

## Short-Answer Questions

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**Q.1. What were Kamala Das' fears as a child? Why do the fears surface when she is going to the airport?**

**[CBSE (AI) 2011]**

**Ans.** Kamala Das fears that her mother would leave her alone and go away. These fears surface now as she looks at her old mother doze with her mouth open in the car.

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

**[CBSE (AI) 2012]**

**Ans.** The poet wants to prove that there can be life under apparent stillness. The poet invokes the earth as a living symbol to prove his point. The earth never attains total inactivity. Nature remains at work even under apparent stillness.

**Q.3. "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 far away,..."**

**Q. Where is the poet at present?**

**Ans.** The poet is on her way to Cochin Airport from her ancestral home. She is travelling in a car with her mother sitting beside her.

**Q. How does she describe her mother?**

**Ans.** Kamala Das describes her mother as old, pale and senile. As she was asleep, the poet noticed that her mother looked as pale and colourless as a dead body. She seemed to have lost the vitality of life.

**Q. What thoughts had she given away?**

**Ans.** The poet has put away the haunting thoughts of losing her mother.

**Q. Mention the poetic device used here?**

**Ans.** Simile e.g. face ashen like that of a corpse.

**Q.4. "... 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..."**

**Q. Who is 'her' here? Why does the poet look at her again?**

**Ans.** 'Her' is the poetess Kamala Das' sixty-six year old mother. The poetess looked at her again for the last time to reassure herself that her mother is well. She drove away her thoughts of pain and fear which had surfaced on seeing her mother. It was a look of reassurance to meet her again.

**Q. Explain 'pale as a late winter's moon.'**

**Ans.** This is an example of a simile. The poet has compared her mother's face to a winter's moon. Winter symbolises death and a waning moon symbolises decay. Just like winter loses its magnificence and beauty when covered with fog and mist, similarly the poet's mother has lost her youth and vitality and has become inactive and withered.

**Q. Why did the poet promise her mother of a meeting in the near future?**

**Ans.** The poet was doubtful of seeing her mother again. She knew that the mother was also aware of the same. Yet, to encourage her mother, to leave a hope in her mind, to make herself strong, the poet promised a futile reunion in the future.

**Q. The poet's repeated smile seems out of the place in a way. In which way is that appropriate?**

**Ans.** The poet had no reason to smile at the time of separation from her aged mother. She was deeply distressed and pained to separate from her mother when she was so old. Yet, to make the mother feel 'there is nothing to worry,' the poet attempted to be glad, cheerful and reassured her by her extended smile.