

CONTEMPLATE ACT FLOURISH



**Embrace
your
true self
and get
ahead
in life**

RAKESH DESHPANDE





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CHAPTER 1

WHY CHILDHOOD IS MYSTERIOUS?

It's an underrated statement. If I need to justify this, then allow me to ask you a few questions, and I hope you don't mind. Get in a comfortable seating position and take a few deep breaths. Do you agree that everyone's childhood is completely mysterious? Let me justify this statement with a few questions that will help you rethink.

Can you express your childhood with complete coherence? It seems to be an arduous task, isn't it? I mean, how can someone just summarize years of happiness, sadness, losing someone that was dear to you, and creating wonderful experiences with new friends in just a few words or could draw? Don't you think that you need at least a thousand pages to express? Well, how can just someone write about their entire childhood experience, right? That's the

point! Some people can comprehend their whole childhood experience.

Let's look at your parents' perspective. Your childhood has always been mysterious to your parents because they had to understand a child who was yet to learn to speak, be able to walk and to argue with them at some point later in life. Like me, all you might have done was cry about almost everything. Your parents always had to decode your sign language as a child. It was like you were sending them some secret encrypted message. Without any hesitation or prior years of experience, we forced them to decode it. They had to understand when you were hungry, what made you sad, what you really liked to eat and play with, and who your favorite superhero or cartoon character was. They didn't give up, did they? They tried to protect you despite knowing that one day you will grow and eventually hurt them in or the other way. Because they might have done a similar thing to their parents. It's a vicious cycle, but despite that, your parents did it. They did it out of love for you. They did it because you are part of their life and a piece of their body. Literally. You just grew up outside, but it all started with your parents. It's like I am tapping something that was hidden somewhere deep inside you, isn't it?

Well, that's how childhood is supposed to be. The notorious acts, silly fights with siblings, your

struggle to learn how to ride a bicycle, do math, and potty training. Embrace these memories instead of feeling embarrassed. If you have lived your childhood without any of the struggles, then some part of the world suffers in silence. Think about this!

No matter how stupid acts you did, your parents were proud of you. They had to stay awake to feed you every couple of hours when you were a few months old. They had to take you to hospitals for vaccinations despite knowing the fact that you would cry the entire night and they had to be there to console you. And the next day, they had to work with puffy eyes and an inactive minds that were desperately begging them to take a nap. They didn't give up, otherwise you wouldn't be in such good health. It's a different story if you have developed unhealthy habits over these years, and it's clearly not their fault.

Your parents compromised despite knowing that one day you may not pay attention to them like they did to you. They spend their savings on your education so that you become a better person. They never paid attention to their personal goals and commitments so that you enjoy their childhood. They are real people who live in the real world. Your parents have also seen children kicking their parents out of the house. They have seen the bad side of the

world. Yet, they showered unconditional love and spent every valuable aspect of their lives for you. They are not perfect, but aren't they wonderful? They made so many mistakes, but they didn't leave you behind. On the whole, they nurtured you for you, not for themselves.

Your parents had no prior experience as a parent, but they ensured that you were safe, ate healthy food, and were in good health. They tried their best, and now it's your responsibility to acknowledge that. It's tough to love someone unconditionally and without expecting anything much in return? This is what your parents did. If you had such a childhood, consider yourself a lucky one.

It is your turn to make your child's childhood a wonderful memory. Wouldn't it be the best gift for them? Yes, it is evident that you are not perfect. In fact, none of us are. But if we wish, we can become wise parents.

I want to share my life experience with you, and I intend to give you a different perspective to make your life worth living.

I pledged to make a small contribution of my earnings from each book I publish to charity. It was a weekend when my wife and I decided to visit a local orphanage, and we did a quick search online. We found one which was almost fifteen kilometers

away from our home. It had good ratings and had images uploaded.

I was already anxious and started to wonder how I would interact with them and how I would speak to them. I had no idea until we reached there. We had carried a few sweet boxes, snacks, and some fruits on the way that could feed around ten children. When we reached there, there was a family who had parked the car outside and had asked the helper to carry the rice bags inside. We didn't want to interrupt them, so we thought of waiting outside until they were done, hoping that they would want to spend some time with them.

But, they were quick. We went inside, and we quickly handed over the boxes and bags to the helper and asked their permission if we could talk to the children. When I went inside, there were more than ten children of different ages. I clearly remember the youngest was seven years old and the eldest one was twenty-one years old. They were studying for their examinations. We were a little hesitant because we didn't want to disturb them, but we also wanted to talk to them to offer if they needed anything.

The helper immediately came to us and asked us if we would like a tour of the orphanage. We agreed without a second thought. When I went inside the first room which had twelve beds placed beside each other and the torn blankets on them, it broke

my heart. Neither I nor my wife could go to any other room. When I tried to speak to the seven-year-old boy, I realized that he had no idea what he was missing in life. It's because he never saw the other side of life. He looked as happy as the other kids had parents. I couldn't understand this logic for a moment.

Then I went on talking with other children of different ages, and they all reacted in almost similar ways. That made me clear that a child will grow no matter what terrible situation it lives through. As long as there is one caretaker or a well-wisher who is able to guide them in the right direction, they will eventually grow as wise individuals. I became more curious, so I wanted to talk to the twenty-one-year-old. I desperately wanted to understand more. I found him in the kitchen chopping vegetables and cooking rice for the rest of the children. I sensed that they usually help each other every day. When I spoke to him about his education or if he needed any guidance, what he told me was completely surprising. I got to know that he was pursuing engineering and was about to graduate. He was kind and soft-spoken. Probably that's how he was nurtured to be. I could tell. The children wanted to play with us but the helper was a little hesitant about my idea of playing with them, as they had exams to prepare for. The caretaker instructed them

like a parent would usually do. The children reacted exactly like how a child of their age would do. I am sure the caretaker and helper might be stricter at times but aren't parents the same? I know that at some point in life, they will regret having no parents around, but by then they would have already learnt the reality of life. They will eventually become responsible individuals like other children with parents.

Let me share my childhood remembrances with you that shaped my perspective. I was born in a lower middle class family and when my father had just started practicing law. Just in a few years, with the grace of god, my father's income increased and fortunately, our economic status got enhanced. It was possible only with my father's dedication and commitment. I was raised in a jovial environment. My parents pampered me a lot. I never had to worry about the pocket money because my father was always there by my side. However, they also taught me valuable lessons early in life. As I grew, I learned the importance of goals and valuing money, but I was stubborn by nature. My mindset was also rigid. If it weren't my father, I would still be searching for valuable lessons. He often said that "money cannot buy happiness nor will it let you live a peaceful life without it". My mother is known for her creativity and generous nature. She taught me the importance

of kindness and a different life perspective. Years passed, and our financial condition improved drastically. Amidst this, our relatives became jealous and greedy. Like every other family, we had our differences. We fought, but we also believed in resolving our misunderstandings.

I was a teenager then. I believed only what I saw and taught to me. I was far away from understanding the intentions of people. I thought they were what they spoke about themselves. I didn't foresee my world falling apart. And it fell apart sooner than I thought.

Then, I lost my father. That was one of the most painful and worst times of my life. It was so sudden and shocking that my mother and I took days to digest this painful truth. All the privileges that I had as a teenager disappeared in thin air. In just a few months, we were living a life of poverty. My mother and I roamed to the temples, gurus, and other doctors in search of an answer; why did I lose my father all of a sudden?. There was no definite answer. Some said that it was due to black magic practiced by my close relative, and some said that his body had stopped responding to the treatments. While my mother was selling all the property and ornaments to fund school fees, I was slowly slipping into depression. The ugly and abusive arguments with my relatives made my situation worse. In just

a few years, we had lost what my father and my mother had earned through their sheer hard work and commitment. But destiny had a role to play in it. We were betrayed. The property that we owned was snatched from us. Again, we reached our elders for justice, but they turned their back on us.

I was just a spectator watching my mother being physically thrashed by my relatives. I hadn't seen anything of that sort or heard something like this from my parents. I was at a standstill and deeply in shock. After a few days, my mother and I visited those relatives again, pleading to return our property, but we returned with bruises and humiliation. My mother and I cried for days, worrying about the future. She had started losing hope in her life too. I couldn't bear that. I couldn't afford that.

Gradually, I learnt that my family needed to come out of this situation. I decided to take a firm stand for my family. I decided to be strong without even knowing its true meaning. I just had one intention: 'protect my family as my father did,' and that's where my focus was. The lessons that my father had taught me earlier helped me gain the strength to fight for the assets that were snatched from us. I still remember weighing my options; 'either I lose it completely or get it back'. I was giving my best, yet I prepared myself for the

worst. In the beginning, I started retaliating every time. Then, I faced situations for which I wasn't prepared. I had no time to think if I was physically hurt or emotionally disturbed. I did what I had to. I was going with the flow. I got thrashed and abused. Soon, I had lost all the support from other distant relatives who at least called us to console earlier. At last, it was just me and the lessons that I had learned from my parents.

Honestly, we didn't get what we fought for. But I found myself, in the process, I found my abilities and valuable lessons at an early stage that I still treasure. Despite implementing these lessons in my life, I struggled and I often struggle but when I do, I recall my parents, who taught me so much. I can never thank them enough for being a true source of inspiration to me. Because of their invaluable lessons, I can lead my life in a world where others need help. Here, I am writing another edition of the book to help you and others.

When I did self-reflection, I was in a paradox. I thought who was happier, who learnt more- the children in the orphanage or I? Was the childhood of those orphans a paradise that they didn't see the ugly side of reality or a hell that they missed the love and lessons that parents usually teach their children? Was my childhood a paradise where I learned and found myself, or was it a hell that I lost

my father, who meant so much, and I had to face depressing situations?

When you see two different worlds running in parallel and converging at one point, it makes us feel that childhood is mysterious. No matter how protective we are around our children, when they grow up, they are going to develop a different perspective about this world. They will find different ways to experiment, fail, fall, and eventually rise up again. When they interact with different people, they tend to tweak their personalities like how we did when we were in college or when we were learning the norms of our first job.

There are ups and downs at every stage of our lives, no matter how focused we are towards fulfilling our responsibilities. Instead of fighting this mountain-like agony, it is better to look on the bright side and enjoy the little things in life. And that makes a big difference in your and your child's life. It's better to let your child explore and learn, rather than restrict them in the name of protection. I know you are able to connect your experiences with this.

You may ask 'When we aren't perfect, 'how can we provide the best to our children?'. In the next chapter, let's see whether a childhood should be a utopian or dystopian experience.

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