

MY MOTHER AT 66

KAMALA DAS

EXTRACT AND EXPLANATION

Driving from my parent's..... old as she looked ...

The poet was driving from her parent's home to the airport to return to Cochin when she glanced at her mother. She saw that her mother was sleeping with her mouth open. Her face had lost all its glow and colour. It was nearly lifeless and pale just like a corpse. She suddenly realised with intense pain and grief that her mother had become very old and looked her age.

.....but soon ... out of their homes.....

The poet quickly looked away, driving the painful thought of the distressing reality that her mother was getting old and she might die anytime. She turned towards the window and saw young trees on the roadside, which appeared to be running. Logically an optical illusion as the car was speeding forward. Metaphorically it signified that time was running fast and her mother was reaching the end of her life. It also portrayed characteristics of youth in contrast to the dullness of old age. She also saw a group of children, merrily rushing out of their homes to play, a symbol of the exuberance of youth, happiness, strength and vigour. The energetic and lively children presented a contrast to the poet's mother who has grown old and pale.

But after the security check, ... my childhood's fear,

As the poet passed through security check at the airport and happened to look at her mother again, she was again haunted by the same fear of losing her to death. This shows that the joyful scene earlier didn't help drive away the painful thought from her mind. The poet uses a simile, where the mother's dull and lifeless face is compared to a late winter's moon that is on its last stages. It is a grey and colourless dying moon, just like her mother. In her childhood, the poet was always insecure about losing her mother, just as all young children often are. The same

fear has come again now when her mother has grown old.

"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.

but all I said was see you soon, Amma ... and smile and smile

The poet's parting words were, "See you soon, Amma", which are suggestive of the hope that they will meet again. Though in her heart she knows that may not be possible. The poet 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. 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. The poet was also feeling guilty for neglecting her. She was reassuring herself and also her mother. She could not even communicate her true feelings to her mother.

WRITE SHORT ANSWERS UPTO 60 WORDS

- 1. Where was the poet driving to?**
- 2. Why was her mother's face looking like that of a corpse?**
- 3. What did the poet notice about her mother?**
- 4. Why was the realisation painful?**
- 5. What do the 'sprinting trees' signify?**
- 6. What are "the merry children spilling out of their homes", symbolic of?**
- 7. Why was the mother like a 'pale winter's moon'?**
- 8. What was the poet's childhood fear?**
- 9. What were the poet's parting words?**
- 10. Why did the poet smile and smile?**

