher for spreading communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children. The teacher apologized and regretted his behaviour.

In another incident, Kalam's science teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer, invited Kalam for a meal to his house. But his conservative wife refused to serve a Muslim in her pure Hindu kitchen.

The unperturbed teacher, served Kalam himself and even invited him for another meal the next weekend. Iyer believed that once a person has decided to change the system, such problems have to be confronted. However, by Kalam's next visit, Iyer's wife's views had changed. She took Kalam inside her kitchen and served him food with her own hands.

Hence, attitudes can change if we take initiative to resolve the differences and be the change we want to see.

No Men Are Foreign

Question 1.

"Beneath all uniforms..." What uniforms do you think the poet is speaking about?

How does the poet suggest that all people on earth are the same?

Answer:

The poet speaks about the various dresses that people of various countries wear but beneath them, the human body is same.

The poet says that nobody is different and peculiar. No country is foreign. A single body breathes beneath all uniforms. Moreover, the land is the same everywhere.

Question 2.

In stanza 1, find five ways in which we all are alike. Pick out the words.

Answer:

In the first stanza the poet says that there is no difference between the body of a citizen of one country and the citizen of another country. We have same kind of body; we wear same kind of clothes. We walk on the same planet, and the end of each individual is the same.

Question 3.

How many common features can you find in stanza 2? Pick out the words.

Answer:

The following common features are given in the stanzas:

sun

air

water,

Peaceful harvests required for human survival

same hands

Question 4.

“... whenever we are told to hate our brothers....” When do you think this happens? Why? Who ‘tells’ us? Should we do as we are told at such times What does the poet say?

Answer:

Sometimes some selfish people instigate the innocent to harm others. They do it for their own benefit. The common or ordinary man does not understand their tricks and starts hating his fellow human beings. They tell them to cause riots. The poet says that one should not follow anybody’s advice without brooding over it. The poet repeatedly says that there is no difference in them and the foreigners. The people of the entire world are the same.

