

Assignment - I

POEM: My Mother at Sixty-six

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Introduction

Kamala Das, one of the greatest literary figures in Malayalam literature, was born in 1934 in South Malabar, Kerala. Popularly known as Madhavikutty, she died in 2009. She was a skilled painter of images.

Theme:- advancing age and the fear of loss and separation.

Setting:- The poem is set in a car. The poet is on her way to the airport in Cochin. She is driving from her parents' place with her mother seated beside her.

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:-

I looked again at her ---- smile and smile...

a) What does the poet compare her mother's pale face to? Mention the poetic device.

Ans:- The poet has compared her mother's pale face to that of a waning winter moon, no longer bright. The poetic device used for the comparison is that of a simile.

b) What is meant by "familiar ache"?

Ans:- The poet refers to the familiar ache of losing her mother.

c) Why did the poet smile?

Ans:- The poet smiled to cover up her pain.

Assignment - 1

Poetic devices:-

1. Simile :-
a) face ashen like that of a corpse
b) pale as a late winter's moon.
2. Personification "young trees sprinting".
3. Metaphor :- "merry children spilling out".
4. Irony :- "The green trees racing while the mother like a corpse".

Q-1. What do you think is the pain that the poet feels?

Ans. On her way to the airport, the poet notices her mother taking a nap, open mouthed. She is very anxious looking at the mother's pale face which looks like lifeless. The poet feels upset at the failing health of her mother.

Q-2. Why has the poet's mother been compared to the 'late winter's moon'?

Ans. The poet's mother is sixty-six years old. Just as a 'late winter's moon' looks hazy and appears to lack brightness and lustre, in the same way, the poet's mother also looks pale, dull and colourless due to old age.

Q-3. Why are the young trees described as 'sprinting'?

Ans. The poet is driving to the Lochin airport. When she looked outside through the window, the trees appeared to be sprinting because the car was speeding fast in the opposite direction. The poet here uses a contrast - the dozing old mother and the sprinting trees.

H.W. (i) What do the parting words of the poet and her smile signify?

(ii) How does Kamala Das try to put away the thoughts of her ageing mother?