

CLASS XII
ENGLISH

My Mother at Sixty-Six

-By Kamala Das

About the poet

- ***She is an Indian English poet who wrote on diverse topics including women's issues, child care and politics.***
- ***She was marked as an iconoclast of her generation.***

EXPLANATION

*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*

□ *The stanza highlights the poet's pain when she notices her mother's pallid face. It sets a melancholic mood as the poet realized her mother is ageing*

Simile: face ashen like that of a corpse

Metaphor: face ashen

EXPLANATION

*But soon put that thought away, and looked out at Young
Trees sprinting, the merry children spilling
Out of their homes*

□ *The poet shifts her glance to the view outside the car to deviate from the negativity.*

Personification : sprinting trees

EXPLANATION

***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***

□ *The poet realized that the mother looks like a late winter moon
whose light is hindered by fog and mist*

Tautology : wan, pale

Simile : as a late winter's moon

EXPLANATION

*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....*

The poet recalls the sentimental account of her past , her familiar ache of seperation but she puts forth a brave front by camouflaging her pain with a smile.

Smile and smile and smile: Repetition

and smile.... : elipses

GLOSSARY

- **Doze: breathing with mouth wide open**
- **Ashen: very pale, like ash**
- **Corpse: a dead body**
- **Sprinting: running**
- **Spilling : moving out in great number**
- **Wan : pale**
- **Ache :pain**

QUESTION-ANSWERS

- *What is the kind of pain and ache that the poet feels?*
- *Why are young trees described as sprinting?*
- *Why has the poet put forth the image of merry children spilling out of their homes?*
- *Why has the mother been compared to the late winter's moon?*
- *What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?*