

About the Poet: My Mother at Sixty-six(CBSE/HBSE)

Kamla Das's poetry is known for her bold and open expression. The main features of her poetry are “**an acute obsession with love and the use of confession.**” Her main themes of poetry revolve round freedom, love, apathy of age, and protection. “Kamala Surayya (born **Kamala**; 31 March 1934 – 31 May 2009), popularly known by her one-time pen name **Madhavikutty** and married name **Kamala Das**, was an Indian poet in English as well as an author in Malayalam from Kerala, India. Her popularity in Kerala is based chiefly on her short stories and autobiography, while her oeuvre (works) in English, written under the name Kamala Das, is noted for the poems and explicit autobiography. She was also a widely read columnist and wrote on diverse topics including women's issues, child care, politics among others etc.” Her works are famous for their versatility, originality, and indigenous flavour of the soil. She published many novels and short stories in English and Malayalam. My Mother at Sixty-six revolves around complex human relationships and old age apathy.

Summary of the Poem: My Mother at



Sixty-six(CBSE/HBSE)

All of us are going to be old one day, and ageing is a natural process. In this poem, the poetess explains the old age of her mother, and she tries to explain that all of us have to become old. Old age symptoms and gestures are common among all human beings. She explains the problems of old age in her poem, “My Mother at Sixty-six.” She was seated beside her mother and looked at her face. Her mother's face was 'doze, open-mouthed, her face

ashen like that of a corpse'. All these words are the symbol of old age, which all of us have to face.

Old age is real and everyone tries to run away from the situation by claiming they are too afraid of old age. The poetess turns her attention towards the 'Young Trees', merry children. It shows us that all of us are worried about old age and always imitate being young. This is a human dilemma. She compares her mother's face with "winter's moon", which shows that in old age things are not always the same as the winter's moon, which doesn't shine as in summer. We are afraid of losing our parents and always feel attached to them. She shows her love for her mother, who has become very old and is passing through old age problems. We always smile when we feel stressed about thinking about old age.

To conclude, My Mother at Sixty -six revolves around the relationship between the poet and her mother. The fear of separation of mother and daughter is the main concern of the poetess. The poem's theme of bonding between a mother and a daughter is applicable to all of us.

Theme or Main Idea of the Poem: My Mother at Sixty-six(CBSE/HBSE)

The poetess, Kamla Das, discussed in the poem, "My Mother at Sixty-six," the problems of old age and how we feel about old age. Ageing is a universal fact, and we are all going to be old one day. She explains all her apathy toward old age with the example of her mother, who is an old lady with an open mouth, no shine on her face, and she is compared with a corpse and a winter moon. It is human nature that we don't want to be old. Therefore, we never realise the pain of old age. We must all feel the apathy of old age so that we don't face any burden of old age.

Everyone wants to be young their whole life. The poetess turns her attention from her mother toward the young trees and children who were playing

outside. On the contrary, the elderly are unable to play and enjoy life like children. It's our sole duty towards our elderly parents that they should not feel isolated in their old age. The poem ends with a positive note that we should always smile, irrespective of our age.

Textual Questions: My Mother at Sixty-six(NCERT)

Think it out

Q.1. What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?

The poet feels the pain and ache of her mother's old age. We will all have to pass through this process of ageing.

Q.2. Why are young trees described as "sprinting"?

The young trees are compared to young children, and both of them shine at their young age. The young trees are described as sprinting as they grow very fast when they are young.

Q.3. Why was the poet brought into the image of the merry children spilling out of their homes?

The poet tries to compare the young children with her mother, who is an old lady. The children are active and play in the grounds, whereas the elderly are in pain and have faces that resemble ash and the winter moon. The difference is clear and vital between old and young people. Old people are like corpses, and young children are running.

Q.4. Why has the mother been compared to the "late winter's moon"?

The old mother has been compared to the winter moon as the winter moon does not shine properly due to winter. It means that the faces of old people don't shine.

Q.5. What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

The poet tries to smile as she wants to change her thinking from old age to young age and feels that ageing is a natural process.

Important Stanzas for comprehension: My Mother at Sixty-six

Read the stanzas given below and answer the questions that follow :

Stanza.1. Driving from my parents 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 was as old as she looked but soon

Questions:

1. **What is the name of the poem?**
2. **What is the name of the poet?**
3. **Where was the poet driving to?**
4. **Who was sitting beside her?**
5. **What did the poet notice about her mother?**
6. **Why was her mother's face looked like that of a corpse?**
7. **Find words from the passage which mean : (i)no healthy sleep(ii) dead body (iii) no remains.**

Answers:

1. The name of the poem is "My Mother at Sixty-six".
2. The name of the poet is Kamla das.
3. The poet was driving to Cochin Airport.
4. Her mother was sitting besides her.
5. She noticed that her mother face was opened and like ash.
6. Her mother face was like corpse as there was no shining on her face.
7. 1. dazed 2. corpse 3. ash.

Stanza 2. She looked but soon

put that thought away, and

looked out at Young

Trees sprinting, the merry children spilling

out of their homes,

Questions:

1. Why did the poet put her thought away?
2. What do the phrases convey, 'Trees sprinting' and 'Merry children'?
3. What did the poet realise?
4. What did she do then?
5. What did she notice in the world outside?

Answers:

1. She wanted to divert her attention from old age to young age.
2. The phrases convey the young age, young trees and happy children.
3. She missed her childhood.
4. She looked outside to see young children and young trees.
5. The children were happy while coming from their homes.

Stanza 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...

Questions:

1. **Why did she compare her mother's face with the winter moon?**
2. **What was her old familiar ache?**
3. **What was her childhood fear?**
4. **Why did she smile at the end?**
5. **What is the synonym of "ache"?**

Answers:

1. **There was one shining on her face like a winter's moon.**
2. **She was afraid of losing her mother one day.**
3. **She didn't want to be separated from her mother.**
4. **She wanted to divert her attention from losing her mother.**
5. **Pain**