

It is strange, that the impressions that lodge in our mind do not fade away. They sink into the sub-conscious part of the brain. For some strange reason, we feel a continuity within us, even when the cells of our body have been replaced several times in the span of our age. The bodies we had as children are no more, and have been transformed into old skeletons, covered with flabby or wrinkled flesh. The face seems withered, but the mind is same as it was as when we were children. These memories seem to be as fresh, even after a lapse of decades. Why? Old philosophers, whether in the west or in the east, postulated a soul. In the east it was called, "Aatma". As Catholics, our creed says, "We believe in One God, Maker of all things visble and invisible." The nature of the invisible world is hidden from our senses. Even, Indian philosophers have pondered on the spiritual dimension of the creation. Modern philosophers have offered different theories to explain this, but even they do not have all the facts, as human nature is so complicated, that only the Mind of the Creator can fathom it, and he will open it up in small doses, for man to discover.

The fascination however is that our lives are flooded with so many beautiful experiences, that they sustain us, even amidst adversities, which are part of our existence. We feel happy when we recall these old memories, and it gives pleasure to others too, who hear about it, as it pries out their own personal memories, and they live the good days of the past once again.

I recall a time, when I was five years old, and we lived in a place in South Kanara. It was south of Mangalore taluka, and called Puttur. My father was a teacher in a Govenment run school. He used to commute to and from the school on a British made bicycle. It was 1939. The times of Hitler, Churchill and Mussolini.

Our two storied rented house, overlooked lush green paddy fields, and was a stone's throw from the main road going to Mangalore. Buses, lorries and bullock carts used to ply regularly on this road. I remember a small local blacksmith's shop closeby, where he fitted metal rims to the bullock cart wheels. On the other side of the road, a little further away from our house was a small kiosk, we called "Angad" who sold sweets, and simple groceries. As children, we were only interested in the sweets. Once I took a small coin worth three paise, and asked the shop keeper to give me a bicycle, and he laughed and me and said, that they cost much more. He could give me some sweets for that money, and gave me some.

Bang opposite our house, across the road, on a little hill, was our elementary school, where I was admitted to the first class, and my mother or elder sister, would reach me to the school, and come to receive me after class. Right from my early childhood, I was very implusive, and half of the problems were created with this deficiency in my character.

My mother once told me, that the Bus that passed by our house went to Mangalore, where my grandfather, her father lived. I recall the time, we went to Mangalore a year before, and it was for the Eucharistic Congress that was held there. We visited the well lit Rosario Church in Bolar, where there was a large fair, and beautiful bass band music could be heard from a distance. My eyes fell on the tungsten bulbs which brightly lit the stalls, and I was carried on the shoulder I do not recal fully whose, but he was a large bodied man, possibly my uncle. I

Sounds of Early Childhood

Written by W.J.Pais

remember they bought a badge, which had a large round, silver coated medallion, pinned to a bright red satin ribbon, which was pinned to my shirt. This memory always drew me to my grand father's house, where I was born in 1934, in the cold month of December. My grandfather was the first Secretary of the Catholic Bank, which he had helped in founding and he resided on the upper story of the bank building, which was on the left side of the open ground overlooking the Milagres Church, in Hampankatta, Mangalore. This has been demolished long time ago. While I am here, let me tell you of one of my innocent pranks, which was discovered by my grandfather. A visitor had come to him, and when he was going back, found his footwear missing, and went back to my grandfather and asked him, if there was a dog in the bank. When asked why, he told him, of the missing footwear. My grandfather jokingly told him, that he had a two legged dog, and called his peon to find if I was playing with them, and he came up and found the missing footwear and took them to the gentleman.

Seeing the buses going up and down so frequently, one day, I decided to ask the bus driver, if he could take me to my grand father's house. No reply, the bus went ahead without noticing me. After some days, of constant and persisting asking, and finding that there was no response, my little brain, thought of confronting the driver. I stood in the path of the bus with a stick, and the bus slowed down and stopped. I was happy, that the driver consented at last. To my consternation, I found that he was pleading with me, to get out of the way, and I was threatening him. Around our house many Muslim women used to live, and they with their black burquas, were crowded along the road, yelling at my mother to come down and take her son to safety. I could not understand their worry. Suddenly, out of nowhere, my older brother came and snatched me away, in his arms, and took me home, and gave such a dressing of scary stories, that from that day, I became a funky person, afraid of any confrontation !

There was another incident in my school, where the boy sitting next to me, used to come with a Gandhi cap. My sensitivity to cleanliness inculcated early in childhood, found that the cap was a bit dirty. I told the boy to ask his mother to wash it. There was no change, as day after day, the boy came to school with the same cap. So, my impulsive nature drove me to snatch it from his head and throw it out of the class room. The boy started crying and the teacher took the matter in her own hands, and when my mother came to get me after class, told her about what I did. Again, I got a lecture not to interfere in other people's lives, where I did not have any place.

I also remember vividly, how my father used to take me on his bicycle to my aunt's house, which was far away down the road. As my brothers and sister were growing, my father decided that we move to Mangalore, where there were better schools, and they could pursue their studies, and my father would visit us during his holidays. My youngest sister was born in November that year.

My oldest sister, who was studying in Mangalore, came for the Christmas holidays, and I was a witness to her magic fingers, as she took a blue saree of my mother, and draped the crib with it. On our dining table she placed small cardboard boxes, and painted newspapers with chimney coal dust and ash, and

crumpled the papers and formed hills of rocks, and with patches of grass taken from the field, burnished the hills with greenery, and made a small lake with the basic, and with the anema

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can, made a stream flowing into the lake. This creative instinct has come down to the rest of the family, and has gone down to the grand children.

Early in the following year, during the summer holidays, we moved to Mangalore and settled down in a rented house in Jeppuu, in Bishop's Compound, close to the Jeppu Seminary Church. In my next issue, I shall tell you stories of what happened in Jeppu.