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Class 12 English (Flamingo) Notes

MY MOTHER AT SIXTY-SIX

Key Notes and Important Questions with Answers

POETRY

My Mother at Sixty Six

Poet Kamala Das represents natural ageing process and complexities of life. We need to contemplate about relationship and take care of them with sensibility & responsibility.

—Kamala Das

Points to Remember

- On her way back to Cochin, the poet saw her mother's face who was sitting beside her in the car.
- Her mother's face was colourless and lacks lustre, like a corpse.
- The poet is in deep pain because of her mother's ageing, decaying health and fear of losing her.
- In order to divert her mind from such negative thoughts, she started looking outside.
- As the movement of the car makes the trees appear running, the young trees are described as 'sprinting'.
- The face of poet's mother symbolises frailty, dullness, pessimism and inactivity whereas, merry children and young trees symbolise vigour, energy, zeal, optimism and joy.
- As late winter's moon loses its magnificence and beauty when it gets covered with fog, similarly poet's mother has lost her youthful look, vitality and charm.
- At the airport while parting from her mother she smiles and reassures her that all is well. Her words infuse optimism in her mother and herself both.

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow :

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 realized with pain
that she was as old as she looked but soon
put that thought away.

(a) Where was the poet driving to?

Ans. She was driving from her parent's house to Cochin airport.

(b) What did the poet notice about her mother?

Ans. She noticed that her mother was growing old.

(c) What does the poet compare her mother's face with?

Ans. She compares her mother's face with that of a corpse.

(d) Name the poem and the poet.

Ans. The name of the poem is 'My Mother at Sixty-Six' and the poet is 'Kamala Das'.

2. ...and realised with pain
that she was as old as
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 airports.
security, check, standing a few yards away.

(a) What pain is being felt by the poet?

(b) Which thought did she put away?

(c) What do young trees and merry children signify?

(d) Did 'looking out' help the poet?

3. ....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....

(a) What was the childhood fear that troubled the poet?

(b) What do the poet's parting words suggest?

(c) Why did the poet smile and smile?

(d) Pick out the antonym of 'strange' from the extract.

Answer the following questions in about 30-40 words each.

1. What do you think is the pain and the ache that the poetess feels.
2. How has the poet compared the scene inside with that of outside the car ?
3. Why are the young trees described as "sprinting"?
4. Why is the poet's mother compared to late winter's moon?
5. Why does the poet smile and what does she say while bidding goodbye to her mother?
6. What was the dilemma in the poet's mind ?
7. How does the poet bring out the irony of human relationship ?