

The Treasure Within

I

Unhappy Schooling

Hafeez Contractor was a very unhappy school boy. In the first and second year he was a good student. From the third standard onwards, he seemed to have lost all interest in studies. He was particularly afraid of Mathematics. He had nightmares about a maths examination. He dreamt of appearing in the examination not knowing anything at all about the subject.

Contractor Loved Action not Theories

As a student Contractor was interested in games and playing jokes on others. He was a very good sportsman. He was the senior champion for many years. He was also the captain of his school cricket team.

Principal's Advice

Contractor passed his examinations only by copying. However when he approached his 11th class, the Principal called him and said, "Look here, Son, I have been seeing you since day one. You are a good student but you never study. I have taken care of you till today. Now, I can no longer take care of you. So you have to take care of yourself." He talked to him for five minutes. He exhorted Contractor to rise to the occasion and study.

The Advice Worked

The Principal's advice had the desired effect on Contractor. He would go for prayers and all he would do was eat and study. As a result, he got 50% in his SSC.

The Punishments at School

Contractor was being interviewed by Ms Bela Raja. She asked him if he was punished at school. Contractor replied that the teachers pulled him up regularly. He would receive a caning every week. However he never felt anything on that account. He was more interested in playing.

A Sports-Freak

Contractor was just interested in playing and nothing else. He was also the leader of a gang. He would have gang fights and plan strategies. These things interested him more than the books. One day, he did not want to study, so he created a distraction. For one whole hour they played 'chor police'.

II

A Chance Encounter with an Architect

After school, Contractor wanted to join the army. His aunt wouldn't allow it. His mother won't allow him to join police force either. She asked him to do his graduation. It was by using some influence that he got admission in Jaihind College. There he had to study French. Being weak at French, he had to take his married cousin's help. Her husband was an architect. So he started going to an architect's office to learn French.

In the Architect's Office

One day, in the architect's office he saw somebody drawing a window detail. The window detail is a very advanced drawing. Contractor told him that his drawing was wrong. He added that the window he had drawn would not open. There was a bet which Contractor won. This surprised his cousin's husband. He asked him to draw a few specific things. Contractor did that at once.

The man was so impressed that he asked Contractor to drop everything and join architecture.

Admission in Architecture

That architect took him to the Principal of the college. In the college for architecture nobody who had got below 80-90 per cent was allowed to enter. Contractor had only 50 per cent. So the Principal warned him, "I will allow you to take part in the entrance examination, but if you do not do well, I will not allow you to join."

Contractor got an 'A+' in that entrance examination. After that it was a cakewalk. He stood first class first throughout after that.

The Source of Genius

Contractor never made a plan. One of his teachers, Mrs. Gupta had told him, "You are useless in everything but your sketches are good." She had advised him to be an architect on growing up. When he became one, he went back to meet her and told her so.

Contractor Disliked Studies

Contractor was bad at languages. His maths was also very bad. In fact, he never applied his mind to them. He was in a boarding school where every day was a new day for him. When there were tests, he just copied.

Giftedness and Learning

Those who always stood first or second in his school are doing ordinary jobs. As for himself, the school life made him street-smart. He learnt more by what he did than what the books taught him.

Special Interests

At school, Contractor was interested in other things and not in books. If it rained outside the class, he would think of the flowing water. He would forget the lecture and think about the flow of water within the dam. He would wonder how much water would the dam hold.

Helping His Friends

Discipline in his school was very important. Sometimes a student would lose a button while fighting. In that case he would run to Contractor. Contractor would cut a button from a chalk using a blade. No one could then see that his real button was missing. He would get past dinner with a full neat uniform.

His Structures

Today when a client comes to Contractor, he looks at him closely. He would observe his face, clothes and manners. That gives him an idea of his taste. He is able to relate to people in a way that would be comfortable. Then he makes a sketch spontaneously. He gives it to his people in the office.

Contractor's Mathematics

Contractor says his sketches are his mathematics. He puts design, construction, psychology and sociology together. Making a sketch from all that is contractor's definition of mathematics.