

## Chapter 6

### My Childhood

#### No Men are Foreign - Thinking about the Poem

**Q. 1 A** "Beneath all uniforms..." What uniforms do you think the poet is speaking about?

**Ans. :** The poet has used the word 'uniforms' to signify the armies of several countries who are constantly at war with one another. In addition, the word 'uniform' could also refer to the wide variety of dresses worn by people across the globe.

**Q. 1 B** How does the poet suggest that all people on the earth are the same?

**Ans.:** The poem reminds people that all kinds of divisions based on nation, religion, caste or creed are groundless since all human beings are similar in their basic need of the common resources such as air, water and the sun required for the existence of humanity. It suggests that since all people on earth have a common source of origin, all kinds of violence must be given up which would eventually unite everyone for the betterment and well being of the human race.

**Q. 2** In Stanza I, find five ways in which we all are alike. Pick out the words.

**Ans.:**

The following are the five ways in which we all are alike:(1) Each of us has a similar body.



- (2) All of us breathe.
- (3) All of us walk.
- (4) All of us lie.
- (5) We live and die on the same earth.

**Q. 3** How many common features can you find in stanza 2? Pick out the words.

**Ans.:** The common features in stanza 2 are as follows:

- 1. The sun
- 2. The air
- 3. The water
- 4. The peaceful harvest.
- 5. The hands and the labour.

**Q. 4** “...Whenever we are told to hate our brothers...” When do you think this happens? Why? Who “tells” us? Should we do as we are told, at such times? What does the poet say?

**Ans.:** Whenever there is a situation of war; leaders provoke the feeling of enmity amongst people and compel them to hate the other country. They tell people to do so for their personal gains from the situation.

However, we should not become a puppet in their hands and act upon their advice. According to the poet, human beings need to understand that hatred against others will only deprive them of themselves and it is the earth which would eventually be polluted of such impurities. Therefore, the poet persuades people to contribute towards peace and prosperity and always remember that no men are foreign and no countries strange.



## Thinking about Language

**Q. 1** Find the sentences in the text where these words occur:

Erupt Surge Trace Undistinguished Casualty

Look these words up in a dictionary which gives examples of how they are used. Now Answer the questions below:

1. What are the things that can erupt? Use examples to explain the various meanings of erupt. Now do the same for the word surge. What things can surge?
2. What are the meanings of the word trace and which of the meanings is closest to the word in the text?
3. Can you find the word undistinguished in your dictionary? (If not, look up the word distinguished and say what undistinguished means.)

### **Answer :**

1. A few things that can erupt include – volcano, tooth, anger, riots, unrest, rashes or pimples on the surface of the skin etc. The meanings of erupt with examples are given as follows:

- (i) Something that began unexpectedly – Example: Riots erupted in the city.
- (ii) Something bursting into flames – Example: The tiny spark within no time erupted into flames.
- (iii) Become active and eject lava – Example: The molten lava erupted out of the active volcano.
- (iv) Violent release of something pent up – Example: The discussions soon erupted into a heated argument.
- (v) Break out – Example: The eruption of the wisdom tooth is very painful
- (vi) Sudden appearance on the skin – Example: A pimple erupted on her face just after removing the oil and dirt.



A few things that can surge include pride, anxiety, army, boat, waves etc. The meanings of surge with examples are given as follows:

- (i) A sudden forceful flow – Example: The boy drowned in the constantly surging waves.
- (ii) Move upwards under the influence of a natural force – Example: The boat kept surging in the high and low tide.
- (iii) Rise and move forward – Example: The army steadily surged towards their enemy.
- (iv) An improvement or achievement through one's performance –  
Example: I can still feel the surge of pride in earning my own money for the first time.

**2.** The following are the meanings of the word trace –

- (i) Follow or discover something via the course of development or through the medium of investigation
- (ii) To go back over again
- (iii) Make a mark or lines on a plain surface
- (iv) Reading with difficulty
- (v) Pursue or chase something

The closest meaning of the word 'trace' in the text is 'to find or discover through investigation.'

**3.** The meaning of the word 'undistinguished' can be derived from the meaning of 'distinguished' which refers to special or eminent appearance or behaviour of a person. Therefore, undistinguished would symbolize 'ordinary appearance or behaviour of a person.' For example - I was one of many children-a short boy with rather undistinguished looks.



**Q. 2 A** Match the phrases in Column-A with their meanings in Column-B.

Column-A	Column-B
(i) broke out	(a) an attitude of kindness, a readiness to give freely.
(ii) in Accordance	(b) was not able to tolerate
(iii) a helping hand	(c) began suddenly in a violent way
(iv) could not stomach	(d) assistance
(v) generosity of spirit	(e) persons with power to make decision
(vi) figures of authority	(f) According to a particular principle of system.

**Ans.:**

Column-A	Column-B
(i) broke out	(c) began suddenly in a violent way. Eg. A fire broke out in the neighbourhood a few hours back.
(ii) in Accordance	(f) According to a particular principle of system. Eg. The laws are formed in accordance with the provisions of the Indian constitution.
(iii) a helping hand	(d) assistance Eg. Many people lent her a helping hand in making the necessary arrangements for the event.
(iv) could not stomach	(b) was not able to tolerate Eg. The new teacher could not stomach a Hindu priest's son sitting with a muslim boy.
(v) generosity of spirit	(a) an attitude of kindness, a readiness to give freely.



	Eg. .- She showcased a true generosity of spirit in helping the children at the orphanage event.
(vi) figures of authority	(e) persons with power to make decision Eg. The Prime minister is the major figure of authority in a parliamentary form of governance.

**Q. 2 B** Study the words in italics in the sentences below. They are formed prefixing un-or in-to their antonyms (words opposite in meaning).

(i) I was a short boy with rather undistinguished looks. (un + distinguished)

(ii) My austere father used to avoid all inessential comforts. (in + essential)

(iii) The area was completely unaffected by the war. (un + affected)

(iv) He should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance. (in + equality, in + tolerance)

Now form the opposites of the words below by prefixing -un or -in. The prefix in- can also have the forms il-, ir-, or im- (for example: illiterate-il+literate, impractical- im+practical, irrational -ir+rational). You may consult a dictionary if you wish.

-adequate -acceptable -regular -tolerant  
-demanding -active -true -permanent  
-patriotic -disputed -accessible -coherent  
-logical -legal -responsible -possible



**Answer :**

Adequate-inadequate	Acceptable-unacceptable
Regular-irregular	Tolerant-intolerant
Demanding-undemanding	Active-inactive
True-untrue	Permanent-impermanent
Patriotic-unpatriotic	Disputed-undisputed
Accessible-inaccessible	Coherent-incoherent
Logical-illogical	Responsible-irresponsible
Legal-illegal	
Possible-impossible	

**Q. 2 D** Rewrite the sentences below, changing the verbs in brackets into the passive form.

- (i) In yesterday's competition, the prizes (give away) by the Principal.
- (ii) In spite of financial difficulties, the labourers (pay) on time.
- (iii) On Republic Day, vehicles (not allow) beyond this point.
- (iv) Second-hand books (buy and sell) on the pavement every Saturday.
- (v) Elections to the Lok Sabha (hold) every five years.
- (vi) Our National Anthem (compose) Rabindranath Tagore.

**Ans.:** (i) In yesterday's competition, the prizes were given away by the Principal.

(ii) In spite of financial difficulties, the labourers were paid on time.



- (iii) On Republic Day, vehicles are not allowed beyond this point.
- (iv) Second-hand books are bought and sold on the pavement every Saturday.
- (v) Elections to the Lok Sabha are held every five years.
- (vi) Our National Anthem was composed by Rabindranath Tagore.

**Q. 2 E** Rewrite the paragraphs below, using the correct form of the verb given in brackets.

#### How Helmets Came To Be Used in Cricket

1. Nari Contractor was the Captain and an opening batsman for India in the 1960s. The Indian Cricket Team went on a tour to the West Indies in 1962. In a match against Barbados in Bridgetown, Nari Contractor (seriously injure and collapse). In those days helmets (not wear). Contractor (hit) on the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. Contractor's skull (fracture). The entire team (deeply concern). The West Indies players (worry). Contractor (rush) to hospital. He (accompany) by Frank Worrell, the Captain of the West Indies Team. Blood (donate) by the West Indies players. Thanks to the timely help, Contractor (save). Nowadays helmets (routinely use) against bowlers.

#### Oil From Seeds

2. Vegetable oils (make) from seeds and fruits of many plants growing all over the world, from tiny sesame seeds to big, juicy coconuts. Oil (produce) from cotton seeds, groundnuts, soya beans and sunflower seeds. Oliver oil (use) for cooking, salad dressing etc. Olives (shake) from the trees and (gather) up, usually by hand. The olives (ground) to a thick paste which is spread onto special mats. Then the mats (layer) up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.





**Answer :**

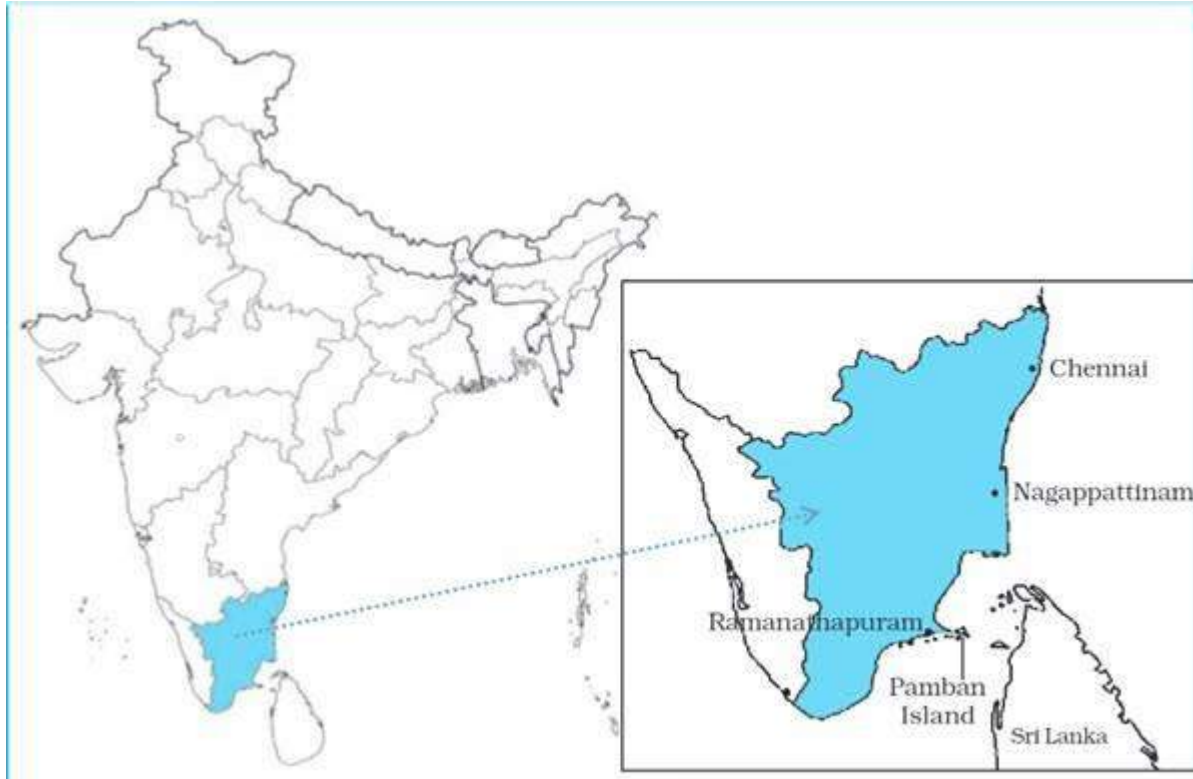
1. Nari Contractor was the Captain and an opening batsman for India in the 1960s. The Indian Cricket Team went on a tour to the West Indies in 1962. In a match against Barbados in Bridgetown, Nari Contractor got seriously injured and collapsed. In those days helmets were not worn. Contractor was hit on the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. Contractor's skull had fractured. The entire team was deeply concerned. The West Indies players were worried. Contractor was rushed to hospital. He was accompanied by Frank Worrell, the Captain of the West Indies Team. Blood was donated by the West Indies players. Thanks to the timely help, Contractor was saved. Nowadays helmets are routinely used against bowlers.

2. Vegetable oils are made from seeds and fruits of many plants growing all over the world, from tiny sesame seeds to big, juicy coconuts. Oil is produced from cotton seeds, groundnuts, soya beans and sunflower seeds. Olive oil is used for cooking, salad dressing etc. Olives are shaken from the trees and gathered up, usually by hand. The olives are ground to a thick paste which is spread onto special mats. Then the mats are layered up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

### **Thinking about the Text**

Q.1 Find Dhanuskodi and Rameswaram on the map. What language (s) do you think are spoken there? What language do you think the author, his family, his friends and his teachers spoke with one another?





**Answer :**

Tamil is the language spoken in Dhanuskodi and Rameswaram. The author, his family, his friends and his teachers also spoke the Tamil language.

**Q. 1** Where was Abdul Kalam's house?

**Ans.:** Abdul Kalam's house was situated on the Mosque Street in Rameswaram in the state of Madras.

**Q.2** What do you think Dinamani is the name of? Give a reason for your answer.

**Ans.:** Dinamani is the name of a local newspaper. It can be said so because Abdul Kalam often made attempts at tracing stories related to the war in the headlines of Dinamani.

**Q. 3** Who were Abdul Kalam's school friends? What did they later become?

**Ans.:** Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan were Abdul Kalam's three school friends. Ramanadha Sastry became the highest priest of the Rameswaram Temple, Aravindan went into the business of arranging transport for visiting pilgrims and Sivaprakasan became a catering contractor for the Southern Railways.

**Q.4** How did Abdul Kalam earn his 'first wages'?

**Ans. :** During the Second World War, the newspapers were bundled and thrown out of a moving train. Abdul Kalam helped his cousin Samsuddin in catching these bundles and in this way he was successful in earning his "first wage".

**Q.5** Had he earned money before that? In what way?

**Ans. :** Yes, Abdul Kalam had earned some money before he started helping his cousin. He used to collect tamarind seeds and sell them at a provision shop on the Mosque Street when their demand soared high during the Second World War. He usually earned one anna in a day.

**Q. 1** How does the author describe:

(i) his father

(ii) his mother

(iii) himself

**Ans.:** (i) His father: Abdul Kalam's father, Jainulabdeen, was not a wealthy or educated person. However, he was an honest and generous man with strong innate wisdom. He was self-disciplined and used to avoid all inessential luxuries but provided all the necessities needed for living.

(ii) His mother: Abdul Kalam's mother, Ashiamma, was an embodiment of goodness and kindness who was an ideal helpmate to her husband. She also possessed immense hospitality skills and fed many people every day.

(iii) Himself: The author describes himself as a short boy with undistinguished looks, who had a secure childhood. He is a self-disciplined and honest person with a considerate attitude.

**Q. 2** What characteristics does he say, he inherited from his parents?

**Ans.:** The author says that he inherited honesty and self discipline from his father and the attributes of faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother.

**Q. 1(A)** Discuss these questions in class with your teacher and then write down your answer in two or three paragraphs each.

"On the whole, the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of the segregation of different social groups," says the author.

(i) Which social groups does he mention? Were these groups easily identifiable (for example, by the way they dressed)?

(ii) Were they aware only of their differences or did they also naturally share friendships and experiences? (Think of the bedtime stories in Kalam's house; of who his friends were; and of what used to take place in the pond near his house.)



(iii) The author speaks both of people who were very aware of the differences among them and those who tried to bridge these differences. Can you identify such people in the text?

(iv) Narrate two incidents that show how differences can be created, and also how they can be resolved. How can people change their attitudes?

**Ans.:** (i) He mentions two social groups of Rameswaram i.e. Orthodox Brahmins and Muslims. Yes, these groups were easily identifiable from the way they dressed; Kalam wore a cap which marked him a Muslim whereas his friend, Ramanadha Sastry wore a sacred thread which marked him a Hindu.

(ii) Though they were aware of their caste differences, yet shared the natural bond of friendships and experiences.

Kalam's mother and grandmother often told the children of the family about the events from the Ramayana and from the life of the Prophet as bedtime stories. In addition, during the Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony, his family used to arrange boats with a special platform for carrying idols of the Lord from the temple to the marriage site, situated in the middle of the pond called Rama Tirtha which was near his house

(iii) The people who were aware of the differences among them, were the young teacher who joined the Rameswaram Elementary School and came to teach Kalam's class (the fifth standard) and his science teacher's conservative wife who refused to serve Kalam in her ritually pure kitchen.

Those who tried to bridge these differences were Kalam's science teacher Sivasubramania Iyer who invited, served and dined with him to the social barriers that the society proposed and Lakshmana Sastry who summoned the teacher and conveyed the strong sense of conviction to the young teacher to bring about reform.

(iv) The incident that shows how differences can be treated is when the new young teacher came to teach Kalam's class. On finding a Muslim



student sitting beside a Hindu student, he immediately asked Kalam to leave the front row and sit back in the last row. However, Lakshmana Sastry resolved the differences by persuading the teacher about not spreading the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in innocent minds. The second incident where differences could be seen was when Kalam's science teacher Sivasubramania Iyer's wife showcased a hostile reaction towards Kalam when it came to serving him from her ritually pure kitchen. Likewise, the situation was resolved when Kalam's science teacher invited him again to his house.

Both these incidents throw light on the ideas of equality and tolerance which eventually helped in reforming the attitude of people who staunchly believed in segregation of different social groups in society. This shows that a change can be brought in society when one is prepared to face the consequences with utmost courage.

**Q.1(B)** Discuss these questions in class with your teacher and then write down your answer in two or three paragraphs each.

- (i) Why did Abdul Kalam want to leave Rameswaram ?
- (ii) What did his father say to this?
- (iii) What do you think his words mean? Why do you think he spoke those words?

**Ans.:** (i) Abdul Kalam was very much interested in pursuing higher studies. Therefore, he requested his father and asked for his permission to leave Rameswaram and study at the district headquarters in Ramanathapuram.

(ii) Kalam's father said that he knew that one day Kalam had to go away to grow. He gave him the analogy of a seagull that flies across the sun alone and without a nest. He further quoted Khalil Gibran to his mother saying that their children were not their own children. They were the sons



and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through their parents, but not from them. They may give them their love, but not their thoughts as the children have their own thoughts.

(iii) Abdul Kalam's father's words bear a deep significance. He inspired his son to go ahead and pursue his higher education independently. Further, he explained Kalam's mother to give his son the space to utilize his opportunities and move forward progressively.

He spoke those words to encourage his son to achieve his goals as well as to control the emotional attachment of his wife for her son.