

My Mother at sixty-six

Summary

My Mother At Sixty Six poem is written by Kamala Das and is one of her very popular poems. Kamala Das is famous for capturing the complexities of personal relationships. In the short summary of My Mother At Sixty Six, the poet relates to her own experience in the poem. She brings out a contradiction in human relationships. Throughout the poem, she has pictured what emotions a daughter feels when she bids farewell to her mother. She feels sad for her mother and is not able to express her grief. A short and long summary of My Mother At 66 is provided below. The poet was driving from her folks home to the Cochin air terminal last Friday morning. Her mother was sitting close to her. She was sixty-six years of age. The older woman was resting. Her mouth stayed open. Her face looked pale and blurred. It was dim like debris. It looked dormant like a body (dead body). Her youth dread overwhelmed her once more. In any case, she controlled herself. She gave off an impression of being ordinary. She scattered grains all over while bidding farewell to her mother. She wished to see her old Amma once more.

Question Answers

Q1. How does the poet describe her mother in the poem?

Ans: The poet describes her mother as an elderly woman who has become dull, inactive and worn out due to old age. She is often dosing and unconscious of herself as a dead person.

Q2. Why does the poet look outside? What activities does the poet see outside the car window?

Ans: The poet realises that her mother is about to die. The thought of her mother's numbered days makes her anxious, and she looks outside to distract her attention from her mother. Outside the car window, the poet sees young trees sprinting. She also finds very active, energetic and lively children coming out of their homes.

Q3. Why are young trees described as sprinting?

Ans: The young trees are described as sprinting with respect to the car because the movement of the racing car makes the trees look as if they are running along. It has also a deeper meaning. By sprinting young trees, the poet means that the youth passes quickly out of human life and that a person enters his old age and approaches his death.

Q4. Why is the mother compared to the late winter's moon?

Ans: The mother is compared to the late winter moon because, like the moon of the winter season, the mother of the poet also looks dull, greyish, pale, and her strength is waning.

Q5. What childhood fears do you think the poet is referring to in the poem "My Mother at Sixty Six"?

Ans: The fear of childhood to which the poet refers is the anxious feeling of losing her mother. The poet feels uncomfortable and unprotected when she thinks she is losing her mother. She doesn't expect to see her mother again. She, therefore, shows a childish reluctance to leave her mother.

Q6. What does Kamala Das do after the security checkup? What does she notice?

Ans: The poet stands a few steps away from her mother and looks at her after the security check-up. She notices that her mother looks pale, wrinkled and worn out than ever before. This makes her realise that her mother is living her final days of life.

Q7.

a) What does the poet actually feel at this moment?

Ans: In fact, the poet feels very depressed and dismayed at the sight of her old mother.

b) Why did the poet say "see you soon Amma"? What does the poet actually mean by „smile and smile and smile....”? What kind of smile is it?

Ans: The poet said, "see you soon Amma" because though she was aware of her mother's old age and her approaching death, but she was still hopeful of seeing her soon. By "smile and smile and smile" the poet actually means that she should smile continuously so that her mother might not grasp her daughter's sorrow. She smiles only to reassure her mother. It is not a real smile but only a showy one. The use of words is just a formality; otherwise she knows that her mother's fate is too evident.

Q8. 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 realize with pain
that she was as old as she looked but soon put that thought away.*

a) Where was the poet driving to? Who was sitting beside her?

Ans: The poet was driving to Cochin. The poet's mother was sitting next to her.

b) What did the poet notice about the mother?

Ans: She noticed that her mother was weak, pale and unconscious like a dead body.

c) Why did the mother's face look like that of a corpse?

Ans: The mother's face looked like a corpse because it had turned pale, greyish and was dosing open-mouthed due to old age.

Q9. Discuss the mother-daughter relationship as described in the poem.

Ans: The relationship between mother and daughter as described in the poem is very sensitive and full of love, care and emotions. Mother has a profound

emotional connection with her children and doesn't want them to be away. In particular, she gets more concerned and worried about her children when the mother reaches her old age.

Daughter also tends to have a specific kind of emotional bond with her mother. She tries to keep her mother close and feels very bad and worried when she is separated from her. In this poem, the mother doesn't want her daughter to leave her; the daughter likewise gives a mysterious and indefinable smile that shows unwillingness and anxiety to leave her mother.

Q10. "My Mother at sixty-six" is an emotional account of the poet about her old mother. Discuss.

Ans: "My Mother at Sixty Six" is a poet's emotional account of her mother's last days. She is very sorry and disappointed to see her old, grey, wrinkled and dull face. She tries her best to change her mind, but she remains unsuccessful, and this thought continues to haunt her mind. Till the end of the poem, she feels very sorry and depressed about her mother's declining age. She can not shed her fears and emotions with the fear of dismaying her mother. She bids her mother farewell by smiling in order to hide her hurt feelings and to encourage her mother.

Literacy Devices

Q. The poet compares her mother to many things. Pick out two similes which reinforce this comparison.

Ans: The poet has used the following similes in the poem:

1. "Her face ashen like that of a corpse."
2. "I looked again at her wan, pale as a late winter's moon".

Q. What image does the poet use to describe death in the poem?

Ans: The image of "corpse" has been used to describe death in the poem.

Q. Cite an example of one device of contrast that the poet uses in the poem.

Ans: The contrasting device used by the poet in the poem is the old age of his mother and the young sprinting trees and gorgeous children. The poet compares the energy, vitality and jubilation of childhood and youth with the old age.

Q. Smile and smile and smile.....is a poetic device. What is it called?

Answer: " Smile, smile and smile..." is a poetic device called repetition which is used to make a poem rhythmically impressive using fewer words.