

A Summary Of Arun Kolatkar's *An Old Woman*

In Arun Kolatkar's poem, "An Old Woman," the main theme is about keeping what is important in perspective—in this case, an old woman and her heritage—the land from which she comes.

Someone may be walking and a woman may grab ahold of his or her sleeve. For a price, she will take what seems to be a sightseer to a nearby shrine. The man will not be interested: he has seen the shrine before. However, the woman will be insistent; the man may want to dismiss her because she is an *old* woman, and they cling and won't let go.

The man will turn, about to end their association, to put her in her place and demand that she leave, but she will look at him and explain that there is little else left for an old woman to do in the hills where she abides: how can she live? she seems to imply.

The shock the man receives is looking at the sky, perhaps as blue as the woman's eyes: but what stops him is the sense that her eyes are like bullet holes—this image is shocking and riveting, as is, perhaps, his enlightened perception of this woman and her connection to this old land.

The man will note that as he looks at the woman, and the cracks around her eyes, the cracks will seem to spread to the landscape around her: to the hills, the temples and even the sky. But he will see, as he watches, that even though the sky may fall and shatter around her, she is untouched: "shatterproof."

In the midst of the life that has reduced her to trying to earn some money as a guide for tourists, and seen *only* an old woman to the tourists—not worth their time and barely worth their notice—her resolve is strong. She is a part of the land, as old as it is: she is as immovable. She lives, the man will see, with what is made available to her. It would seem, that in the face of the man's realization, he will feel as if he has been reduced to nothing more than his money, for *he* does not have that kind of connection to *his* land or *his* heritage. And perhaps, in light of the trials and tribulations of life, *he* is really the unimportant one—beyond the small change in his pocket—but *she* stands, unbreakable and strong.