

**STELLA MARIS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) CHENNAI 600 086**  
**(For candidates admitted during the academic year 2008 – 09 & thereafter)**  
**SUBJECT CODE: EL/MC/SA54**  
**B.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION, NOVEMBER 2011**  
**BRANCH XII – ENGLISH**  
**FIFTH SEMESTER**

**COURSE : MAJOR – CORE**  
**PAPER : SOUTH ASIAN WRITING**  
**TIME : 3 HOURS** **MAX. MARKS : 100**

**I. Analyse one of the following poems, with reference to the issues raised by the author**  
**poems in not less than 350 words. (1x15=15 marks)**

**The Old Playhouse – Kamala Das**

You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her  
In the long summer of your love so that she would forget  
Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but  
Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless  
Pathways of the sky. It was not to gather knowledge  
Of yet another man that I came to you but to learn  
What I was, and by learning, to learn to grow, but every  
Lesson you gave me was about yourself. You were pleased  
With my body's response, its weather, its usual shallow  
Convulsions, you dribbled spittle into my mouth, you poured  
Yourself into every nook and cranny, you embalmed  
My poor lust with your bitter – sweet juices.  
You called me wife,  
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and  
To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering  
Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and  
Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason. To all your  
Questions I mumbled incoherent replies. The summer  
Begins to pall, I remember the ruder breezes  
Of the fall and smoke from burning leaves. Your room is  
Always lit by artificial lights, your window always  
shut, Even the air – conditioner helps  
So little. All – pervasive is the male scent  
Of your breath. The cut flowers in the vases have begun  
To smell of human sweat. There is  
No more singing, no more a dance. My mind is an old  
Playhouse with all its lights put out.  
The strong man's technique is  
Always the same. He serves his love in lethal doses,  
For, love is narcissus at the water's edge, haunted  
By its own lonely face, and yet it must seek at last  
And end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors  
To shatter and the kind night to erase the water.

**OR**

**Patrick Fernando (1931- 82)**  
**The Fisherman Mourned by his wife**

When you were not quite thirty and the sun  
 Had not yet tanned you into old- boat brown,  
 When you were not quite thirty and not begun  
 To be embittered like the rest, nor grow  
 Obsessed with death, then would you come  
 Hot with continence upon the sea,  
 Chaste as a gull flying pointed home,  
 In haste to be with me!

Now that, being dead, you are beyond detection,  
 And I need not be discreet, let us confess  
 It was not love that married us nor affection,  
 But elders' persuasion, not even loneliness.  
 Recall how first you were so impatient and afraid,  
 My eyes were open in the dark unlike in love,  
 Trembling, but in fear, you'll let me go a maid,  
 Trembling on the other hand, for my virginity.  
 Three months the monsoon thrashed the sea, and you  
 Remained at home, the sky cracked like a shell  
 In thunder, and the rain broke through,  
 At last when pouring ceased and storm winds fell,  
 When gulls returned new – plumed and wild,  
 When in our wind-torn flamboyante  
 New buds broke, I was with child.

My face was wan while telling you, and voice fell low  
 And you seemed full of guilt and not to know  
 Whether to repent or rejoice over the situation.  
 You nodded at the ground and went to sea.  
 But soon I was to you more than God or temptation,  
 And so were you to me.  
 Men come and go, some say they understand,  
 Our children weep, the youngest thinks you're fast asleep;  
 Theirs is fear and wonderment.  
 You had grown so familiar as my hand,  
 That I cannot with simple grief  
 Assuage dismemberment.

Outside the wind despoils of leaf  
 Trees that it used to nurse;  
 Once more the flamboyante is torn,  
 The sky cracks like a shell again,  
 So someone practical has gone  
 To make them bring the hearse  
 Before the rain.

**II. Answer three of the following in not less than 300 words each. (3x15=45 marks)**

1. Comment on the portrayal of Benare, with reference to concepts relating to gender.
2. Discuss the major thematic concerns in 'The Land of Our Parents' in relation to the socio-historic context of the play.
3. Comment on Basu's portrayal of the Japanese wife in his short story.
4. What are Vishaka's observations as a writer, artist and dancer in war-torn Srilanka?

**III. Answer two of the following in not less than 750 words each. (2x20=40 marks)**

1. Analyse 'Fire in the Monastery' as a sensitive dramatization of the problems of Nepali Women.
2. Comment on the allusions and references used by the poet in "Play of the Absurd", How do they serve to support the thematic concerns of the poet.
3. Diaspora is as much internal as it is external. Comment with reference to 'Kartography'.
4. Identify and comment on correspondence / difference relating to gender, ethnicity and language issues in the texts prescribed for study.

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