

Recollections of My Childhood

My childhood was a sheltered and uneventful one In the evenings usually many friends came to visit father and he would relax after the tension of the day and the house would resound with his tremendous laughter. His laugh became famous in Allahabad. Sometimes I would peep at him and his friends from behind a curtain, trying to make out what these great big people said to each other. If I was caught in the act I would be dragged out and, rather frightened, made to sit for a while on father's knee. Once I saw him drinking claret or some other red wine. Whisky I knew. I had often seen him and his friends drink it. But the new red stuff filled me with horror and I rushed to my mother to tell her that father was drinking blood.

I admired father tremendously. He seemed to me the embodiment of strength and courage and cleverness, far above all the other men I saw, and I treasured the hope that when I grew up, I would be rather like him. But much as I admired him and loved him, I feared him also. I had seen him losing his temper at servants and others and he seemed to me terrible then and I shivered with fright, mixed sometimes with resentment, at the treatment of a servant. His temper was indeed an awful thing ...

One of my earliest recollections is of this temper, for I was the victim of it. I must have been about five or six then. I noticed one day two fountain-pens on his office table and I looked at them with greed. I argued with myself that father could not require both at the same time and so I helped myself to one of them. Later I found that a mighty search was being made for the lost pen and I grew frightened at what I had done, but I did not confess. The pen was discovered and my guilt proclaimed to the world. Father was very angry and he gave me a tremendous thrashing. Almost blind with pain and mortification at my disgrace, I rushed to mother, and for several days various creams and ointments were applied to my aching and quivering little body. — Jawaharlal Nehru