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Notes

## MY SON WILL NOT A BEGGAR BE

*What things does a normal child like to see? Was Ved's childhood different from that of other children?*



### OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- read and understand an autobiography;
- use modals;
- use adverbs and adjectives;
- write letters; and
- give and take messages.

### 9.1 SECTION I

In India as elsewhere every girl or boy has fond and warm memories of his childhood, from the day he begins to talk to his mother and father. Invariably a child learns and recognizes the faces of his mother and father, of sisters and brothers who play with him, or the servants who prepare his meals or watch him play in a nursery full of toys. He must also remember the rich colours of the butterflies and birds which children everywhere always love to watch. But when I was three and



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a half, all these memories were expunged, and with the prolonged sickness (meningitis) I started living in a world of four senses – that is, a world in which colours and faces and light and darkness are unknown.

If my age and the sickness deprived me of the treasured memories of sight, they also reduced things which are valued so much in the sighted world to nothing more than mere words, empty of meaning. I started living in a universe where it was not the flood of sunshine streaming through the nursery window or the colours of the rainbow, a sunset or a full moon that mattered but the feel of the sun against the skin, the slow drizzling sound of the spattering rain, the feel of the air just before the coming of the quiet night, the smell of the grass on a warm morning. It was a universe where at first – but only at first – I made my way fumbling and faltering.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.1**

1. What did the writer miss when he lost his sight.

Tick the right answer.

- (a) The love of his family
  - (b) The colours of the birds and butterflies
  - (c) Darkness
  - (d) Being able to recognize people
  - (e) Not eating his favourite food.
2. The writer says, 'It was a universe where at first – but only at first- I made my way fumbling and faltering.' What does he mean when he says, 'but only at first'? Tick the right answer.
    - (a) He regained his sight.
    - (b) He learnt to manage his daily life though he was blind.
    - (c) Someone else did all his work for him.

**9.2 SECTION II**

*How did Ved's family react to his blindness? Were they very unhappy, or did they think he would recover? What did they do about his problem?*

It was good that I lost my sight when I did, because having no memories of seeing, there was nothing to look back to, nothing to miss. I went blind in November

1937. At that time we were living in Gujarat, in the province of Punjab in northern India. After my sickness, we moved to Lahore, a few miles away, but the number of relatives who came to sympathize made my father ask for another transfer, this time to Karnal, where we had neither friends nor relatives. There we got a cottage on the canal bank, built in very peaceful and quiet surroundings.

As might be expected, in the beginning it was tough for all of us, for mother and my father, for my three sisters and my brother, and for me too. The illness had left me weak. The servants avoided me as though I were an evil eye personified. My sisters treated me with care, as though I were a fragile doll, and mother wept. My father, who was a doctor in the public health service, was grateful that I had got prompt and good medical treatment, for delay would have affected my mind or endangered my life. But he, like the rest, had no hope.

A stage of complete inaction therefore followed my blindness. In part, this was due to the immediate shock of the illness, but more important still, the difficult situation was caused by ignorance of the potentialities of a blind child, since the only blind persons my parents saw were beggars.

But now, by fate or by the will of god, blindness had struck not only a child of the well to do, but that of an excellently trained doctor, who found his training in this instance useless. Still, his wide medical experience had prepared him for an acceptance of this tragedy, and he understood that any course of action must begin with the realization that I would be blind for the rest of my life.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.2

1. Was the writer's father happy that so many relatives came to sympathise with them that their son has gone blind. Tick the right answer.

- (a) Yes, he wanted sympathy.
- (b) No, because they upset his wife.
- (c) No. He asked for a transfer to get away from them.

2. Column A has names of people in the story.

Column B describes their feelings about the blind boy. Match the two.

A	B
The mother	(a) thought he was evil or harmful
The sisters	(b) cried all the time



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The father (c) treated him like a delicate doll  
 The servants (d) had little hope that he would see again  
 But though he was lucky to have escaped death.

3. How did Ved's father react to the situation. Tick the right answer.
- (a) He was unhappy  
 (b) He was afraid  
 (c) He was optimistic  
 (d) He accepted the situation.
4. What do you understand by the phrase, 'Potentialities of a blind child.'
- (a) What the child wants to do.  
 (b) What he can do.  
 (c) What he can't do.

### 9.3 SECTION III

*Ved's mother had her own ideas of why her son went blind. She also had her own methods of treating him. What were they? Did they do him any good?*

My mother on the other hand, could not convince herself that my sight would never return: she did not have the medical experience of my father, and she blamed something in her past for the tragedy.

The family pandit, upon whose advice, mother had relied almost from her childhood, was called in and consulted. "He knows more about religion and science," mother said with pride, "than any other pandit in our province." I was taken before him, and for a long time I sat in my mother's lap while he was lost in thought. After a while, he took my hand and examined the lines. Then he looked at mother's and he studied her forehead, mumbling steadily. He said he found himself inadequate, and more pandits would have to be consulted. At his request, they were called and questioned as to what atonement could be made. They all agreed that by doing penance for her sins, my mother could improve my chance of regaining sight.

They prescribed methods ranging from intensive prayers to strenuous physical exertions, and for a fee they agreed to perform part of the necessary religious ceremonies. Each pandit's advice was carefully heeded. Since my mother knew that my father would dislike such methods, she kept them secret, making it doubly hard for herself.

Along with this religious counsel, there were a series of visits to hakims (physicians who followed the Greek or Unani system of medicine). These quacks prescribed all types of concocted drops to put in my eyes. The surmas, which were administered at all hours of the day and night, burned and stung my eyes; and the only soothing part of the miserable ordeal was the loving caress of mother afterwards.

One night when my mother was administering these eye drops, and I was protesting with loud cries, my father unexpectedly returned. He asked and I told him why I was crying. He was very angry.

He forbade her to make any more visits to the hakims, and strictly prohibited the purchase of any more surmas.

Then he gently lifted me from her arms, and took me away. With steady hands, he bathed my stinging eyes. After this incident, even though we stopped going to hakims, now and then applications of surmas continues till I was eleven. But they were very mild, and my mother always obtained my consent in advance.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.3

1. What did Ved's mother think had caused her son's blindness? Which words in the text tell you this?
2. What did the pandits advise her to do. Mention two things.
3. What did the hakims prescribe for him? Name two things.
4. Ved's father was angry when his wife used the hakim's medicines on Ved because

Tick the right answer or answers.

- (a) she did not take his permission.
  - (b) they made Ved uncomfortable.
  - (c) they did not do him any good.
5. Did the treatments stop? If so, which words in the text tell you so.

### 9.4 SECTION IV

*How did Ved's father deal with his son's blindness?*

I remember other little tests my mother put me through. One day she perceived that just before I arrive at a closed door, I would stop and reach for the handle to



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open it. She began letting me go about the house by myself and she discovered that I seldom ran into things. She credited the hakim and the stinging drops, but every evening she would hold her hand up before my face and ask me to tell her where it was. She used to shake her hand before me so that myriads of pores next to, below and above my ears could feel her hand even when it was a foot away. The air currents helped me to spot it. But she wasn't satisfied with this. She wanted me to tell her whether the light was on or off. When I failed this test, she was unhappy again, but I soon caught on and would listen for the click of the switch and then tell her. Sometimes she would flip the switch very rapidly time and again, and I would always count the clicks and give her the right answer.

Although in my case there was an obstacle that seemed unsurmountable, father was determined to try everything. He read all available literature on blindness. He learned that almost all India's blind people had turned to begging for their livelihood, or had become owners of pan and biri shops and spent their days rolling nuts and condiments in a betel leaf or tobacco in a cigarette paper. He was determined that this was not going to be the fate of his second son, and he started corresponding with many of the prominent educational authorities, asking for their advice. The replies were not optimistic. For the blind, educational facilities and personnel were limited, and often the schools became semi- asylums with all ages grouped together in classes without any gradation system.

My father still persisted, for he knew that my staying at home would result in my becoming a pampered child. He realized, as well, that I would have difficulty playing with normal children, and that my mother would always be afraid to let me leave the immediate premises.

At last he heard of Dr. R M Halder, Principal of Dadar School for the Blind in Bombay. My father wrote to him asking for advice. Dr. Halder showed unusual interest in my case, and promised to take special care and personal responsibility for me if I were sent to his school.

When my mother learned of my father's decision to send me to the Dadar School, she was appalled. She could not understand the reason for sending me nine hundred miles away from home to attend school with orphans and children of the poorest classes. Yet she placed her faith in my father's superior judgement, and in her quiet way, she agreed.

- Ved Mehta



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 9.4

1. Ved's mother put him through several tests. What were they?

2. Ved succeeded in passing some of these tests. Does this prove that
- (a) he could see again
  - (b) he was clever
  - (c) he began to adjust to his blindness by using his other senses.
  - (d) he was clever and so he began to adjust to his blindness.



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### OVERALL QUESTIONS

1. Ved Mehta became blind. That is, he lost his sense of sight, he still had four other senses. These were
- (a) the sense of touch through the skin.
  - (b) the sense of taste.
  - (c) the sense of hearing.
  - (d) the sense of smell.

Match the five senses mentioned in Column A with the experiences of feeling in Column B

**A**

Touch  
Taste  
Smell  
Hearing  
Sight

**B**

(a) The sound of rain  
(b) The feel of the cool breeze  
(c) The rich colours of flowers and the butterflies  
(d) The smell of the earth after rain  
(e) The taste of kheer

2. On which one of the following characters does the story concentrate? Tick the answers.
- (a) the blind boy
  - (b) his mother
  - (c) the father making efforts to give the boy a good future.
3. Which of the above characters do the following words describe
- (a) sad, superstitious
  - (b) practical, scientific minded
  - (c) obedient, patient



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4. Ved Mehta overcame the challenge of blindness and became a famous writer and journalist. Find three people from history who have overcome their physical challenges to achieve greatness.

**GRAMMAR**

- I. 'Will' in the first person, when used with I, expresses willingness, promise, determination, etc.

eg. I will write soon.

It can be used to talk of the future.

He will go away tomorrow.

'Shall' is used with 'I' to talk about the future.

It also expresses determination.

eg. I shall visit you next week.

Now fill in the blanks in the following sentences with either 'will' or 'shall'.

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ post this letter tomorrow.
2. The examinations \_\_\_\_\_ begin next week.
3. I have not met my grandfather for a month now. I \_\_\_\_\_ see him next time.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ you please stop talking.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I serve dinner now?
6. You \_\_\_\_\_ not steal.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ you change this bulb for me?

'Would' and 'should' are past tense forms of 'will' and 'shall'.

'Would' is also used politely in making requests.

Eg. "Would you help me to finish this work please?"

It also expresses habitual actions that took place in the past.

Eg. My mother would put surma in my eyes.

'Should' expresses an obligation.

Eg. We should help others.



I should visit my grandmother more often.

Your cough is very bad. You should see a doctor.

Now fill in the blanks in the sentences below, with 'would' or 'should'

- B. 1. He said his brother was in the Army and posted on the border and he had written to say that he \_\_\_\_\_ come home on leave on the 6<sup>th</sup>.
2. The teacher said we \_\_\_\_\_ work harder.
3. You \_\_\_\_\_ not eat so many sweets.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ you pass the rice please?
5. He said that the train was very late, but it \_\_\_\_\_ arrive within the next fifteen minutes.

**II Now read the following sentences.**

1. The athlete used to practice daily for twelve hours. He would then win several prizes.
2. My mother used to hold long discussions with the pandits.

She would then perform a number of rituals and religious ceremonies.

'Used to' and 'would' both refer to past action. 'Used to' refers to repeated habitual action in the past, which has now been discontinued.

In connected speech, we often begin with 'used to' and then change to 'would'.

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with 'used to' or 'would'.

- A. 1. When I was in primary school I \_\_\_\_\_ hate going to school.
2. My brother \_\_\_\_\_ bully me as a child. Then I \_\_\_\_\_ call out to my sister for help.
- B. Now, fill in the blanks in the sentences below with 'would', 'wouldn't', 'should', 'shouldn't'.
1. When we were in Delhi we \_\_\_\_\_ go to the zoo every week.
2. You \_\_\_\_\_ read in bad light. It will harm your eyes.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ you mind opening the window, please?
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ wear a helmet when you are driving a scooter.



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5. I \_\_\_\_\_ like to speak to the manager.  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ you like to try another outlet?

C. Read the dialogue and fill in the blanks with 'will', 'won't' and 'would':

Suresh: I \_\_\_\_\_ go to the library tomorrow.

Mohit: I know it may be difficult for you, but \_\_\_\_\_ you be able to pick me up?

Suresh: Yes, of course I \_\_\_\_\_. But I \_\_\_\_\_ go late in the evening.

Mohit: About what time \_\_\_\_\_ that be? I \_\_\_\_\_ be ready.

## VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

### I. ADVERBS

Look at the following words taken from the lesson

gently, strictly, constantly, excellently, steadily, unexpectedly

These are adverbs, usually formed by adding 'ly' to adjectives like gentle, strict, constant and so on. Eg. Her father was very strict.

Father strictly prohibited the purchase of any more surmas.

- Now, make an adverb with the underlined word in each sentence and use it to fill in the blank in the next sentence.
  - He was vey **gentle**.
  - Amit \_\_\_\_\_ picked up the injured puppy.
- It was a very **peaceful** meeting.
  - The crowd became a bit restless, but when the chief speaker came and spoke to them, they settled down \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ved was happy when his father stopped his mother from using the **painful** medicines on him.
  - The old man climbed \_\_\_\_\_ up the steps.
- Dr. Singh was a very **firm** person.
  - The teacher spoke very \_\_\_\_\_ to the rowdy boys.

5. (a) Mohan is a reliable and **steady** young man.  
(b) He walked \_\_\_\_\_ uphill for five miles.

II Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with appropriate adverbs from the box.

suddenly, slowly, painfully, hungrily, sadly, happily, luckily.

Rahul walked \_\_\_\_\_ up the hill to his house. It was a dark and rainy night and he wanted to get back so that he could have a hot bath and change into dry clothes. He thought \_\_\_\_\_ of the tasty dinner his mother would have cooked for him. But just then he twisted his ankle and fell on the roadside. "Oh dear, I can't walk," he thought \_\_\_\_\_. Now I won't get my hot bath, and my good dinner." \_\_\_\_\_ a car stopped. It was his neighbour. "Hurt yourself, Rahul?" he asked. "Never mind, I'll take you home." \_\_\_\_\_ Rahul got into the car.

### ADJECTIVES

Adjectives describe Nouns

Eg. A rough boy; A fat boy; A blue balloon.

They describe quantities. eg. There was a little milk in the bowl.

They describe numbers eg. There are a few guests in the hotel.

They also describe the order in which events occur. eg. Mohit was the first boy to come to school.

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences below with the correct adjectives from the list below.

warm, brightest, full, slow, prompt, blind, medical, loud, right, superior.

1. Mamta tried to learn to draw, but her progress was \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ medical attention after an accident saves lives.
3. The ring of the doorbell was very \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Alka wants to go to \_\_\_\_\_ college.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ boy enjoyed the feel of the winter sun.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ weather will make us feel more cheerful.
7. There was a \_\_\_\_\_ moon last night.
8. Mohit fell off his cycle and hurt his \_\_\_\_\_ hand.



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9. Mandeep was the \_\_\_\_\_ boy to be taken in the under 19 cricket team.
10. Ram's \_\_\_\_\_ officer was kind and sympathetic.

**LET'S WRITE**

Now look at the following letter.

Dr. Mehta,  
45, Canal Road  
Karnal, Haryana.

Dr. R.M. Halder,  
Principal,  
Dadar School for the Blind,  
Mumbai (Maharashtra).

Dear Sir,

My son Ved went blind at the age of three and a half years, after an attack of meningitis. He is now about six years old. He is an intelligent child, and over the last few years he has developed his other senses, so that now he can move freely about the house, open and close doors, and do some of his own work.

I am anxious to send him to a school where he will get a good all round education and learn to be completely independent.

Your school has been highly recommended to me and I shall be grateful if you could give me the following information.

1. I would like to know if my son could be admitted to your school, and what kind of educational facilities would be available to him.
2. Kindly let me know what your annual fees would be.
3. What facilities, medical and otherwise, would be available in the hostel?

Thank You,

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Mehta.

This letter-

1. Gives you the addresses of the writer, and the addressee.
2. Has a superscription and a conclusion.

3. Gives details of the child's illness and his present condition.
4. Asks for information about the facilities that can be provided to the child, and the fees that have to be paid.
5. Asks if admission will be available.



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### Exercises

You are Dr. Halder Principal of the Dadar School for the Blind.

Write a reply to Dr. Mehta.

Your letter should contain the following matter.

Children can be admitted from Class I level, and stay till they finish Class X-they are encouraged to play games and take part in extra-curricular activities-they are taught Braille-books suitable for the visually handicapped are provided in the library, and they are encouraged to read – there is a Doctor available if required – the staff in the school is kind and sympathetic – the younger children in the hostel are under the care of a highly qualified and experienced matron.

The school would be very happy to admit Ved Mehta, and will do their best to provide him with a good all round education.



### LET'S TALK

### Worksheet

Listen to the conversation on giving and taking messages on tape. Then fill in the blanks below:

- 1) Ravi wanted to speak to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ offered to pass on Ravi's message to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) Ravi said that Ajit should contact \_\_\_\_\_ regarding a trip to \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) Ravi also said that Suresh will give Abhay all details including how much \_\_\_\_\_ will be needed for the trip.



### CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

### Intext Questions 9.1

1. b
2. b



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**Intext Questions 9.2**

1. c
2. Mother - b, sister - c, father - d, servants -a
3. c
4. b

**Intext Questions 9.3**

1. "Something in the past for her tragedy".
2. Intensive prayers, strenuous physical exercises.
3. Concoctions and *surmas*, 4. b
5. "Then he gently lifted me ..... consent in advance."

**Intext Questions 9.4**

1. Shook her hands vigorously, asked whether lights were on or off., 2. c

**OVERALL QUESTIONS**

1. Touch - b, Taste - e, Smell - d, Hearing - a, Sight - c, 2. a
3. Mother, father,

**Grammar**

I. A. 1- shall, 2-will, 3- will, 4-will,5-shall, 6-will, 7-will

B. 1- would, 2-should, 3-should, 4-would, 5-would

II A 1-used to, 2-used to, would

B 1- would, 2-shoudn't, 3-would, 4- should, 5-would, 6-would

C will, won't, will, will, would, will

**Adverbs**

1-gently, 2- peacefully, 3-painfully, 4-firmly, Steadily

**Adjectives** 1-Slow, 2-prompt, 3- loud, 4-medical, 5-blind,6-warm, 7-full, 8-right, 9-brightest, 10-superior