

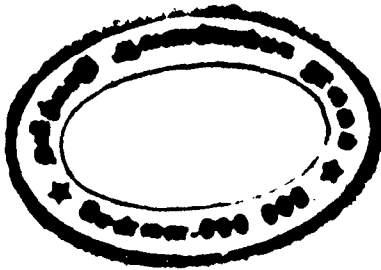
READ BY YOURSELF

SUPPLEMENTARY READERS

GRADE III

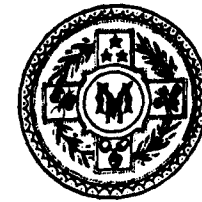
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THE NIGHTINGALE OF INDIA



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BY
SULABHA PANANDIKAR
AND
ARTHUR P. PEREIRA



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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

In most of the States of India, English is now being taught in the non-English medium schools according to a syllabus of graded structures and controlled vocabulary. Some series of textbooks have been prepared on the basis of such syllabuses, but there is still a dearth of suitable supplementary reading books.

To develop interest in reading in English and to cultivate the habit of reading, children need plenty of interesting books which will be easy enough for them to read by themselves without having to consult a teacher or a dictionary constantly. To make this possible the books must be in simple English and within the range of the syllabus. Some books of this type, containing stories and folk-tales, are available as Supplementary Readers, but children of the age-group 9-16, who will be studying English in school, also need books which will help them to explore the world around them about which they have abundant curiosity.

The books in the present series aim at introducing to children the world of things, animals and people, with all its thrills and adventure. They are based on children's natural interests and are written in an informal and lively manner. They cover the fields of nature study, biography and adventure, the themes ranging from the lowly ant or the fly to great men famous all over the world. It is felt that material of this type presented in a readable form will help in developing in children the habit of reading for information, a habit which will be of great use to them throughout life.

The series is intended for pupils following a six or seven years course in English, with a syllabus of graded structures. It is divided into three grades to correspond to three well-marked stages in the study of English; the first covering the simpler basic structures, the second proceeding to the more complex basic structures and the third leading on to English in general use. As far as possible the books in each grade are kept within the scope of the syllabus for the corresponding stage. When it is found necessary to introduce words or structures not included in the syllabus, they are indicated separately.

These books can be used either as Supplementary Readers or as library books. It will be desirable if the teacher introduces each book to the pupils, and then leaves them to read it by themselves. The themes are vitally related to their interests and environment and their presentation in simple English, along with aids such as introductory headings for paragraphs and a quiz at the end, will enable the young readers to get along on their own and enjoy what they read.

THE NIGHTINGALE OF INDIA

The classroom was very quiet. All the girls were busy doing algebra sums. Only one little girl was *day-dreaming*. She was eleven years old. She was clever, and always came high in class. But today, something was wrong. She was annoyed because she was getting all her algebra sums wrong. So she kept on dreaming. Suddenly she began to write in her notebook. Beautiful thoughts came into her mind, and she wrote them all down. When she finished writing, she found that she had written a poem.



She was very fond of poetry; but she had never written a poem of her own before. She was quite excited. This little girl was one day to become world famous as a writer of English poetry. Her name was Sarojini Chattopadhyaya. She belonged to a Bengali family. She was born in Hyderabad, Deccan, on 13th February 1879.

Her Parents

Sarojini's father was Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya. He was not a medical doctor, but a Doctor of Science. He had got the *degree* of D. Sc. (Doctor of Science) from the *University* of Bonn in Germany and from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

He was a very learned man. He knew Bengali, his mother-tongue, and Hindustani. He was a Sanskrit and English *scholar*. He studied Hebrew, the language of the Jews of Palestine; it is the language in which the Holy Bible was written by the Jews in ancient times. He even studied Greek, the language of Greece. Greek, Latin and other ancient languages are called *classical* languages. These languages helped him to read and study books written in ancient times by *philosophers* and other learned and holy men. To be able to read modern books and magazines from Europe, he studied French and German.

In 1877 Hyderabad, Deccan, was ruled by the Nizam. The Nizam admired learning, so he decided to start a College. It was called the *Nizam's College*, and Dr. Aghorenath was its first Principal. The Nizam admired him for his learning.

One day he spoke in public, against the British who were then the rulers of India. The Nizam did not like this and asked him to stop offending the Government. Aghorenath refused to promise this. So the Nizam asked him to go away for some time.

Aghorenath was a *patriot*. He loved his country very dearly. He taught his children to love their country and to fight for India's freedom from British rule. The example of her father helped to make Sarojini a great patriot also.

Sarojini's mother's name was Varada Sundari. She had not only a lovely name, but she also had a sweet voice, and wrote charming poems in Bengali. Her husband

found great joy in listening to Varada singing. People loved to hear her read poetry aloud. She often read her own poems aloud and sometimes sang them.

Three Poets in the Family

Sarojini loved poetry and used to listen to her mother when she *recited* poetry aloud. She would sit for hours listening to her mother's beautiful voice. No wonder Sarojini became a poet too!

They were a large family. Sarojini's brothers and sisters were all clever. The youngest brother, Harindranath, is a well-known poet and writer of dramas. Thus, there were three poets in the Chattopadhyaya family. Their home in Hyderabad was the home of poetry and music.

Shut up in a Room

Sarojini became world famous as a writer of English poetry and as an *orator* in English. But you will be surprised to learn that at school she did not like learning English, and so her examination marks in English were not very high. Because of this her father got angry with her. And when she did not care to improve, he punished her. He shut her up in a room, and kept her there for several hours.

When her father at last opened the door, he expected to find her crying. He thought she would be sorry, and that she would promise to improve by studying English more earnestly. If she was not crying, then she would be angry for being punished; in that case, she would be *stubborn* and refuse to study better to improve her English.

However, little Sarojini was neither crying nor was she angry. She was not in tears and she was not in a temper. She was laughing when her father entered the room. And with a happy smile she told her father, 'I shall be a good girl in future. I shall improve my English, because I want

to make you happy, and because I want to be a learned person like you!

Miles of Smiles

She took her punishment *sportingly*. She knew that her father loved her and had punished her for her own good. She saw how foolish she was in refusing to improve her English. The English people were then the rulers of India; English was spoken all over the world; many learned people in India spoke and wrote English well. If she wanted to be like them, she must improve her English. When she saw what a fool she was, she laughed and laughed; and so her father found her laughing, when he opened the door.

All her life she was well-known everywhere for her gay laughter. When she was famous, a newspaper reporter asked her, 'Which *talent* do you value most?' She replied, 'Of all the gifts God has given me, I prize the gift of laughter as beyond price.'

What a charming thing to say! She knew how much sorrow and hatred there was in the world. Therefore, she wanted to spread joy and happiness wherever she went. Every mile of her journey through life would begin with a smile. In this way she hoped that there would be miles and miles of smiles.

Nobody likes a sad person or one who is dull and gloomy. If you laugh, you will be always popular; and if you can make other people laugh, you will be welcome everywhere by everyone. That was also the secret of Sarojini's popularity.

Passed Matriculation at Twelve

There was no High School for girls in Hyderabad. So at the early age of ten, Sarojini was sent to Madras to

attend a High School. And she passed the Matriculation examination at the age of twelve. It was a very difficult thing to do. The subjects in those days were English, second language, history and geography. She was a girl not yet in her *teens*, and she was away from home for the first time. She must have felt lonely and longed for her parents, brothers and sisters. Yet, she conquered all these difficulties.

Besides, she was not satisfied with only passing the examination; she wanted more. Twelve-year-old Sarojini, sat for the school-final examination with boys and girls much older than she was—many of them sixteen—yet she came very high in the whole University of Madras among thousands of students. She had both courage and determination. If you want to succeed, you must have them too!

Lucky Thirteen

At thirteen she wrote a very long poem of 1300 lines. Poems are difficult to write; yet thirteen-year-old Sarojini, born on 13th February, wrote 13 hundred lines of poetry in six days. Wonderful, isn't it?

The same year she became ill. Her doctor told her to rest and not to read any books. Sarojini was a very mischievous girl. Her doctor had told her not to read; but he had not told her not to write. So to tease her doctor, she took a notebook and began to write. She did not know what she was going to write. But suddenly she got an idea for a drama. She wrote page after page. Soon she found that she could not stop. When the drama was finished, it was 2000 lines long.

She was only thirteen years old at this time. Yet she had already written a long poem, and a complete drama without any help from an older person or teacher. Thirteen was certainly her lucky number!



Did Sarojini go to College?

No! After finishing school she became ill, so ill, that the doctor advised a long rest. But you know our mischievous Sarojini by now. Would she rest? When her doctor told her not to read, what did she do? She obeyed her doctor; and she did not read. But she wrote a drama, 2000-lines long, while in bed. Now, the doctor told her not to go to college. So she stayed at home; but she read one book after another. She read for hours at home.

She did not want to be disobedient. She read so many books, because she loved reading; also because she disliked being idle. In order to get well soon, she took her medicines and *tonics* regularly, even when they were bitter. She found reading good books was a *tonic* to her mind. Reading made her feel well and happy. So she read more and more. Neither her doctor nor her parents tried to stop her. They knew she was happy with books; and if she was happy, she would get well sooner. Therefore, she was allowed to read as many books as she liked.

For four long years she read and read. She read books

on all subjects but especially on history and philosophy. She was full of fun outside; but she was serious inside.

Proposal for Marriage

In 1895 Sarojini was sixteen years old. Something happened now to change her whole life. Her family had many visitors. Many of them were learned men and women. One of the regular visitors was a doctor. His name was Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu. He liked Sarojini, and enjoyed hearing her read poetry aloud. He laughed at her jokes and liked very much to be with her.

One day in 1895 Dr. Naidu came to see Sarojini's father very early in the morning. We can only imagine what happened during this important visit:

'Come in, come in, doctor,' said Aghorenath and asked the doctor to sit down. 'Why have you come so early in the morning?'

'I have a request to make,' said the doctor hesitating.

'Very well! So you have a request to make. Can't you make this request sitting down?' the older man asked, laughing *heartily*. But the doctor was silent. 'Come on, out with it. What is this strange request, doctor? Do you want something from me, or from my wife? Or from my children?'

'It is about Sarojini,' replied the doctor, hesitating to say anything more.

'Ah, ha!' *exclaimed* Aghorenath, 'now we know something more. So it is about my eldest daughter. Has she been teasing you? What trick has she played on you? Stolen your *stethoscope*?' The doctor shook his head, but said nothing.

'All right, then. She has not been up to any mischief. Maybe you want her to sing at your birthday party. Is that what you want?'

'No,' replied the doctor.

'Then tell me what you want,' said Aghorenath, getting impatient. 'Don't you stand there shaking your head. Speak out man, speak out!'

'I wish to marry your eldest daughter,' said the doctor in a low voice.

Now it was the older man who could not speak. He struggled to say something, but no words came out of his mouth. So he sat on a sofa and remained quiet for a while. Then he made signs to Dr. Naidu to sit down beside him.

'Listen to me very carefully, doctor,' he said. 'My Sarojini is a Bengali, though she was born and has lived here in Hyderabad. She is a Brahmin. You are not a Brahmin, and you are from Andhra in South India. You are a good man and a clever doctor; but that is not enough to make Sarojini happy as your wife. I can never give my consent to your request.'

Dr. Naidu got up and left the house. He was very sad.

Sarojini Sent to England

Sarojini's father and mother must have prayed much that night. They must have asked God to guide them to do the right thing. They loved their children very much, and Sarojini in a special way, for she was the eldest.

Soon they thought of a nice way out of the difficulty. If Sarojini went to England to study, she would be very busy with her studies. She would have no time to think of other things. She would soon forget that nice young man, Dr. Naidu. They were able to get a scholarship for her.

So at sixteen Sarojini Chattopadhyaya sailed for England, in September 1895.

Became a Poet, Not a Scholar

Sarojini spent three years in England. First she joined King's College in London. But she liked poets better

than *professors*, so she spent more time in the library than in the lecture room. She sometimes avoided the lectures in the college and wandered in the fields among the flowers—the white daisies and the yellow buttercups.

While her college companions spent hours in the playground, she spent all her spare time in the park. While other girls of her age were day-dreaming of boy-friends, Sarojini was dreaming of birds and butterflies. She loved nature; and she never grew tired of sitting by a stream and watching the clouds float like magic carpets in the sky.

She had wonderful day-dreams. She wished she was a flower; then the bees would suck the honey from her mouth. She wished she was a cloud; then she could wander all over the world. She observed everything in Nature and wrote charming poems about birds and flowers.

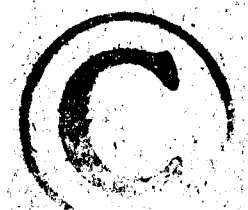
She Met English Poets

Her college companions admired her, and enjoyed reading her poems. One of them invited Sarojini to her



1851

THE
NIGHTINGALE OF INDIA



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home and introduced her to Edmund Gosse, an English poet and writer. Edmund Gosse liked her poems but said to her, 'You write very good English, and you have imagination. You are an Indian; yet you can write beautifully in English. But you must stop writing about English subjects, for they are foreign to your spirit. Write poems about Indian subjects, for these are dear to your heart.'

Sarojini listened to Gosse very carefully. She followed his advice and wrote poems about Indian scenes and Indian customs. She would write about the pipal and the pomegranate, the champa and the lotus, the birds and the bangle sellers in the bazaars:

*Bangle sellers are we who bear
Our shining load to the temple fair.
Who will buy our delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives
For happy daughters and happy wives?*

How It All Started

Edmund Gosse asked Sarojini how she started to write poetry. 'Oh, quite by accident!' she replied. Then she explained. 'It started one day when I was eleven years old. I was in class. I was getting my algebra sums wrong again and again. Suddenly I forgot about algebra and a whole poem came to my mind. I wrote it down. Two years later, after I left school, I wrote a long poem, thirteen hundred lines long, in six days.'

'When you were only thirteen years old?' asked the English poet.

'Yes!' said Sarojini laughing. 'And in addition, I also wrote a 2000-line drama at that age. I was supposed to be ill at that time.'

'Perhaps you were *delirious* with high fever,' the poet replied, laughing aloud with her.

Sarojini was making a name as a poet and a speaker. But she was not doing well in the college examinations. So her father advised her to change from King's College in London to Girton College for Women in Cambridge.

Here she met another famous poet and writer called Arthur Symonds. He liked her poems and admired her gaiety and love of mischief and laughter. Speaking to a friend about Sarojini, he said, 'She can never be unhappy.'

Visits to Switzerland and Italy

It is true, Sarojini was always laughing and teasing people in fun. But she was sad at heart; for she must have often thought of home and, perhaps, of Dr. Naidu too. At Girton College, Sarojini became ill again.

Her father sent her to Switzerland. She was very happy in this country of snow-covered mountains. It was so quiet and peaceful here. She met many other sick people there. They also had come for peace and quiet rest.

From there, she went to Italy. She was even happier here. Italy is a land of bright sunshine and blue skies. The people of Italy are always laughing and singing. Sarojini liked the people of Italy very much. She visited the huge churches there; also the Vatican City where the Pope lives. When people go to Europe, they always visit the Vatican City. They want to get the Pope's blessing and to see the Vatican Museum. Here there are hundreds of beautiful paintings and statues. St. Peter's Church in Rome is the biggest church in the world. Rome is the centre of Christianity, and His Holiness the Pope is the head of the Catholic Church.

Sarojini was happy for a time. But she still longed for home. So in September 1898, after three years in Europe, she came by ship to Bombay. She was nineteen years old.

Married at Last

While she was in England, her father had received many letters from her and from others. These letters described how Sarojini had become famous as a poet and an *orator* or *public speaker*. Aghorenath was proud of his eldest daughter. He embraced her with joy and pride on her return to Hyderabad.

Soon her father and mother realized that Sarojini had not changed her mind about Dr. Naidu. Before the year 1898 ended, Miss Sarojini Chattopadhyaya had become Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.

Home of Delight

Sarojini was always full of fun and gaiety. No wonder her home was called by everyone 'The Home of Delight'. She married at nineteen years of age. She had four children: two boys—Jayasurya and Ranadhira, and two girls—Padmaja and Lilamani.

Sarojini was a loving mother. She took good care of her children. She did not leave them to the care of ayahs, maids and *governesses*. Of course, she did not give up writing poems, or making speeches in public, or helping the country by *social work*.

She was an *ideal* wife and an *ideal* mother. She looked after the home and taught her children good habits. She taught them especially how to be cheerful and how to cheer others. They learned from her the charm of poetry and the *magic* of song.

When there was a flood in Hyderabad State, many houses were destroyed. Thousands of people lost their homes and their possessions. Mrs. Naidu went from place to place asking people to give money and clothes. Her doctor husband gave free medical help.

Champion of Women

Not only the poor needed her help. Her help was also needed very much by the women of India. She was their *champion*, their friend and their guide.

She collected women together and spoke to them on many subjects: She explained the value of helping the poor; she advised them to take an interest in home nursing and the care of babies and little children; she told them how the country was ruled, and how they could help India to win freedom from British rule; she read her poems aloud and spoke of the advantage of reading books, magazines, and weekly newspapers; she urged them to know more about food and cooking—thus they would have better meals at less cost; she repeated over and over again the need for cleanliness of the body and tidiness in the home; she told them how to keep healthy and how to avoid sickness, and how to look after themselves and their families.

By her public lectures, she guided mothers to look after their children better; and she gave lectures in colleges telling girls how to obey and help their parents. In this way, Indian families became healthier and happier.

Sarojini was the leader of the women of India. She *inspired* them to work for the good of the country, and so started the *Women's Movement* in India. As more Indian women became interested, they formed *Women's Clubs* and *Women's Associations* for various purposes—religious, social and political.

Her Three Books of Poems

Sarojini was a mother, a social worker, an orator and a politician; but more than all these, she was a great poet.

In 1905, seven years after her stay in England, her first book of poems was printed, entitled *The Golden Threshold*,

followed by *The Bird of Time* in 1912, and during the First World War by *The Broken Wing*.

Her first book of poems was printed at the suggestion of Arthur Symons, the English poet and writer. The book was *dedicated* to Edmund Gosse. This great English poet had encouraged Sarojini when she was only sixteen years old. He had advised her to write poems in English but on Indian subjects. Her poems won great praise in Europe.

Her Part in Politics

Sarojini was a follower and great friend and admirer of Gandhiji. Before she met Gandhiji in England in 1914, she had followed the great Indian leader Gokhale. In 1902, this great fighter for India's freedom had said to 23-year-old Sarojini: 'Consecrate your life, your talent, your song, your speech, your thought, your dream to the Motherland!'

She followed this valuable advice, and did very much to help her country. And she did even more, after meeting Gandhiji in London.

How She Met Gandhiji

The First World War started on 4th August 1914. Three days later, Gandhiji arrived in London. He at once started to organize an *Ambulance Unit* to help the wounded. Next day, on 8th August, Sarojini set out to meet this great Indian leader for the first time.

She went to an address in Kensington, London. After much searching, she found the house in a small unknown *locality*. She climbed the *steep* stairs of the old-fashioned building. The door of his room was open. Sarojini burst out laughing as she caught sight of Gandhiji. For this is what she saw: 'A little man, with a shaven head, was seated on the floor, on a black prison blanket. He was eating a *messy* meal of *squashed* tomatoes and olive oil, out

of a wooden prison bowl. Around him were tins containing roasted groundnuts and tasteless biscuits of dried plantain flour.'

No wonder Sarojini laughed, loud and long. She had expected to meet the great man surrounded by a circle of admirers. She was amazed to find him all alone, and amused to see him eating a cheap tasteless meal, made by himself.

She only stopped laughing when Gandhiji looked up and laughed back at her. 'Ah, you must be Mrs. Naidu,' he said. 'Who else would dare to be so *irreverent*?' Then with a welcome bow he added, 'Come in and share my meal.'

'No thanks!' she replied *sniffing* at the horrible mess in his bowl. 'What a mess of a meal this is!' Both of them laughed at her remark; and from that moment, their life-long friendship began.

She realized that freedom for India was more important than fame for herself; so she put aside her work as a poet and spent more time in politics. In this, Gandhiji was her teacher and her inspiration. He directed and guided her political efforts with personal interest. She was a willing and eager pupil of an *enthusiastic guru*. She made rapid progress, because politics was not new to her. Ten years before she met Gandhiji in London, in 1914, Sarojini had been active in politics in India.

A Great Poet becomes a Greater Patriot

In 1905, Sarojini's first book of English poems was published in London. Immediately, she became famous as a poet, both in India and in England. In that year Jawaharlal Nehru was sixteen, and was in England for higher studies. Sarojini was 26, and she was in Calcutta. What was she doing there? Was she reading out her charming poems in public, and winning praise as a writer of

English poetry? No! She was speaking in public, against our foreign rulers, the British Government. She blamed them for not giving Indians the right to rule their own country. She lectured to Indian women, and urged them to do social work and fight for India's freedom. Everywhere, she *pleaded* for Hindu-Muslim unity. She warned the people that national unity was as important as freedom from foreign rule.

As a poet Sarojini loved peace and unity; as a patriot she longed for India's freedom. Today, we live in a free India; but before India got her independence in 1947, there were years and years of hard struggle. Sarojini took an active part in this struggle to free India from British rule. To help the *Annie Besant Home Rule Movement*, she went to England. In London she pleaded before members of the British Parliament. She asked them to give Indian women the right to vote at elections.

At this time there were many Indians in East Africa and South Africa. Hundreds of brave Indian pioneers had improved many *undeveloped* parts of the country. Then they took their families and settled there. Many Indians became rich as merchants and businessmen. After these places were fully developed, the Europeans came there to start business. Some of them were jealous of the progress made by the Indians. So they got the Government to pass laws forcing Indians to leave the towns and go to less developed parts of the country.

Sarojini to the Rescue

Indians in Kenya fought against these laws. But the Government in England helped the British people in East Africa. So the Indians in Kenya asked the people of their mother-country for help. The Indian National Congress sent Sarojini to help them in the year 1924.

Our countrymen in Kenya gave her a grand welcome.

She spoke at the meetings of the Kenya Indian Congress and urged the people to fight for their rights. Sarojini told them not to use guns, because Gandhiji had discovered new weapons more powerful than bullets and bombs: They were the weapons of truth and reason and right.

She stirred the people to action and taught them how to get quick results in the fight for liberty. The Indians were grateful for her help. They were proud that such a famous poet and orator had crossed the wide ocean to come to their rescue. The Indian National Congress too was happy with her success.

Now the Indians, who had settled in South Africa, were also having similar trouble with their Government. When they heard of Sarojini's success in East Africa they asked for her help. Sarojini of course consented most eagerly. Do you know why?

Following Her Leader

Ten years before this, Gandhiji had been the leader of the Indians in South Africa. He had directed the fight for their rights against General Smuts, head of the South African Government. Gandhiji had succeeded in getting many rights for the Indians there.

Sarojini was welcomed with great rejoicing. She was very happy to continue the great work her saintly leader had started. The Indians of South Africa were all trained in the new kind of warfare. Gandhiji had called it *Satyagraha*. No violence was to be used in opposing the Government; and if the Indians were beaten by the police they were to offer only peaceful resistance. This non-violent way, of fighting against an oppressive government, won the admiration of the whole world; and Gandhiji was considered a hero and a saint by all nations.

Sarojini had been well trained by Gandhiji; so she also was able to carry on the fight by non-violent means. She

had become famous as a poet and an orator; now she was loved and admired as a great national leader of India. When she returned to India she was given a very great welcome, and treated with honour.

First Indian Woman President of the Congress

She became so popular in India and so famous abroad, that she was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1925. This was a great honour, and the first time an Indian woman was elected President of the Congress.

True she had become a politician; but she was still a poet. In fact, she was a poet, patriot, politician, all in one. We can see this in the way she ended her speech as President. This was her inspiring message:

'As long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave the Cause of Freedom. Come, my general! Come, my soldiers!! I am only a woman, only a poet. But as a woman, I give you the weapons of faith and courage and the *shield of fortitude*. And as a poet, I fling out the *banner of song*, and sound the *bugle call* to battle. How shall I *kindle* the flame which shall waken you men from slavery?' . . .

Represented India in America

Books are a powerful force in building up the fame and good name of a nation or a country. Sarojini's books of poems had made people in Europe and America love her motherland, India. But for every book which spoke well of India, there were many books which gave India a bad name. One such book was titled *Mother India* and was written by Katherine Mayo. This book did a lot of harm to our country. It only described our poverty and weak points in social and religious life. The book showed

only the bad side of India and her people. So readers in Europe and in America were upset by what they read.

Now many writers and leaders in America wanted to know more about India, and especially about her fight for freedom from British rule. They had invited Indians to come and tell them about India and her people. Almost every year the American leaders sent an invitation to Gandhiji to come to America for this purpose. But of course Gandhiji had more important work in India. He was leading the fight for freedom. So in his place, the Indian National Congress chose the next most popular Indian to visit America. Sarojini went to America in 1928, when Katherine Mayo's book was doing so much damage there to our country. She captured the heart of America by her sunny smile, her sincerity and her gift of charming speech.

With Gandhiji in London

A few years later, in 1933, she went with Gandhiji to London for the *Round Table Conference*. The following year she visited South Africa as a representative of the Government of India. But do not imagine that she was a grand person enjoying a grand time.

In her fight for India's freedom Sarojini was often sent to prison by the old British rulers. This was not so much to punish her, as to keep her quiet. They liked her as a person and admired her as an orator and a poet. But her speeches were stirring up too many people and causing trouble to the British Government.

Even in prison Sarojini was always cheerful; and she kept everyone else cheerful. As a poet she was a lover of Nature, and very fond of flowers. So when in prison, she asked permission to have her own garden. The officer of the prison allowed her to do so.

So she made a lovely little garden in front of the Yerawada

Jail in Poona. She planted some chrysanthemum seeds. Day after day she watched the plants as they grew up. She watered them regularly every morning. Soon her efforts were rewarded. The plants grew well and were about to have flowers. Just at that time the prison officer told her that she was free to go home.

Wanted to Stay Longer in Prison

Now a very funny thing happened. Sarojini often made a joke of this in later life. 'I believe I am the first person in India to have been sorry to leave prison,' she used to say laughingly.

Why was she sorry to leave the prison and go back home? Because she was a poet at heart. She looked upon those chrysanthemum plants like her own children. Now they were about to flower. How could she leave them and go away?

So she asked the prison official permission to stay in prison at least for one more week. Have you ever heard of such a strange story before? The officer was puzzled. No prisoner, before this, had ever made such an unusual request. But Sarojini was an unusual person, she was a poet with a poet's love of flowers and beauty and song; she had the poet's love of justice and truth and equality of all human beings and nations; she believed that a person can be free even while in prison, if the heart was full of love and kindness for others and had no envy, or hatred even towards an enemy.

Although the British rulers of India put her in prison, Sarojini did not hate or curse them. She fought against the British rulers, but she loved the British people. She prayed that they may do what was right and soon give freedom to our nation. Then we could be a free nation and rule ourselves.

Birth of Pakistan

While the Indian leaders fought for freedom from British rule they were also fighting among themselves. The chief Muslim leader, Mr. Jinnah, wanted to have a separate State for Muslims, called Pakistan.

Sarojini was very much upset. She knew Mr. Jinnah very well. He too had been a member of the Congress, and he had worked very hard to keep Hindus and Muslims united. But now he wanted to have a country ruled by Muslims, separate from the rest of India. Sarojini tried very hard to stop this division of India.

She went from place to place, persuading and arguing with Muslim leaders. She gave lectures to groups of Muslims and tried to show them the value of a united India. But all in vain.

India got her freedom, but lost her unity; and Sarojini's heart was filled with sadness at seeing the division of India, which she had opposed with all her strength.

Happiness Lies within Us

But there were many years of hardship and sufferings before India got her freedom. Many times Sarojini was sent to prison with other Indian leaders for opposing the British rulers in India. Her health was poor, and prison life made her worse. She was loved not only by the people of India, but also by all other nations of the world including the British people. So the Government took good care of her; and whenever she became seriously ill in prison, they set her free and sent her home.

However, even in prison Sarojini was cheerful and gay. Many people asked her, 'How can you be cheerful behind prison bars and separated from your family and home?' She used to reply, 'Happiness lies within us. We can be happy anywhere and everywhere if we want to be happy.' The last time Sarojini went to prison was in 1942, during

the Second World War, because of the 'Quit India' movement.

'Quit India'

In 1942 Hitler was winning the Second World War with his powerful armies. The Germans had conquered most of the countries of Europe, including France. Hitler was now planning to *invade* England. When the war started in 1939, there were 182,000 soldiers in the Indian army. In 1942 ten times that number, about 2,000,000 Indians, were fighting as volunteers with the British forces. But the Germans were very powerful; and the British needed many more soldiers. The Indian National Congress did not like that India should have been dragged into the war without the consent of the Indian people. The A.I.C.C. asked the British Government to state that their war aims included the treatment of India as a free nation.

This was refused by Mr. Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England and head of the *Conservative Party*. So the All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay and passed the 'Quit India' resolution on 7th August 1942. They demanded that the British should quit (leave) India and let Indians govern themselves.

At once, many leaders were *arrested*. When Gandhiji and Nehru were sent to prison, Sarojini was put in complete charge of the 'Quit India' movement. Then she too was put into prison. This was her last stay in prison. Once again, she became seriously ill and had to be set free. But more Indian leaders were being arrested.

The struggle for freedom continued!

Then on 26th July 1945, the Conservatives were defeated; the *Labour Party* came into power in the British Parliament, with Mr. Clement Attlee as Prime Minister. They agreed to give Indians independence. As a result, India got her freedom on 15th August 1947. Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru become the first Prime Minister of independent India. Sarojini Naidu, known as 'The Nightingale of India', could now sing her *jubilant* song of freedom.

We Greet the Free World

On that great day Sarojini was chosen to greet the world from the Delhi Broadcasting Station. Though it was a political occasion, she spoke like a true poet: 'Oh, world of free nations, on this day of our freedom we greet you! Oh, world of nations not yet free, on the day of our freedom, we pray for your freedom in the future! Ours has been an epic struggle, covering many years and costing many lives.



'Nations of the World, I greet you in the name of India, my Mother! My Mother, whose home has a roof of snow, whose walls are living seas, whose doors are always open to you. Do you seek peace or wisdom? Do you seek shelter or succour (help)? Do you seek love and understanding? Come to us! Come to us in faith, come to us

in hope, come to us believing that all gifts are ours to give!

'Today in the name of India, I give for the whole world the freedom of this India that has never died in the past, that shall be *indestructible* in the future, and shall lead the world to *ultimate* peace!'

All her listeners, in India and the world over, were greatly moved by her eloquent speech. Young and old, rich and poor, *peasant* and prince, men and women, of all castes and religions were stirred by her *oratory*. No more did Indians feel like subjects of a foreign government. They were free! And in their freedom, they were eager to do their part to win freedom for all nations, and peace for the whole world!

Crowned with Glory

Sarojini had served her country well. In the new India, she was appointed Governor of Uttar Pradesh, the first woman governor of a province. But greatness and fame and honour did not change her. She still lived a simple life and charmed everyone by her friendly nature and cheerful spirit. She loved the poor and did much to improve their sad condition. But now she had little time for social work.

The leaders of India had always valued her advice. Now they needed her advice even more. So she had to spend much of her time attending meetings of Indian leaders. Although she was 68 years of age, she was still young at heart, and full of mischief and fun. Her *lively* humour and *sparkling wit* brightened every meeting of government officers. Because of her beautiful poetry, she had been called 'The Nightingale of India.' Now, because of her mischievous jokes, a speaker in Colombo called Sarojini 'The Naughty-girl of India.' A great American writer called her 'The *Jester* of the Mahatma's little Court'.

What a happy Court that was! From here Mahatma Gandhi ruled the many millions of India not by the sword but by the soul; not by power, but by persuasion and by prayer. Everything seemed bright and beautiful. Then, without warning, came sudden death and national *mourning*. Gandhiji practised what he preached. So he loved everyone—Hindus and Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsees and Jews. Some people hated him for this. And on the 30th January 1948, only five and a half months after Independence, Gandhiji became a Martyr to love. He died for peace and unity in India.

This made Sarojini very sad, she had lost a great friend and a good Master. She had learned from the Mahatma to preach the Gospel of Love; and for over thirty years she had worked for Hindu-Muslim unity under his guidance. Now her heart was heavy and she was filled with grief. Her poor health became worse. The end was near.

Beginning of the End

On 13th February 1949, two years after India's Independence, Sarojini would celebrate her 70th birthday. She was now a famous poet, a great orator, and the most popular of the governors of Free India. But more than these, she was a born fighter. She had fought for equal rights for women in social and political life; and she had spent more than fifty years in the fight for India's freedom. Now that both these aims had been won, God was soon to call her to her reward in heaven.

Three days before this 70th birthday, she felt unwell. But as she had much work to do, she did not go to bed. On 11th February, she went by train to Delhi. But though she got worse, she completed all her government visits and work. Then she returned to her capital city, Lucknow.

At Raj Bhavan, as the house of the governor is called,

she was treated by the best doctors. But she got still worse. On 28th February she was in great pain. At eleven o'clock on the night of March the 2nd, she fell into a deep sleep. She woke at 3 o'clock next morning. She looked around and smiled. Then she closed her eyes. Her soul like a winged bird, flew joyously to her home in heaven. How the angels must have rejoiced to welcome her there—this poet, this patriot, this woman dedicated to truth, justice and freedom; this lover of laughter, this good wife and loving mother, this noble woman of a noble land—Mother India!

Lessons We Can Learn

That day, 3rd February 1949, saw the end of Sarojini's life; but it was not the end of her influence. What a wonderful woman she was! A charming person, a famous poet, a powerful orator and a courageous patriot. We can all learn many important lessons from her life.

As you know, she was born at Hyderabad (Deccan) in a Brahmin family, originally from Bengal. But all her life she fought against caste differences and *prejudices*. She even married Dr. Naidu, a non-Brahmin from Andhra in South India, because he was a good man of noble character.

Her One Great Fault

One example of Sarojini's early life, you must not follow. You remember how she became very ill after passing the Matriculation Examination in Madras at the age of twelve. She was back in Hyderabad then. Her doctor knew that she was very weak. So he wanted her not to study or read too much. But thirteen-year-old Sarojini was full of mischief. She wanted to tease the doctor. He told her not to read; but he had not told her not to write.

So she wrote a drama, 2000 lines along. This great effort made her worse. Later, she wrote a novel. By doing all this she spoilt her health; this foolishness *affected* her whole life, for she never kept good health again. You know how as a student she got sick in England, and had to visit Switzerland and Italy; also, how she often got seriously sick as a political prisoner.

A Life Full of Laughter

She suffered much pain because of her bad health. Yet she was never sad but always laughing and joking. Even in prison she was cheerful and gay. She was a true poet and she believed that

*Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage.*

She loved nature. You know how she started a flower garden in front of her prison window. She could turn a prison into a fairy palace. Yet when she became the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, she was not very happy. She lived in a palace; but she felt like a bird in a golden cage. Sarojini believed that happiness lies within us. From her wonderful example we can learn that happiness does not come from grand homes, or beautiful clothes, from rich parents or costly presents—only from the way we live and feel for others.

Quick to Learn from Others

Even at a young age Sarojini was very fond of reading books of history, poetry and philosophy. It later helped to make her famous as a writer of English poetry. She was quick to learn from her parents and the learned visitors to her home.

While in England, Edmund Gosse advised her to write poems only about life in India. She followed his advice at once. Instead of describing English churches, forests

of giant oaks, and robin-redbreast, Sarojini wrote poems on Indian scenes. How beautifully she described them! Listen to this verse:—

*Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,
Whereupon the champa boughs the champa buds are blowing;
To the koel-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten,
The voices of the fairy-folk are calling me, oh listen!*

Don't you feel you are sitting in a forest, watching the lotus lilies? That is the magic of her verse. Sarojini used words, like painters use colours. Because she wrote about Indian scenes she knew and loved, she could describe them so well.

*Fireflies dance in the moonlight,
Peach leaves dance in the wind,
Dreams and delicate fancies
Dance through a poet's mind.*

Too many of us neglect Indian scenes and subjects in our English essays and compositions, and in any poems we may write. There is poetry all around us. Describe what you see in the mango blossoms, the champa buds, the sparrow and the kingfisher, the tinkling bells of the bullock carts and the temple bells at twilight; the crimson gulmohors dancing in the dawn; the dragon-fly, the parrot, the giant banyan tree, the green neem, and the magic fireflies *twinkling* a million messages at midnight.

Grateful Always

Sarojini was clever; yet she was ever ready to learn from others. And she was always grateful for any help or advice given to her. She wrote poems to honour her father and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Edmund Gosse had encouraged her in her efforts as a young poet. So in 1905, she dedicated her first printed book of poems entitled, *The Golden Threshold*

*To Edmund Gosse
Who showed me the way to
The Golden Threshold.*

All of us dream of becoming poets and writers of novels; but to most of us it remains only a golden dream. To Sarojini this dream came true. Edmund Gosse had shown the golden threshold (door) to that golden dream-world of poetry.

It was not easy for her. She had a home and a family to care for. But her confidence in herself gave her courage, and her faith in God gave her hope. She expressed that hope in the dedication of her second book of poems *The Broken Wing*

*To the dream of Today
And the Hope of Tomorrow.*

Champion of Women

Though she was a woman and a Hindu woman, Sarojini did not hide her gifts of poetry and oratory in the home. She stepped out into the world and fought for the rights of women in social and political life.

She was not afraid to go out of India. She visited Africa to help the Indians there; and she went to America to tell the Americans the truth about our country. She was invited by the British Government to the Second Round Table Conference in London to speak for all the women of India.

How many of us dare to imitate her example or care to follow her lead? Girls especially, who read this little book, can learn how much *one* Indian woman can do for women, for India and for the world.

Inspiration to Others

In England and in America, Sarojini won fame as an orator. Even the British rulers of India admired her

oratory. Once she made a speech at the Lucknow Congress. While she was speaking, Sir James Meston, the Governor, and Lady Meston entered the hall. They admired her so much that they invited her to Government House to have a meal with them.

Her *zeal* and sincerity moved her listeners and stirred them to action. Her example won their admiration, and her oratory won their hearts. Hundreds of men and women hearing her speeches, answered the call for *volunteers* in the fight for freedom. She urged lazy people to become volunteers and work for the country; and she inspired volunteers to become leaders.

One of these was Jawaharlal Nehru himself. He tells how her oratory made a wonderful change in him: 'What I'm today,' he writes, 'is partly due to inspiration from Sarojini Devi, when I heard her 33 years ago from the platform of the Indian National Congress. I was greatly *thrilled*, as I was thrilled later whenever I heard her speak.'

Her Best Quality

Of all her wonderful qualities of mind and heart, her gift of joyous laughter was the one she most valued. You remember how she used to say, 'Of all that life has given me, I prize the gift of laughter as beyond price.'

Like many of the English poets and writers, Sarojini suffered much pain through sickness all her life. Yet all her poems show a surprising courage and cheerfulness. Pain, hardship, defeat and even imprisonment—nothing could break her *high spirits*.

Duty before Comfort

When her third book of poems was entitled *The Broken Wing*, the great Indian patriot and leader, G. K. Gokhale, asked her, 'Why should a song-bird like you have a broken wing?' Hardly anyone knew how much she was suffering

because she never complained. Even three days before her death, she kept all her appointments in Delhi, though in great pain. She believed that duty came before comfort, and service before self. What a noble example for us to follow!

She knew that God had given her wonderful talents, very rare among women, especially Indian women in those days. So she started taking more care of her health. She was determined to use her wonderful *talents* for her country for many years. She did not want to die young like Toru Dutt.

Child of the Ganges

Toru Dutt was the first Indian woman to become famous as a writer of English poetry. Her father took her to Europe in 1869; and her book of English poems was printed in 1876, nearly thirty years before Sarojini's first book of poems. She died two years later, at the early age of 21. She wrote charming verse; but she was not a fighter like Sarojini. Even her poetry shows how easily she gave up:

*The rose must go,
And the laurel I know,
And all things below.
Then why should I strain
Ah me! to remain?*

Now compare this with Sarojini's determination to continue to fly, even with a broken wing:

*Behold! I rise to meet the destined Spring
And scale the stars upon my broken wing!*

Sarojini wanted to live; but more than that, she wanted always to be young.

Her Eternal Youth

There are two ways of growing: you can grow up or

you can grow old. Sarojini never grew old. She died seventy years young! When asked what she would like written on her *tombstone* as her *epitaph*, she replied, Write this on my tombstone:

She Loved the Youth of India!

Throughout her life, whenever she visited important cities, she gave talks in the colleges and recited her poems. It was a real joy to hear her! Once in Bombay, she took part in a public debate. One speaker said that Sarojini was getting old and so she could not understand the difficulties of youth. Sarojini, in a *spirited* reply, said with deep feeling: 'Look at my head, and you will find many grey hairs; but tear open my breast, and you will find that my heart is young!' Then another speaker added: 'We can call Sarojini Naidu the Queen of the kingdom of youth, for she is the *symbol of eternal youth!*'

And young she always was. Her poetry was full of the joy of youth and the fresh eagerness of living; her conversation was always cheerful and gay, never solemn even when serious; her view of life was always full of courage and of hope in the future. Where there are children, there is always laughter; and where Sarojini went she spread gaiety and laughter. She had suffered much all her life, so she wanted to make the lives of others happy. She joked to forget her own troubles; and she made others cheerful to make them forget theirs. She knew the value of the saying: 'Smile and the world smiles with you! Weep and you weep alone!'

After her death, many people praised her in public speeches and in writing. But Jawaharlal Nehru's simple tribute is the sincerest and the sweetest of them all:

Sarojini began life as a poet. She did not write much poetry with pen and paper; but her whole life became a poem and a song. Let that be her Epitaph!