

## Strong Roots

APJ Abdul Kalam (1931-2015)

### ❖ Describe Kalam's childhood

Ans: Kalam had a very fortified, secure, soothing, simple childhood. He was born into a middle class Tamil family. Kalam was with undistinguished looks, on the contrary his parents were tall and handsome. He spent his childhood days under the sweet shadow of his ancestral house amidst congenial atmosphere. There was a fine line between necessity and comfort. He was provided only essentials—food, medicines, clothing. He was blessed with graceful parents, secured, serene family and secular social scenario. Since boyhood his father has incorporated positive values in his blood and chromosome. Fortunately he has maintained equilibrium between material prosperity and spiritual outlook.

### ❖ Kalam's feeling about his father

Ans: Kalam had profound reverence/respect for his father. He admired him from the core of his heart. His father was very simple, pious, informally educated, unwealthy human being. Despite that he had possessed profound innate wisdom and generosity. [Being a devout Muslim he was an early riser (at 4 a.m.) and attached to religious doctrine and dogma. He was like a messiah, had mystical power to transfer divine power into normal things (water). He had a very secular attitude and that is reflected in his intimacy with the highest priest of Rameswaram temple Pakshy Lakshmana Sastry. He was a good orator and could explain complex spiritual dogma in profoundly lucid colloquial language.] His father opened the crescendo of truth to him and he has implemented his father's principle in his own world of science and technology.

### ❖ Write down relevance of prayer

Ans: Being asked Kalam's father explain to him the relevance of prayers. He said [These were nothing mysterious about prayer. He considered it as a wonderful medium of communion of spirit between people. Aspired on the wings of prayer a man can go beyond his bodily existence and become an inextricable part of the cosmos. Unlike human beings the cosmos knows no disparity/division between cast-creed-age-wealth] Thus through simple, lucid, colloquial language Kalam's father explained to him the relevance of prayer.'

### ❖ Describe Kalam's neighborhood

Ans: Kalam has given a picturesque description of his neighborhood. He came from a middle class Tamil family and was born in Rameswaram, the then part of Madras state. He used to live in his ancestral house on the Mosque street, which was near to the famous Shiva temple of Rameswaram. Although the locality was predominantly Muslim but there were a lot of Hindu families. Both of them used to live amidst harmony, peace, amity, fortitude incorporated into him mutual respect for all religions and doctrine of secularism.

## ❖ Relationship between Pakshy Lakshmana Sastry and Kalam's father

Ans: The memory that is still green in the cascade of Kalam's memories is the discussion between his father and Pakshy Lakshmana Sastry. Both of them are in their traditional attire. They are distinctly different in their religious dogma but they have a close communion on the spiritual matters. Both of them are profound. From the outer perspective they were poles apart, but both of them utter harmonious hymns and sing a saga of unity in diversity.

## ❖ What does Dr. Kalam say about his childhood experience in the mosque?

Ans: Kalam was born and brought up in Mosque Street of Rameswaram amidst a secular environment of peace, amity, and fortitude. There was a very old mosque in the proximity of his ancestral house. His father was a regular 'Namazee' and his father would take him to the mosque for evening prayers. Kalam would not make out/infer the meaning of Arabic prayers but from the inner sanctum of his heart he believed that his prayers would reach to the benign God. His father had a profound impact on the adjacent people—people of different religions believed that his father had the power to transform normal water into sacred water by dipping his fingers. This sacred water by his pious father was used as medicine for the distressed and destitute (but his mind was not confined and creed by the religious fervor and fanaticism. The soulful prayer opened a new vista to him.)

## ❖ Comment on the spiritual principle of Kalam's father

Ans: Kalam's father was a spiritual and pious person. But he was without formal education and wealth. Despite that he had possessed profound innate wisdom and generosity.[2],[3]. He was a believer of the idea that amidst adversity there were always opportunities for introspection. So we must not be afraid of difficulties, danger, hindrances, and hurdles. He helped people to get rid of distress. He was but a go-between in their honest endeavour to claim demonic forces with prayers.