

## Chapter -1

### The portrait of a lady

#### Long answer:-

**Q1.** Describe the friendship between Khushwant Singh and his grandmother.

**Ans.** Khushwant Singh's grandmother was closely involved in bringing him up when the author lived with her in the village during his early life. She used to wake him up early in the morning. While bathing and dressing him, she sang her prayers. She hoped that the young boy would learn it by heart. She then gave him breakfast-a stale chapatti with butter and sugar. Then they would go together to the temple school. While the author learnt his lessons, the grandmother would read holy books. They returned home together.

A turning point came in their friendship when his parents called them to city. Although they shared a room, she could not help him much. She hated music, science and western education. The common link of their friendship was gradually snapped.

**Q2.** What image of the grandmother emerges from "The Portrait of a Lady"?

**Ans.** Khushwant Singh's grandmother has been portrayed as a very old lady. She was short statured, fat and lightly bent. Her face was wrinkled and she was always dressed in spotless white clothes. She was deeply religious lady. Her lips were always moving in a silent prayer. She was always telling the beads of her rosary. She went to the temple and read the scriptures. The grandmother was a kind lady. She used to feed dogs in the village. In the city she took to feeding the sparrows. She had great affection for her grandson. She looked after him in the village. She could not adjust herself to the western way of life, science and English education. She hated

music and was distressed to know that there was no teaching about God and holy books at Khushwant's new English school. On the whole, she was a nice, kind-hearted and religious lady.

**Q3.** Write a character sketch of the author's grandmother by using following words: affectionate, caring, kind and benevolent, religious, a strong woman.

**Ans.** Khushwant Singh's grandmother was a very old lady. She was short, fat and slightly bent. Her face was wrinkled. She had white hair. She was very affectionate. She was closely involved in bringing up the author. They both lived in the village. She was a caring grandmother. She would wake him early in the morning and get him ready for school. She served him breakfast and took him to school. She waited for him in the temple. She prayed while he studied. She returned with him.

She was kind and benevolent. She used to feed dogs in the village. In the city she took to feeding the sparrows. She was a deeply religious lady. Her lips were always moving in a silent prayer. She was always telling the beads of her rosary. She went to the temple and read the scriptures.

She was a strong woman with strong beliefs. Although she was not formally educated, she was serious about the author's education. She could not adjust herself to the western way of life, Science and English education. She hated music. She was distressed to know that there was no teaching about God and holy books at Khushwant's new English school. On the whole, she was a nice, affectionate, kind hearted and religious lady.

**Q4.** The grandmother herself was not formally educated but was serious about the author's education. How does the text support this?

**Ans.** The grandmother was quite serious about the author's education. She woke him up in the morning and got him ready for school. She washed his wooden slate. She plastered it with yellow chalk. She tied his earthen ink-

pot and reed pen into a bundle. She took him to school. He studied in school. She waited for him in the temple reading scriptures.

In the city, the author went to an English school in a motor bus. When he came back she would ask him what the teacher had taught him. She could not help him with his lessons. She did not believe in the things taught at the English school. She was distressed to learn that her grandson was being taught music. She considered it unfit for gentle folk.

**Q5.** Gradually the author and the grandmother saw less of each other and their friendship was broken. Was the distancing in the friendship deliberate or due to demand of the situation?

**Ans.** During his boyhood, grandmother was a part of his life. He was completely dependent on her. The turning point in their friendship came when they went to the city. Now, he went to school by bus. She no longer accompanied him. As the years rolled by they saw less of each other. For sometime she continued to wake him up and got him ready for the school. When he came back she would ask him what the teacher had taught. She did not believe in the things that were taught at school. She was distressed that there was no teaching about God and the scriptures. She felt offended that music was also being taught. She expressed her disapproval silently.

After this she rarely talked to him. When he went up to university, he was given a room of his own. The common link of friendship was snapped. Now she spent most of her time at the spinning wheel. Thus we find that the distancing in the friendship was due to demand of situation. The graph of life never follows a straight line.