

## 9. My Mother at Sixty-Six

### Think It Out

#### 1. What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?

##### Answer:

When the poet sees the corpse-like and pale face of her mother, her ache or the old familiar pain returns. Perhaps this fear was entertained by her since her childhood. Ageing is a process which occurs naturally. Ageing and time spare none. Ageing and time have not spared the mother of the poet and may not spare her as well. By ageing, death and separation become inevitable.

#### 2. Why are the young trees described as ‘sprinting’?

##### Answer:

While driving to the Cochin airport, she observed outside the young trees which seemed to be walking across them. They seem to be sprinting or running fast with the speed of the car. The poet provides a contrast – the ‘sprinting’ young trees and her ‘dozing’ old mother.

#### 3. Why has the poet brought in the image of the merry children ‘spilling out of their homes’?

##### Answer:

To present a contrast, the poet brought in the image of the merry children ‘spilling out of their homes’. The merry children who are coming out of their houses in huge numbers explain the spontaneous flow and happiness of life. It is different from the old mother ‘dozing’, whose ‘ashen’ face looks pale and lifeless, similar to a corpse. The description of the poet’s mother highly indicates passivity, decay and

ageing in the poem. The contrast between these two images strengthens the effect of the poem.

#### **4. Why has the mother been compared to the ‘late winter’s moon’?**

**Answer:**

The mother of the poet is sixty-six years old. Her ‘ashen’ face which is shrunken, is similar to that of a corpse. She has lost the strength of youth and her shine. The late moon in the winter looks obscure and hazy. It also lacks strength and shine. This comparison is appropriate and quite natural. The simile used here is effective and apt.

#### **5. What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?**

**Answer:**

The parting words of the poet, her smile and her assurance present a sharp contrast to the fear of childhood or the old familiar ache. Her smiles and words are a conscious attempt to hide her feelings. The parting words – “See you soon, Amma” provides an assurance to the old woman whose ‘ashen face’ is similar to a corpse. In the same way, her continuous smile is an attempt to overcome the fear and ache which is present in her heart.