**MY MOTHER AT SIXTY SIX**

KAMALA DAS

**Extract Based Questions**

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

"*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 was as old as she looked but soon put that thought away*"

**Questions:**

**(a) Where was the poet coming from ? Where was she going ?**

**Ans.** The poet was coming from her parent’s home. She was now going to Cochin.

**(b) Where was the poet's mother ?**

**Ans.** The poet's mother was sitting beside her in the car. She was travelling with the poet to Cochin to see her off at the airport.

**(c) How does the poet describe her mother ?**

**Ans.** The poet describes her mother as old and pale. As she dozed off beside her, the mother looked almost like a corpse, for her face was colourless and seemed to have lost the energy of life.

**(d) Who does 'she' refer to in the last line ? What thoughts had she driven away ?**

**Ans.** 'She' here refers to the poet's mother. Like all elderly (old) people, she also suffered from the pain of loneliness and wanted her children to be with her. However, she seemed to have accepted her seclusion (separation) with quiet (silent) resignation (surrender).

The poetess had driven away the thoughts of her old and pale mother because those thoughts gave her anxieties (worries).

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?**

**Ans.** The poet was at the Cochin airport waiting to board the plane after the security check.

**(b) Who does 'her' refer to here? How did she look like?**

**Ans.** 'Her' here refers to the poet's mother. She was an aged (old) lady and hence looked pale and colourless.

**(c) Why does the narrator (poet) 'look at her again'?**

**Ans.** The narrator (poet) looked at her mother once again for the last time before she left to reassure herself about the well being of her mother. She had tried to drive away the pain she had felt on seeing her weak and aged mother. One last time she looked at her to wish her goodbye.

**(d) Explain: " wan, pale as a late winter's moon."**

**Ans.** In this simile, the poet compares the mother's pale and withered (dry) face with the winter's moon. The moon seems to lose its brightness in the winter season as it is veiled (covered) behind fog and mist. The mother's face also seemed to have lost its radiance (shine) which was now reduced by age. Winter symbolises death and the waning moon symbolises decay.

**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?**

**Ans.** The poetess Kamala Das looked at the young trees.

**(b) Which thought did she put away?**

**Ans.** The thought that she put away from her mind was that of her ageing mother's decaying condition and the thought that this could probably be their last meeting.

**(c) What do young people, sprinting trees signify?**

**Ans.** The young sprinting trees signify the energy of the youth and continuity of life in contrast to her thoughts related to her old-aged mother.

**(d) Identify the figure of speech used in line no. 4.**

**Ans.** Personification

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**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 ?**

**Ans.** The poet's mother is at sixty-six. She is sitting beside her. The mother is dozing as old people usually do during the journey. She keeps her mouth open. This is also a sign of old age. Her face looks pale and faded like ash. Actually, she is an image of decay and death. Her 'ashen' face looks like that of corpse.

**Q.2 Why does the poet feel her old familiar ache and what is her childhood fear?**

**Ans.** The sight of her mother's corpse-like face arouses ' that old familiar ache' in her heart. Her childhood fear returns. The fear is that with ageing comes decay and death. Ageing and decay are inevitable. No one can avoid them. Perhaps she herself may have to face all these things. This idea is quite painful and fearful to her.

**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.**

**Ans.** Inside the car sits an old mother beside the poet. She is sixty-six and ageing. Her 'ashen' face is pale and lifeless like a corpse. The world outside provides a stark contrast. The 'young' trees seem to be running past or sprinting. The children are making merry. The 'ashen' and 'corpse-like mother' is contrasted with the 'young' trees 'sprinting' outside and the merry children coming out of their houses.

**Q.4 What were the poet's feeling at the airport? How did she hide them?**

**Ans.** The poet experienced two opposite and contrasting feelings at the airport. The ashen and the pale face of her mother brought an image of decay and death. But she immediately hid her feelings. She composed herself and tried to look normal. She smiled continuously to assure her mother that they would meet again soon.

**Q.5 Describe the poetic devices used by Kamala Das in 'My Mother At Sixty-Six'.**

**Ans.** Kamala Das ' My Mother At Sixty-Six’ is rich in imagery. The use of simile is very effective. Her face has been described as 'ashen'. The ashen face is 'like that of a corpse'. Again the 'wan, pale' face of a mother is compared to ‘a late winter's moon'. The poem excels in contrasts.

**KEEPING QUIET**

**-Pablo Neruda**

**Extract Based Questions**

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

*"What I want should not be*

*confused*

*with total inactivity.*

*Life is what it is about;*

*I want no truck with death.*

*If we were not so single-minded*

*about keeping our lives moving,*

*and for once could do nothing,*

*perhaps a huge silence*

*might interrupt this sadness*

*of never understanding ourselves*

*and of threatening ourselves with*

*death."*

**Questions:.**

**(a) What does the poet not want himself to be?**

**Ans.** The poet doesn't want himself to be confused with advocating total inactivity.

**(b) Explain: 'I want no truck with death'.**

**Ans.** Total inactivity brings death. The poet has no association with death. Hence, he is not advocating for death.

**(c) What were we not focussing on?**

**Ans.** It would have been better if we had not been focussing all the time on keeping our lives moving. We should have given ourselves some time to think and rest.

Or

We were not focusing on giving ourselves time to think and rest.

**(d) When can a huge silence do us good?**

**Ans.** When we were threatening ourselves with death, a silence can do us a lot of good.

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

"*Perhaps the Earth can teach us*

*as when everything seems dead*

*and later proves to be alive.*

*Now I'll count up to twelve*

*and you keep quiet and I will go.*"

**Questions:**

**(a) What can earth teach us?**

**Ans.** The earth can teach a lesson to mankind how to live on it.

**(b) What remains alive when everything seems dead?**

**Ans.** Only the earth remains alive when everything else appears to be dead.

**(c) What does the poet ask us while he counts up to twelve?**

**Ans.** The poet asks us to keep quiet while he is counting up to twelve.

**(d) Name the poem and the poet of these lines.**

**Ans.** The name of the poem is 'Keeping Quiet' and the poet is Pablo Neruda.

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:**

**Answer the following questions in 30-40 words each:**

**Q.1 Why does Pablo Neruda urge us to keep still ?**

**Ans.** Pablo Neruda considers that indecent haste (hurry) and activities lead humanity to wars, violence and death. He urges us to keep still to enjoy a few moments of peace, rest and tranquillity. Sometimes keeping still gives us the much needed respite.

**Q.2 How can suspension of activities help ?**

**Ans.** Man's indecent haste has already caused a lot of problems. His activities have given birth to only chaos (disorder), war, violence and miseries. Suspension of human activities can help in restoring the environment and health of this world. Suspension of undue haste and rush can help in bringing peace and tranquillity in the troubled world.

**Q.3 How will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us ?**

**Ans.** Man continues his activities endlessly day after day. This results in turmoil (trouble) and tensions. Violence, war and other mischiefs of man are the results of his undue and indecent haste and hurry. Keeping still can help him to get time for a positive approach and thinking. It can help in bringing this uneasy and turbulent world to peace and harmony.

**Q.4 How can there be life under apparent stillness ? How does the poet prove it ?**

**Ans.** Neruda doesn't equate stillness with total inactivity. Under this apparent stillness there is life. We can learn it from the earth. When everything seems dead, the earth remains still alive. It is never dead. The life on the earth goes on as usual under the apparent stillness.

**Q.5 How is 'stillness' not equal to total inactivity? Why does Neruda say : 'I want no truck with death' ?**

**Ans.** The Earth can teach us an important lesson. The earth is never dead. When everything seems to be dead, it remains still alive. 'Stillness' shouldn't be confused with total 'total inactivity'. Life goes on as usual. The poet doesn't advocate for total inactivity as stillness has no association with death.

**Q.6 Which sadness is Pablo Neruda worried about in his poem?**

**Ans.** The sadness that Pablo Neruda is worried about in his poem is the sadness of isolation that has made modern man its victim. This sadness has made man self-centred and uncaring to the needs of his fellowmen. He has sacrificed the needs of his emotional self in favour of materialism.

**Q.7 Do you think the poet, Pablo Neruda advocates total inactivity and death? Why/Why not?**

**Ans.** No, the poet Pablo Neruda does not advocate total inactivity and death. He wants to give mankind an opportunity of quiet introspection to know and realize how he has been harming himself and others. He makes it clear that stillness should be confused with inactivity. Stillness means halting of harmful human activities. He also wants mankind to understand that life is sprouting out of seemingly dead surroundings.