

# A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

## Key Word Meanings (പദസമ്പത്ത്)

- **Courtyard:** A courtyard is an open area of ground which is surrounded by buildings or walls. (മുറ്റം / അങ്കണം)
- **Groaning:** Making a deep, inarticulate sound in response to pain or despair. (വേദന കൊണ്ടുള്ള ഞരക്കം)
- **Tremendous:** Very great in amount, scale, or intensity. (വളരെയധികം / ഭീമമായ)
- **Impeded:** To be delayed or prevented from moving by some obstruction. (തടസ്സപ്പെടുത്തുക)
- **Enormous:** Very large in size, quantity, or extent. (വലിയ / ഭീമമായ)
- **Frightened:** Feeling fear or anxiety; scared. (പേടിച്ച / ഭയന്ന)
- **Ragpicker:** A person who picks up rags and rubbish from the streets for a living. (ആക്രി പെറുക്കുന്നയാൾ)
- **Bald skull:** A head that has little or no hair on it. (കുപ്പിത്തല)
- **Grandeur:** Splendour and impressiveness, especially of appearance or style. (ഗംഭീരമായ / മഹിമയുള്ള)
- **Incomprehensible:** Not able to be understood; not intelligible. (മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്ത)
- **Dialect:** A particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group. (പ്രാദേശിക ഭാഷ / ഉപഭാഷ)
- **Castaway:** A person who has been shipwrecked and stranded in an isolated place. (കപ്പൽ തകർന്ന് അകപ്പെട്ടുപോയ ആൾ)
- **Magnanimous:** Very generous or forgiving, especially toward a rival or someone less powerful than oneself. (മഹത്തായ മനസ്സുള്ള / ഉദാരമനസ്സനായ)
- **Supernatural:** Attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature. (അമാനുഷികമായ)
- **Rapidity:** The quality of moving or happening very quickly. (വേഗത)
- **Bustle:** To move in an energetic and busy manner. (തിരക്ക്)
- **Disperse:** To go or cause to go in different directions or to scatter. (പിരിച്ചുവിടുക)
- **Invalids:** A person made weak or disabled by illness or injury. (രോഗികൾ)
- **Fatigue:** Extreme tiredness resulting from mental or physical exertion or illness. (ക്ഷീണം)
- **Crammed:** Completely fill (a place or container) to the point that it appears to be overflowing. (നിറയ്ക്കുക / കുത്തിനിറയ്ക്കുക)
- **Pilgrims:** A person who journeys to a sacred place for religious reasons. (തീർത്ഥാടകർ)
- **Virtue:** Behavior showing high moral standards; a good quality. (ഗുണം / പുണ്യം)
- **Merciful:** Showing or exercising mercy. (കരുണയുള്ള)
- **Absurd:** Wildly unreasonable, illogical, or inappropriate. (അസംബന്ധമായ)
- **Lament:** To express grief or sorrow. (വിലപിക്കുക / വേദിക്കുക)
- **Iridescent:** Showing luminous colours that seem to change when seen from different angles. (മഴവില്ലിന്റെ നിറമുള്ള)
- **Stench:** A strong and very unpleasant smell. (ദുർഗന്ധം)
- **Temptation:** A desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise. (പ്രലോഭനം)
- **Clumsy:** Awkward in movement or in handling things. (അനഭ്യസ്തമായ / വശമില്ലാത്ത)
- **Senile:** Showing the weakness or diseases of old age. (വാർദ്ധക്യസഹജമായ)
- **Annoyance:** The feeling or state of being annoyed; irritation. (ശല്യം)

## **1. Write-up / Essay (7 Marks)**

**Question:** "The society often treats the weak and the vulnerable with cruelty and exploitation rather than compassion." Prepare a write-up on the theme of the story 'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings' focusing on the attitude of society towards the old man.

### **'A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings'**

The story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez is a powerful satire on human nature. It portrays how society reacts when they encounter something "different" or "weak." When an old man with enormous wings appears in Pelayo's courtyard, he is not treated as a divine being or a fellow human in distress. Instead, he is viewed as a "circus animal."

Pelayo and Elisenda, despite their initial pity, lock him in a chicken coop. The neighbour woman said he might be an angel. But the townspeople show no empathy; they throw stones at him. They wanted miracles for their own benefit.

The story shows the cruelty of society towards the weak. This reflects a dark side of humanity where the "vulnerable" are exploited for profit. Elisenda begins charging admission to see the man, turning his suffering into a business. The story teaches us that true humanity lies in compassion and empathy. We must learn to respect those who are different and provide care to the weak, rather than treating them as objects of curiosity or means of income.

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## **2. Character Sketch (6 Marks)**

**Question:** Prepare a character sketch of the 'Old Man' based on your reading of the story.

The "Very Old Man" is the central, mysterious figure of the story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He is very old, bald, and has very few teeth. His most striking feature is his enormous, dirty, and wings which are "entangled in the mud."

His personality is one of extreme patience and silence. Despite the constant harassment from the crowds—who throw food and stones at him, and treat him like a circus animal—he remains passive. He speaks an "incomprehensible dialect" that no one understands, which adds to his isolation. He doesn't perform any miracles the people want; instead, his presence is a "silent miracle" of endurance.

By the end of the story, Even though he was weak, he had great strength inside. At the end of the story, his wings grew back. He flapped his wings and flew away. He represents the suffering and the survival of the weak people in our society.

## **3. Diary Entry (5 Marks)**

**Question:** Pelayo and Elisenda felt a "sigh of relief" when the old man finally flew away. Imagine you are Pelayo and write a diary entry expressing your feelings on that day.

December 14, 2026 Tuesday

What an unforgettable day it was! Finally, he is gone! I saw him trying to fly. At first, he found it difficult. But then, he flapped his big wings and flew away over the sea. Looking back, I feel a strange mix of

emotions. We kept him in a chicken coop for years. Though he helped us become rich with the money we collected from the pilgrims, he was always an "annoyance" to me. Was he really an angel? I don't know. But his silent presence had become a part of our lives. Now that the courtyard is empty, it feels quiet. I feel a great relief now. I hope he finds a better place where people are kind to him. Goodbye, old man!

#### **4. Conversation (5 Marks)**

**Question:** Write a conversation between Pelayo and Elisenda when they first saw the old man.

**Answer:**

**Pelayo:** Elisenda, come quickly! Look at this!

**Elisenda:** Oh my God! Who is this lying in the mud?

**Pelayo:** I don't know. He is an old man, but look... he has wings!

**Elisenda:** Wings? That is very strange. Is he a castaway?

**Pelayo:** He looks like a ragpicker.

**Elisenda:** He is very weak. What shall we do with him?

**Pelayo:** Let's put him in the chicken coop for now. We must be careful.

**Elisenda:** Yes, he looks very different from us.

#### **5. Character Sketch Questions (6 Marks)**

**Question 1:** Prepare a character sketch of **Pelayo** based on the story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings."

**Answer:**

##### **Pelayo**

Pelayo is a main character in the story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He is a poor man who lives with his wife, Elisenda, and their sick child. He is the first person to see the old man in his courtyard. He finds the old man lying face down in the mud. Pelayo is **frightened** by the enormous wings. He is not very kind. He locks the old man in a **chicken coop**.

Pelayo is a hardworking man, but he is also greedy. Along with his wife, he uses the old man to become rich. They charge an **admission fee** from the pilgrims who come to see the "angel." He uses the old man as a source of income rather than a guest who needs help.

In the end, Pelayo represents a typical member of society. He is not a "villain," but he lacks the **kindness and empathy** needed to help someone who is different. He is happy to see the old man fly away only because the "annoyance" is finally over.

#### **6. Character Sketch: Elisenda**

Elisenda is a main character in the story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. She is the wife of Pelayo. When the story begins, we see her as a mother taking care of her **sick child**. Unlike the others, Elisenda is very practical. When she sees the old man with wings, she is surprised but quickly thinks of how to handle the situation.

She is the one who comes up with the idea to charge an **admission fee** of five cents to see the old man. Elisenda is more interested in **money** than in kindness. She built a large mansion and buy fine clothes. This shows that she benefited from the old man's suffering.

In the end, when the old man's wings grow back and he flies away, Elisenda feels a "**sigh of relief**." She is happy not because he is free, but because he is no longer a burden in her life. Her character represents the greed and lack of empathy in human society.

## 7. Narrative Question (7 Marks)

**Question:** Imagine you are a witness to the events in Pelayo's house. Prepare a narrative describing the arrival of the old man, how he was treated, and his final departure.

### The Silent Visitor

It was a rainy day. Pelayo was busy killing crabs in his courtyard. Suddenly, he saw something strange in the mud. It was an old man with enormous wings. He was lying face down and could not get up. Pelayo was frightened. He ran to call his wife, Elisenda. He was a very old man. He had a bald skull and very few teeth and looked like a ragpicker. A neighbour woman said he was an angel who came for their sick child.

Pelayo and Elisenda locked 'the angel' in their dirty chicken coop. Soon, many people came to see the "angel." They poked him with sticks and threw stones at him. They treated him like a circus animal. Elisenda saw a chance to make money. She started charging five cents for admission. With that money, they became very rich. They built a big house, but the old man stayed in the coop, weak and ignored.

But one winter, his wings began to grow new feathers. One morning, He started trying to fly. At first, he was clumsy and hit the trees. But finally, he gained altitude. He flapped his huge wings and flew away over the horizon. Elisenda watched him with a sigh of relief. The strange visitor was finally gone.