

The Portrait of A Lady

by

Kushwant Singh

Module 1/2

Prepared by

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AECS #3, Tarapur



The Author  
Kushwant Singh  
(2 February 1915 – 20 March 2014)

**Khushwant Singh**

an Indian author,

Lawyer,

Diplomat,

Journalist

Politician.

Author *Train to Pakistan* 1956

Made into film in 1998.

Born in Punjab

Educated in [St. Stephen's College](#), New Delhi

Earned an [L.L.B.](#) from [King's College, London](#),

Joined the [Indian Foreign Service](#) [in 1947](#).

Appointed journalist ??in the [All India Radio](#) in 1951

Dept of Mass Communications [UNESCO](#) Paris 1956.

These last two careers encouraged him to pursue a literary career.

As a writer best known for

1. Trenchant secularism

2. Humour

3. Sarcasm laced with acid wit

4. Abiding love for poetry

Editor Literary News Magazines  
&

Editor of Newspapers 1970-1990.

M.P. in Rajya Sabha 1980-1986

Awarded Padma Bhushan 1974

Awarded Padma Vibhushan 2007

1.The narration is a real life  
account

2. About a long standing  
relationship

3. It is about the beautiful bond  
established and existed between  
a grandson and his grandmother.

## **Grandfather's portrait**

- 1. He had a long beard reaching up to his chest**
- 2. He wore a big turban. His clothes were loose**
- 3. The appearance suggested that he may be above 100 years.**
- 4. He thought the old man having no wife or children but accepted he had plenty of grand children.**



# **Kushwant Singh's Grandmother**

1. Short, healthy and slightly bent with a stoop in her back
2. She hobbled all around the house in a spotless white dress.
3. Her silver locks looked unkempt and untidy.
4. A puckered face with wrinkles criss-crossing all over her face.

- 1.He felt hard to accept that she was once young and pretty and was married
2. Truly she reflected divine beauty
- 3.She was an embodiment of taciturnity with a calm and a serene composure
- 4.Her hand rolled the beads of her rosary revealing her as a very pious lady.
5. Recited Inaudible prayers and chants from scriptures in a sing-song mode

## Four Stages of Relationship KS vs GM

1. Relationship in the village
2. Relationship in the city
3. Relationship when he went to University (Secluded)
4. Relationship when he travelled Abroad (Separated)

## STAGE 1 VILLAGE LIFE

1. Kushwant Singh's parents left him with his Grandmother
2. Parents moved to the city to start a steady life.
3. In the Village Grandmother and grandson were constantly together.
4. They had an inseparable, emotional and stronger bond.
5. He was entirely under her primary care and custody.

# Grandmother's morning Duties

1.woke him up

2. Made him ready,

3.Dressed him up to school.

4. Provided stale chapatis butter & sugar for breakfast(Extra Chapatis for dogs)

5.She handed all essentials in a bundle to  
Kushwant Singh

(wooden slate, chalk, red pen and inkpot)

6.She escorted him to school.

1. Kushwant Singh's village school was attached to a temple
2. The priest taught scriptures, morning prayers and alphabets.
3. Grandmother stayed in the adjoining temple reading scriptures.
4. Return trip. She fed stray dogs with stale chapattis.

## STAGE 2 CITY LIFE TURNING POINT

- 1.They shared the same room,
2. but predominantly he got ready independently
3. He boarded a motor bus to an English Medium school in the city.
4. Their relationship started to fade and diminish
5. Their interaction and companionship reduced considerably

1. Grandmother took to spin yarn from dawn to dusk.
2. She turned to feeding sparrows in the afternoon free time.
3. She continued her regular prayers chants and scripture recitals.
4. She despised and detested subjects taught in the English school
5. Music was a complete abomination and a pet peeve for her



## STAGE III UNIVERSITY LIFE

1. Kushwant Singh went to the university
2. Separation widened with separate rooms
3. Their common link of friendship was completely snapped and broken
4. She accepted her resignation with seclusion.
5. From sunrise to sunset her schedule was spinning, reciting prayers and in the afternoon relaxing time with sparrows

## STAGE IV TRIP ABROAD

1. Kushwant Singh was sent abroad for 5 long years

2. She was upset- both felt bad as their loving relationship literally fell apart.

3. She stood by him in all his efforts and endeavours

4. She went to the station to see him off, but she showed no sense of sadness.

5. Gave a moist peck on his forehead as the author speculated that to be her last.

# CELEBRATING KUSHWANT'S RETURN

1. Kushwant Singh came back after 5 years
2. Grandmother was all alive and kicking
3. She had reached the station to receive him
4. She welcomed him back and started celebrating his homecoming
5. She held him in her arms,
6. She spoke nothing only clasped her prayer beads and recited her prayers

- 1.Reaching home she fed the sparrows
- 2.She gathered the nearby women folk
- 3 She took an old Dhol (Indian drum) and started thumping the sagging drum
- 4.She started singing for hours together about the homecoming of the warriors
- 5.The family members forcefully & literally persuaded her from overstraining.
- 6.Strangely she did not pray that day

1. The very next morning, she fell ill.
2. Doctors diagnosed her with fever said that she would be alright soon,
3. But she insisted and predicted that her end was near.
4. She was on her bed peacefully praying and reciting scriptures .
5. Her rosary beads fell off her hands and that was her end.

1. She was removed from her bed
2. Her still stiff body was kept wrapped in the red shroud was laid on the ground.
3. Few hours were provided for mourning with family before funeral.
4. A crude wooden stretcher was arranged for cremation.

1. Suddenly hundreds of sparrows flew in, dispersed themselves around her body.
2. All silently perched on the ground as a mark of respect for the dead soul.
3. Kushwant Singh's mother offered bread crumbs but the birds took no notice
4. When Grandmother's corpse was taken for cremation / the last rites all the sparrows flew away quietly without making any noise.
5. Evidently, the sparrows had come to mourn and to grieve her death, of the grandmother.

**THANK YOU**