



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: XI

Department: ENGLISH (2020-2021)

Topic: THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

1. What does Khushwant Singh describe in ‘The Portrait of a Lady’?

Ans. In "the portrait of a lady" Khushwant Singh basically tells about his relationship with his grandmother in three different phases of his life. In the first phase, he and his granny live in the village. Their relationship is great. She helps him with his work, drops and picks him from school, dressed him up. Then in the second phase they go to live in the city. Grandmother has problems with the English medium school in which he now studies. She can't help him with his study; they don't get to spend time together. She finds objection in the narrator's music lessons. She thinks music is a subject of lowly people. It's not for gentle people. So, it upsets her. In the third phase the author grows up. He attends university. Their friendship kind of ends and they couldn't find time for each other. So, grandmother starts developing and confining herself in her own world. When the author comes back from college, she behaves unusual and celebrates his home coming. Eventually, the loud singing makes her ill and then she dies. In "The Portrait of a Lady" author tries to show the decreasing relevance of grandmother in the narrator's life.

2. Comment on the title ‘The Portrait of a Lady’?

Ans. The author, describes his grandmother, painting a word-portrait for the reader. To him, with her pious, kind, understanding and caring persona, she is the true embodiment of the term, 'lady'. According to the author, the grandmother may not have been pretty, but her inner beauty shone through her persona making her beautiful.

3. Comment on the grandson and the grandmother's relationship?.

Ans. Grandson and grandmother: The grandson and his grandmother shared a close bond. Initially, the grandson stayed with his grandmother in the village. She took care of his daily needs and even accompanied him to school. She was pious and religious and hoped to pass on her faith to her grandson as well. Singh describes her as beautiful like the winter landscape in the mountains, serene and content. She might old and wrinkled but her spiritual aura, simplicity, calmness and general contentment with her life made her beautiful to Khushwant's eyes. When the grandson and grandmother moved to the city, they stayed in separate rooms and the grandmother no longer accompanied him to school. The distance grew further when she came to know that he was taught music, science and English in his school. She did not trust these subjects and was distressed that there was no teaching about God or scriptures. Although the generation gap widened in the city, they still loved one another. She silently lent him support when he went to study abroad. Her death left a void in Khushwant even though he felt blessed for having had her as a part of his life.

4. Comment on the village school and the city school.

Ans. The village school was attached to a temple and the grandmother-grandson duo would walk to reach it. The teacher was a priest and prayers were taught along with the alphabet. Rote learning, wooden slates lathered with yellow chalk, ink pots and ink pens were used to facilitate learning. In the city school, the grandson travelled by a motor bus. The grandson learnt English, Science and Music. There was no teaching of God or the scriptures.

5. How spiritual the narrator's grandmother was?

Ans. Prayers/Grandmother's spirituality: The grandmother's spiritual nature and devotion to the Almighty defines her personality. She prays daily and almost constantly. She wishes to pass on the same devotion into her grandson. The only day she did not pray was the day her grandson returned

from abroad and the very next morning, she fell ill. She prayed from then up to the point of her death passing away with the same spiritual calmness on her face that she had possessed when alive.

6. Why was it hard for the author to believe that his grandmother was once young and pretty?

Ans. The author had only seen and known his grandmother for twenty years as an old woman. She is short, fat and slightly stooped in stature, so, it was very difficult for him to believe the stories of his grandmother's beauty in her younger days.

7. Give three reasons why the author's grandmother was disturbed when he started going to the city school?

Ans. when the author started attending the city school his grandmother was disturbed because she could not help him with his lessons in English, science. Also, she was unhappy when she heard that the author was being given music lessons and that there were no religious teachings about god and the scriptures at his school.

8. Briefly describe the typical routine of the grandmother both in village and city.

Ans. During her village life, every day she would prepare the author for school. She dressed him up, gave him breakfast and would accompany his grandson to school because his school was attached to the temple. While the children learned alphabets and prayer the grandmother would read the scriptures at the temple. But after she came to the city, there wasn't much to do. So, she would sit and do some clothing work in her spinning wheel and at the afternoon she would feed the sparrows.

9. The grandmother had a divine beauty. How does the author bring this out?

Ans. The author brings out the inner beauty of the grandmother by comparing her to a snow-covered winter mountain landscape. This comparison shows her calmness and serenity.

10. How could the grandmother be 'beautiful' without being pretty?

Ans. Grandmother was never a physically attractive woman, but she reflected a divine beauty from within. She was a symbol of peace, serenity and contentment. Her novel virtues gave her a spiritual beauty.

12. What was the turning point of their friendship?

Ans. The narrator's parents sent for them and they shifted to the city. It was the turning point in their friendship. Grandmother could not accompany him to the English or help him in his studies. She saw less of him and the distance grew.

13. Why did the grandmother hate music?

Ans. Grandmother considered that music was indecent and was meant for harlots and beggars. It was not meant for gentle folk or school children from respectable families.