



ENGLISH REVISION

My mother at sixty-six

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: XII

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

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 poet's childhood fear?
- (b) What were the poet's parting words?
- (c) What is the poetic device used in the second line?
- (d) Why did the poet smile and smile?

Answer.

- (a) In her childhood, the poet was insecure about losing her mother, just as all young children often are.
- (b) The poet's parting words were, "See you soon, Amma", which are suggestive of the hope that they will meet again.
- (c) The poetic device used in the second line is simile, where the mother's dull and lifeless face is compared to a late winter's moon.
- (d) The poet smiled and smiled (meaning that she smiled continuously) because she was trying to hide her real feelings. She feared the fact that she might not see her mother again, which left her almost in tears.

2)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 now troubled the poet?
- (b) What do the poet's parting words suggest?
- (c) Why did the poet smile and smile?
- (d) Explain, "that old familiar ache."

Answer.

- (a) As a child the poet was insecure about losing her mother and the same fear has come again now when her mother has grown old.
- (b) The poet, while parting, smiled and said to her mother that she would see her soon. This expression of her suggests that though she was aware that her mother was quite old and weak, yet she could not do anything about it. She could not even communicate



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her true feelings to her mother.

(c) The poet smiled and smiled only because she wanted to hide her fears from her mother. She was reassuring herself and also her mother that they would meet again.

(d) “That old familiar ache” refers to the agony and pain of separation from her mother that the poet felt in her childhood, as she feared that she might lose her mother.

Short questions:

1) How does Kamala Das try to put away the thoughts of her ageing mother?

Ans: Kamala Das finds the thoughts of her ageing mother very painful and disturbing. It is hard for her to accept the fact of her mother growing old, as it brings back to her mind her childhood fear of losing her mother. She makes a deliberate effort to drive or put away such thoughts by looking out of the moving car, at the trees ‘sprinting’ and the joyful young children rushing out of their homes.

2) Bring out the significance of the title, “My Mother at Sixty-Six.”

Ans: The title is very apt as the subject of the poem is the poet’s aged and frail mother. It at once establishes the context in which Kamla is writing – the mother’s unexpressed pain and the poet’s worry about her mother’s frail health, old age and perhaps imminent death. The title prepares us for the frail old mother and her daughter’s concern for her.

3) What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

Ans: The poet’s parting words and her smile are a facade to hide her feelings of insecurity. The pale and senile appearance of her mother brings back her childhood fear of losing her mother. She can definitely experience the pangs of separation, yet she bids her farewell in a pleasant manner. She reassures her mother that all will be well and they would meet again.