

Essay on My Earliest Recollections

How many of us can recollect our early experiences as a baby? For me, my earliest begins only at about the time when I could walk. Prior to that, I cannot recall even a little bit.

I can remember walking along a gravel path hand-in-hand with my neighbor. She was a young and lovely girl with a ready smile. We used to take these walks together in the evenings. I would be all dressed-up in clean clothes and tiny leather shoes. I was quite particular about my appearance then. She would take me right up to the main road where we would watch the cars speed by. Sometimes when my little legs got tired she would carry me home in her arms.

That was many years ago. I am not so particular about my clothes now. T-shirts and faded jeans feel more comfortable. I heard that my lady companion passed away recently. I cannot even remember how she looked like.

How time flew past. My family used to live in a run-down area at the outskirts of town. Our house was a wooden one and it was always in need of repair. Our neighbors all lived in similar wooden houses. Nobody owned a car. The most prestigious mode of transport was a new bicycle. It was always an event to see somebody coming home in a taxi or in a trishaw. Such an event was as rare as New Year's Day.

It was in this environment that I spent my first five years of life. I never knew what a television set was. Sometimes I heard songs from a radio set. More often I only heard sounds emanating from the jungle behind our neighborhood. These were the sounds of insects, birds and the occasional monkey.

I never stepped into that jungle because there were a lot of rumors

about tigers, elephants, and ghosts. Looking at the eerie darkness in between the trees it was not difficult for a four-year-old to believe what was being said. Furthermore, the dangling vines and tiny leeches were not my ideas of fun.

Anyway, the jungle has disappeared forever, a victim of development. So I never will be able to venture into it. I had the chance as a child. Now the chance is gone and never will return again. It was into this jungle that my neighbors would go hunting occasionally. I have seen monkeys, birds, and squirrels being brought back. There was the time when they caught an ant-eater with thick armor plates around its body. This little creature, about a foot long, had rolled itself into the tight ball. It refused to open up. Later I found out that this was the way it defended itself when in danger. However, its defense was not good enough that day. It became ant-eater soup for a lucky hunter.

We had a rattan table-cum-chairs specially made for two infants. My sister, who was a year older than me, would be placed on one chair and me on the other chair opposite her. There we would sit in precarious balance while we have our meal on the table between us. I still wonder how Joy mother was able to seat us both simultaneously, for it was not possible to seat one baby only on one chair and keep the balance of the whole contraption. Another baby on the opposite chair was needed for balance. I was too young to remember how she did it.

Childhood experiences sometimes leave visible marks on our bodies for the rest of our lives. Most of these experiences were painful ones. I had a particularly painful one. It happened when I somehow got.

Hold off my brother's scout dagger and start cutting some coconut leaves with it remember distinctly chopping the tip of my index

finger right to the nail with it. The next thing I remember, that I was crying non-stop and my mother applied for some medicine and bandaged the finger, which was nearly severed. That was many years ago. Even now when I look at the semi-circular scar line around my finger I am reminded of the experience. I learned to respect knives from that day on.

When I was about five, my family moved to the opposite side of town where my father had acquired a business. The house we moved into was a larger one. Around it was a huge open space, occupied by a coconut plantation on one side and a playing field on the other. In this new environment I spent my next three years before moving on to another house in the outskirts of town, but that is another story altogether. My early childhood had ended and a new phase had begun.