

## CHAPTER 1

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# Childhood – A Tapestry of Roots





Like a tender sapling reaching for sunlight, a person's personality takes root in the fertile soil of childhood, shaped by the nurturing hands of family, the embrace of environment, and the gentle winds of early experiences. From these nascent years, the seeds of character, behaviour, and values begin to sprout, revealing glimpses of curiosity, resilience, empathy, and determination.

A person's personality begins to take shape in the early years of life, much like a seed sprouting into a young plant. The foundation of character, behaviour, and values is laid in childhood, influenced by family, environment, and experiences.

A child's interactions with the world—how they face challenges and connect with others—offer a window into their blossoming identity. Parental guidance, social bonds, and exposure to life's myriad moments weave together to form the intricate tapestry of who they will become.

For Madam Glory, her childhood was a vibrant canvas painted with love, learning, and adventure, nurtured by the steadfast presence of her parents, Father Samuel and Mother Annamma.

Father S.N. Samuel, a diligent railway professional, was a man of unwavering principles, strict yet deeply devoted to his family. His greatest aspiration was for his children to excel academically, and he held them to high standards, refusing to sign their report cards unless they ranked at the top. This discipline sparked a fierce dedication to studies among his children, who strived to meet his expectations. Despite the demands of night shifts and extra duties to provide for his family, Samuel remained a loving father, instilling in his children the values of discipline, integrity, and perseverance.

Annamma, Glory’s mother, was a woman of boundless patience and remarkable ingenuity. Though her formal education ended at primary school, her wisdom and talents were extraordinary. She skilfully guided her children through their biology and physics assignments, ensuring their academic success with meticulous diagrams and records. Married at the tender age of 14 or 15, Annamma became the heart of the household, rising at 3:30 AM to prepare her five children for school. She cooked hearty meals over a coal fire, warmed water for their baths, and ensured they stepped into the world ready to learn.

Beyond her role as a homemaker, Annamma was a gifted tailor, crafting clothes for her children and, later, her grandchildren. Her culinary artistry was equally renowned—she conjured an array of traditional delicacies like *murukulu*, *shakkinalu*, *ariselu*, *karjakayalu*, *laddu*, cakes, and pickles, sharing them generously with tenants, relatives, and guests. Her kitchen was a haven of abundance, capable of feeding up to 50 people daily. Even at 75, Annamma’s hands remained deft, stitching clothes, crafting bedding, and tending to the needs of her grandchildren. Their home buzzed with the warmth of visiting relatives, creating an atmosphere of love and togetherness.

Glory’s childhood was a kaleidoscope of adventure and joy. She and her friends roamed the sprawling premises of the Food Corporation of India, clambering onto goods trains and tractors, and wandering through the lush countryside. They braved the perilous slopes of Gutta Hill, surrounded by verdant fields and mango groves that painted their world with endless beauty. Unlike the structured lives of today’s children, Glory and her companions revelled in the freedom of an unbridled childhood.

A favourite pastime was sneaking into the Venkateshwara Theatre, affectionately dubbed “dabba talkies,” just across from their home. After school, Glory and her friends would slip in for quick 10-minute movie sessions, a cherished daily ritual that sparked laughter and wonder.

Visits to her grandparents’ home in Aler mandal erstwhile Warangal district were treasures of memory. There, Glory learned to swim in the wells of Mandanapally, buoyed by bundles of castor sticks tied to her back by her uncle. She delighted in rides with Uncle Vandanam, swaying gently in his bullock cart through the village. These moments wove a deep connection to her roots, binding her to the simplicity and joy of rural life.

As the youngest of five siblings—three brothers and one sister—Glory grew up in a home surrounded by nature’s bounty. Mango, banana, jamun, and neem trees flourished alongside vegetable gardens, tended daily by the children who drew water from the family’s well. Her elder siblings, all graduates in agriculture, set a high bar for achievement, while their home radiated harmony and care.

Her youngest brother, Keny (John Kennedy), was a playful spirit, teasing Glory by knocking snacks from her hands or shaking rain-soaked branches to shower her with droplets. They shared a cot as children, where Keny would mischievously hold up his feet, joking they were a mirror. He taught her to cycle, and together they flew kites, played marbles, and spun tops. Keny later became an engineer at Allwyn Watch Co., living in Singapore before settling in Hyderabad with his wife, a school teacher.

Christopher or Kitty, Glory’s second-eldest brother, was her cycling companion, with Glory perched in front and Keny at the back as they rode to their school, just two kilometres away. Kitty, who retired as a

General Manager at Hindustan Asbestos Ltd., a Birla enterprise, doted on Glory, bringing her fashionable dresses, bangles, and trinkets from his travels.

Her sister, Rose Leela, retired as a Joint Director in the Agriculture Department. Rose and her husband, David Willington, a devout evangelist who ran a perfume business in America after living in Saudi Arabia, were like second parents to Glory, showering her with love and guidance. Isaiah, the eldest brother, and his wife, Sheeba Rani, were equally affectionate, often taking Glory shopping or to the movies, their bond warm and unbreakable.

Yet, being the youngest had its challenges. Glory often felt overshadowed by her accomplished siblings, her voice sometimes lost in their shadow. Still, the love and support of her family anchored her, shaping her into a woman of resilience and compassion.

The family's compound, shared with three tenant families, was a microcosm of harmony, where mutual respect and care thrived. Annamma, the family's moral compass, instilled in her children the values of respect for elders, spouses, and kin. Even in her 80s, she read newspapers with unaided eyes, her health unmarred by ailments like diabetes or hypertension. Her love extended to her daughters-in-law, whom she cherished as her own.

In her final days, Annamma lived alone with quiet courage and unwavering faith, free of complaints or expectations. On September 25, 2023, she slipped peacefully into eternal rest at midday, her spirit departing by evening. Her husband, Samuel, had passed in 2011, leaving behind a legacy of discipline and love.

Annamma's generosity knew no bounds. Her jams, pickles, and kindness nourished not just her family but her community. A pillar of her church, she organized and participated in special events, her heart always open to those in need.

Glory's childhood was a vibrant mosaic, woven with the threads of love, discipline, and adventure. The women in her life, especially Annamma, were the weavers, crafting a foundation of resilience, warmth, and compassion that Glory carried into her own journey, a testament to the enduring power of family and roots.