



Class: VIII

QUESTION BANK 2020-21

Sub: ENGLISH

Topic: The Portrait of a Lady
Study Notes

SUMMARY:

The Portrait of a Lady' is written in first person and is in the biographical mode. In this story, the writer gives a detailed account of his Grandmother with whom he had a long association.

Khushwant Singh recalls his Grandmother as short, fat and slightly bent. Her silver hair was scattered untidily on her wrinkled face. She hobbled around the house in white clothes with one hand resting on her waist and the other telling the beads of her rosary. Khushwant Singh remembers her as not very pretty but always beautiful. He compares her serene face to that of a winter landscape.

During their long stay in the village, Grandmother woke him up in the morning, plastered his wooden slate, prepared his breakfast, and escorted him to school. While he studied alphabets, she read the scriptures in the temple attached to the school. On their way home, she fed stale chapattis to stray dogs.

The turning point in their relationship came when they went to live in the city. The author went to a city school in a motor bus and studied English, law of gravity, Archimedes' principle and many more things which she could not understand at all. Grandmother could no longer accompany him to school nor help him in his studies. She was upset that there was no teaching of God and scriptures at city school. Instead he was given music lesson which, according to her, was not meant for gentlefolk. But she said nothing.

When Khushwant Singh went to a university, he was given a separate room. The common link of their friendship was snapped. Grandmother rarely talked to anyone now. She spent most of her time sitting beside her spinning wheel, reciting prayers,

and feeding the sparrows in the afternoon. When the author left for abroad, Grandmother did not get disturbed. Rather, she saw him off at the railway station. Seeing her old age, the narrator thought that it was his last meeting with her. But, contrary to his thinking, when he returned after a span of five years, Grandmother was there to receive him. She celebrated the occasion by singing songs of the home coming of warriors on an old dilapidated drum, along with the ladies of the neighborhood.

Next morning, she got ill. Although the doctor said it was a mild fever and would go away soon, she could foresee that her end was near. She did not want to waste time talking to anyone. She lay peacefully in bed praying and telling the beads till her lips stopped moving and the rosary fell from her lifeless fingers. To mourn her death thousands of sparrows flew in and sat scattered around her body. There was no chirruping and when Khushwant Singh's mother threw breadcrumbs to the sparrows, they took no notice of the bread. They flew away quietly when the dead body of Grandmother was carried away for last rites.