
Chapter - 1

The Portrait of a Lady

Khushwant Singh is one of the prominent Indian writers and columnists. He has written on various themes and issues. In this lesson he gives a detailed account of his grandmother who had a long association with him. The old, stout, short and a little bent grandmother are clad in white clothes and keeps on telling beads of her rosary.

During their long stay in village, the grandmother used to wake up the narrator in the morning and accompanied him to school. She took care of all small things and continued her regular prayers and reading of scriptures. On the way back home she fed straydogs with stale chapatis. Shifting to city home was a turning point as it increased distances in their relationship. Now, the author was going to a city school and studying all modern day subjects. The grandmother was not able to help the author in his studies and she felt disturbed as there was no teaching of God and scriptures.

The grandmother devoted her time in praying, spinning and feeding sparrows. She did not get disturbed when the author was leaving for abroad and saw him off maintaining her peace and calm. Seeing her old age, the narrator thought that that could be his last meeting with his affectionate grandmother. But, contrary to his thinking after a span of five years the grandmother was there to receive him. She celebrated her grandson's home coming in an usual way by beating a drum and singing. She had a peaceful end and everyone including sparrows got aggrieved at the demise of a bold, religious, practical, responsible and loving person.