

BVP LKR

Class-11, SUBJECT-ENGLISH

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Summary

The Portrait of a Lady

--- Khushwant Singh

“The Portrait of a Lady” is a life-like pen-portrait of his grandmother by Khushwant Singh. He had intimate relations with her since his childhood. He was left at home in the village with his grandmother by his parents. His parents were living in a town. The writer used to live together with his grandmother and she always took his notice. She used to wake him up in the morning. She got him ready for school. In short she did everything for his comfort during his childhood.

The grandmother was a religious and pious lady. She had devoted herself to her religious deeds. Although she was fat and slightly bent and looked old but she had been looking the same for twenty years. She, in her white clothes, always kept on telling the beads of the rosary. Her lips constantly moved chanting prayers. Thus, she presented a picture of peace and contentment.

Everything was going on smoothly when one day the narrator’s parents sent for him in the city. The parting or separation of the narrator from the grandmother was very emotional but it was the need of the time to go to higher school. She became very upset when she came to know that English,music,science, dance etc.were taught to him in the school. She hated such modern ways of teaching.

To her music had 'lewd associations'. Music was good only for prostitutes and beggars. Thus, the selfless bond of friendship got broken with the narrator's departure to a university.

The grandmother accepted her loneliness quietly. She had created an intimate relationship with sparrows. Hundreds of sparrows arrived to break the silence of the grandmother's loneliness and finally enjoyed their food. Even if they created a hell of noise but she never became upset. Feeding the sparrows was the happiest moment for her.

Finally, the narrator decided to go abroad for higher studies. The grandmother came to the railway station to see him off. She kissed her head and the narrator thought that to be the last sign of physical contact between them.

After a long period of five years, the narrator came back. She was looking the same as she used to be. The next morning she fell ill. She did not want to waste her last time of her life, so she kept continued praying and telling her beads. The last departure of her life was noticed when the rosary fell down from her lifeless fingers. When her corpse was brought in a wooden stretcher, thousands of sparrows sat near her dead body. They were mourning her death in their own ways. Even they were given little crumbs of bread to eat but they didn't even touch them. After her body was carried outside, the sparrows left the place at once.

Thus, the story depicts the grandmother as a pious, religious and kind-hearted lady.