



**Class 12 English Core Flamingo Poem-1**

**“My Mother at Sixty Six” by Kamala Das**

The poem “My Mother at Sixty Six” beautifully shows an ever unfailing relationship between a daughter and her mother. Nostalgia smeared in separation appears to be the default setting of the poem.

The poet is driving from her parents’ home to Cochin by car, her mother by her side—sleeping—open mouthed very pale, colorless and frail-like a dead body indicating that her end was near. The poet looks at her and feels intense pain and agony to realize that soon death will cast her mother from her. She tries to divert her mind, looks outside at the young trees and happy children bursting out of their homes in a playful mood (a contrasting image) and then looks towards her mother who is sleeping weak like a dead body.

After the security check at the airport, she looks again at her mother’s face—pale and cold and smiles to hide her guilt and anxiety and with a hope to see her again.

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- Tries to divert her mind, looks outside at the young trees and happy children bursting out of their homes in a playful mood (a contrasting image)
- After the security check at the airport looked again at her mother’s face—pale and cold.
- “Familiar ache-My childhood fear” –the poet has always had a very intimate and close relationship with her mother and she has always felt the fear of being separated from her mother hence it is familiar.
- The poet reassures her mother that they will meet again.

## Poem 1 MY MOTHER AT SIXTY SIX

By Kamla Das



### Word- meanings

Sprinting = Running

Corpse = Dead body

### Q1 Answer the following extract based questions :

a) Read the following lines and answer the questions that follows:

..... I saw my mother,  
beside me ,  
doze , open mouthed , her face  
ashen like that  
of a corpse and realised with  
pain.....

a) who is 'I' ?

Ans: Poet Kamla Das / poets / narrator / daughter

I here is Kamla das the poetess.

b) What did I realise with pain?

Ans : Realised with pain that mother nearing old age/ mom's death

Separation from mother

DA she realised with pain that her mother had grown old. She feared that Her mother would not live long.

c) Why was realisation painful?

Ans : Value points

- Mother's approaching death was a hard fact for her to accept.
  - Thought of separation from her mother made the poet sad
- DA :The realisation was painful because with it came the thought that She might not live for a very long time.

• d) Identify and name the figure of speech used in these lines.

Ans : Value points

■ simile

■ ' ashen like that of a corpse'

b) Old familiar ache , my childhood's fear ,

but all I said was see you soon,

Amma , all I did was smile and smile and smile.....

a) What does the phrase , familiar ache mean ?

Ans : pain, fear / pain that mother was growing old / fear of separation .

**DA :** It means that the sight of her mother revived the poet's old, childhood fear / pain of being separated from her old and sick mother due to her aging and death.

**b) What was the poet's childhood fear ?**

**Ans :** her mother would get old / die / final separation from mother.

**DA :** Her childhood fear was of being separated from her mother.

**c) What do the first two lines tell us about the poet's feelings for her mother?**

**Ans :** Loved her / pained at seeing her mother growing old / fear of losing her mother.

**Detailed answer :**

The first two lines tell us that she wanted to console herself with the thought that her mother would be fine and she would meet her the next time as she was pained to see the mother growing old.

**d) What does the repeated use of the word 'smile' mean?**

**Ans: Value points** Hides her feelings from her mother / reassures herself that mother will be fine

**Detailed answer:**

The repeated use of the word 'smile' shows that in spite of her fear, the poetess tried to keep a cheerful look to hide her feelings from her mother.

**Q 2 Answer the following questions in 30 to 40 words:**

**a) How are the young trees described as 'sprinting' ?**

**Ans:** The young trees running spiritedly in the opposite direction stand in sharp contrast to the poetess's aged and pale looking mother. The trees symbolize youth and life, whereas old mother represents old age and is moving towards the grave. They symbolize the quick passage of time that has brought old age to her.

**b) Why has the mother been compared to the late winter moon ' ?**

**Ans:** The mother has been compared to the 'late winter moon' because she has become pale like the moon in the winter. She is dull and lifeless.

**c) What is the significance of parting words of the poetess and her smile in 'My Mother At the Age Of Sixty-six' ?**

**Ans :** Value points :

- Optimism
- A hope to see her mother again
- Reassuring her mother

- Hiding her anxiety and fear
- Emotions hidden behind the smile
- True feeling of loss and pain of separation

Detailed answer:

The poetess's parting words signify hope and a promise of meeting her mother again. She wants to leave a smiling face behind for her mother, so as not to let her mother know about her feeling and emotions towards her.

**Q 3 Answer the following questions in 100 to 150 words**

**a) Give the theme of 'Kamla Das' poem 'My Mother at Sixty-six'**

**Ans :** The mother of the poetess is not very old. She is sixty-six. But due to her illness or so she looked pale and ash coloured like a dead body.

The poetess is in a hurry to catch her flight. She is deeply concerned about her aged mother. She is not sure that she will find

**b) What are the main ideas combined in the poem 'My Mother at Sixty-six'**

**Ans :** In this poem the poetess specifies how her mother looks at the age of sixty-six. She also spells her pain on seeing her in such a deteriorating condition. It was the morning of her last Friday at home when she looked at her mother while driving to the airport. The poetess was not only pained but shocked to see her sleeping with her mouth open. She became all the more troubled when she looked pale, shrunken and weathered like a corpse. To distract herself from this thought of pain and trouble, she looked outside and saw young trees and children. She realised in them life, vigour and vitality.

Then at the airport's security check. The same kind of oldness was visible on her pale body. She compared her to the late winter's moon and realised that it was due to old age. The poetess smiled at her to see her again and took leave of her. The poem exemplified the pain inflicted by old age and separation.

**Poetic devices :**

**Simile**

“..... face ashen like that of a corpse  
..... pale as a late

**Personification**

“ Young trees sprinting “

**Metaphor**

“ merry children spilling out”

**Irony**

The green trees racing ( inanimate) while the mother like a corpse ”

**Contrast**

“The world replete with activity contrasted with the near lifeless mother”

**Tautology**

“I looked at her again at her , wan, pale”

**Repetition**

“Smile and smile and smile.....”

DRS