

GURU GOBIND SINGH PUBLIC SCHOOL, CHAS

Week 3 e-content & Assignment

**Class XII
English**

FLAMINGO Poem 1: My Mother at Sixty Six

Driving from my parent's home to Cochin last Friday morning,

I saw my mother, beside me,

doze, open mouthed, her face

ashen like that of a corpse

and realised with pain that she thought away,

and looked but soon put that thought away,

and looked out at young trees sprinting,

the merry children spilling out of their homes,

but after the airport's security check,

standing a few yards away,

I looked again at her, wan, pale as a late winter's moon

and felt that 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.....

GLOSSARY

sprinting : short fast race, running

wan : colourless

About the poet : Kamala Das (1934) was born in Malabar, Kerala. She is recognised as one of India's foremost poets. Her works are known for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavour of the soil. Kamala Das has published many novels and short stories in English and Malayalam under the name 'Madhavikutty'. Some of her works in English include the novel Alphabet of Lust (1977), a collection of short stories Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories (1992), in addition to five books of poetry. She is a sensitive writer who captures the complex subtleties of human relationships in lyrical idiom, My Mother at Sixty-six is an example.

Poem Summary: My Mother at Sixty Six' captures the fear of the narrator of losing her mother due to declining health and loss of energy which accompanies old age. The narrator accepts this reality and is disturbed by her mother's need for her on the one hand and her own duties and responsibilities on the other hand. This helplessness is poignantly brought out in this poem. The treatment is different as it emphasizes the subtlety of a mother-daughter relationship. The tone is reflective and the mood is one of resignation and acceptance.

In the poem, the narrator is driving to the airport. The mother is with her. She realizes that her mother is old when the latter dozes off. The mother is pale and looks like a corpse. When the mother wakes up she says nothing and the narrator is pained on having to leave her frail and old mother behind.

Kamala Das has beautifully balanced the contrast between old age and childhood or youth in the poem. Old age is shown as an ashen face, a corpse. This is contrasted with words and ideas expressing vitality, energy and movement. For example, 'Trees sprinting' and 'children spilling out'. Old age is like a winter's moon and the mother is pale and wan. The narrator is pained yet with a smile says 'see you soon'. The separation is not merely of a daughter leaving, but there is pain and a fear of death, a permanent separation, yet the narrator must leave — probably to fulfil her commitments.

The poem ends with a tone of resignation. The narrator accepts reality. She smiles as she parts from her mother. The repetition of the word smile reiterates the facade the daughter puts up for the sake of the mother — the brave act, the cheerful parting — the resignation and finally the acceptance that as she goes away she may never see her mother alive again.

A. On the basis of your reading of the poem 'My Mother At Sixty-six' and related e-content given above, answer the following questions:

1. "Driving from my parent's home to Cochin last Friday
morning, I saw my mother, beside me,
doze, open mouthed, her face ashen like that
of a corpse and realised with pain that she thought away"

Questions:

- (a) Where was the poet coming from ? Where was she going ?
- (b) Where was the poet's mother ?
- (c) How does the poet describes her mother ?
- (d) Who does 'she' refer to in the last line ? What thoughts had she driven away ?

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

"but after the airport's security check,
standing a few yards away,
I looked again at her, wan,

pale as a late winter's moon."

- (a) Where was the poet standing?
- (b) Who does 'her' refer to here? How did she look like?
- (c) Why does the narrator 'look at her again'?
- (d) Explain: "wan, pale as a late winter's moon."

3. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow :

"but soon put that thought away,
and looked out at young trees sprinting,
the merry children spilling out of their homes"

- (a) Who looked at the young trees?
- (b) Which thought did she put away?
- (c) What do young people sprinting trees signify?
- (d) Identify the figure of speech used in line no. 4.

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:

- Q.1 How does the poet's mother look like? What kind of images has the poet used to signify her ageing and decay ?
- Q.2 Why does the poet feel her old familiar ache and what is her childhood fear?
- Q.3 Describe the contrast of the scene inside the car with the activities going on outside. Describe the use of images that poet employs to strike that contrast.
- Q.4 What were the poet's feeling at the airport? How did she hide them?

B. Read the questions given below and answer them:

- 1. You are concerned at the advertisements in the media which are focused on children and aim at targeting them as their prospective buyers. Write a letter to the editor, The Times of India, New Delhi, protesting strongly against this trend in customer management. Sign yourself as Aakash/Akruti of 58, Mohan Nagar, New Delhi-1100 68.
- 2. The information technology has provided new avenues to the students for knowledge, creativity, discovery as well as job opportunities at home and abroad. Computers, internet and mobile phones have brought in a silent revolution. Write an article in 150 to 200 words showing how the information technology has provided the younger generation new opportunities, joys of discovery and thrill of creativity. You are Madhu/Mudit.

3. Manish has to speak in a debate supporting the motion that life in the country (a village) is preferable to life in the city. Below you can see his notes use the information to develop Manish's debate in about 150 to 200 words.

Village life-peace and quiet-soothing, air-fresh and pure, green fields all around-lovely site, helpful neighbours.

City life-vehicles-smoke, industries - noise pollution, crowded streets, people hurry-never relax.