



## 8. Reach for the Top

### Part I

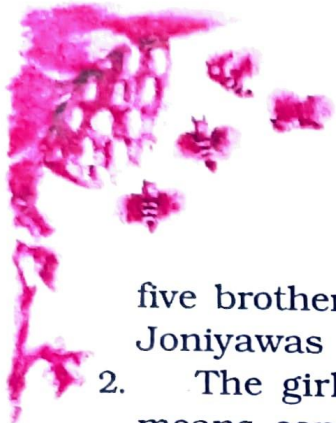
#### Santosh Yadav

##### BEFORE YOU READ

- Think for a while and make a list of three to five persons you idolise, or admire very much for their achievements. Your idols may be from any sphere of life — sports, medicine, media, or art and culture.
- Your teacher will then discuss your choices with you to find out who the top five idols of your class are.

1. The only woman in the world who has scaled Mt Everest twice was born in a society where the birth of a son was regarded as a blessing, and a daughter, though not considered a curse, was not generally welcome. When her mother was expecting Santosh, a travelling 'holy man', giving her his blessing, assumed that she wanted a son. But, to everyone's surprise, the unborn child's grandmother, who was standing close by, told him that they did not want a son. The 'holy man' was also surprised! Nevertheless, he gave the requested blessing ... and as destiny would have it, the blessing seemed to work. Santosh was born the sixth child in a family with five sons, a sister to





five brothers. She was born in the small village of Joniyawas of Rewari District in Haryana.

2. The girl was given the name 'Santosh', which means contentment. But Santosh was not always content with her place in a traditional way of life. She began living life on her own terms from the start. Where other girls wore traditional Indian dresses, Santosh preferred shorts. Looking back, she says now, "From the very beginning I was quite determined that if I chose a correct and a rational path, the others around me had to change, not me."

3. Santosh's parents were affluent landowners who could afford to send their children to the best schools, even to the country's capital, New Delhi, which was quite close by. But, in line with the prevailing custom in the family, Santosh had to make do with the local village school. So, she decided to fight the system in her own quiet way when the right moment arrived. And the right moment came when she turned sixteen. At sixteen, most of the girls in her village used to get married. Santosh was also under pressure from her parents to do the same.

*in line with:* following  
or in accordance  
with; according to

4. A marriage as early as that was the last thing on her mind. She threatened her parents that she would never marry if she did not get a proper education. She left home and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi. When her parents refused to pay for her education, she politely informed them of her plans to earn money by working part time to pay her school fees. Her parents then agreed to pay for her education.

*the last thing:* the  
least important thing

5. Wishing always to study "a bit more" and with her father slowly getting used to her urge for more education, Santosh passed the high school examinations and went to Jaipur. She joined Maharani College and got a room in Kasturba Hostel. Santosh remembers, "Kasturba Hostel faced the



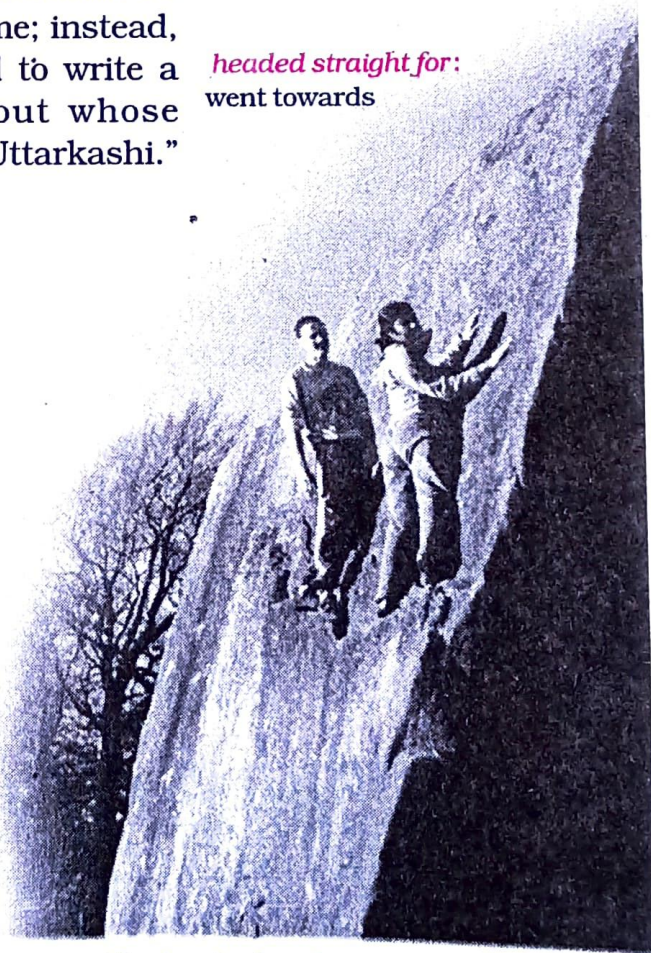
Aravalli Hills. I used to watch villagers from my room, going up the hill and suddenly vanishing after a while. One day I decided to check it out myself. I found nobody except a few mountaineers. I asked if I could join them. To my pleasant surprise, they answered in the affirmative and motivated me to take to climbing."

*check it out:* find out  
(the truth)

6. Then there was no looking back for this determined young girl. She saved money and enrolled in a course at Uttarkashi's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. "My college semester in Jaipur was to end in April but it ended on the nineteenth of May. And I was supposed to be in Uttarkashi on the twenty-first. So, I did not go back home; instead, I headed straight for the training. I had to write a letter of apology to my father without whose permission I had got myself enrolled at Uttarkashi."

*headed straight for:*  
went towards

7. Thereafter, Santosh went on an expedition every year. Her climbing skills matured rapidly. Also, she developed a remarkable resistance to cold and the altitude. Equipped with an iron will, physical endurance and an amazing mental toughness, she proved herself repeatedly. The culmination of her hard work and sincerity came in 1992, just four years after she had shyly asked the Aravalli mountaineers if she could join them. At barely twenty years of age, Santosh Yadav scaled Mt Everest, becoming the youngest woman in the world to achieve the feat. If her climbing skills, physical fitness, and mental strength impressed her seniors, her concern for others and desire to work together with them found her a special place in the hearts of fellow climbers.



*Iron will, physical endurance and mental toughness characterise Santosh Yadav.*



8. During the 1992 Everest mission, Santosh Yadav provided special care to a climber who lay dying at the South Col. She was unfortunately unsuccessful in saving him. However, she managed to save another climber, Mohan Singh, who would have met with the same fate had she not shared her oxygen with him.

9. Within twelve months, Santosh found herself a member of an Indo-Nepalese Women's Expedition that invited her to join them. She then scaled the Everest a second time, thus setting a record as the only woman to have scaled the Everest twice, and securing for herself and India a unique place in the annals of mountaineering. In recognition of her achievements, the Indian government bestowed upon her one of the nation's top honours, the Padmashri.

10. Describing her feelings when she was literally 'on top of the world', Santosh has said, "It took some time for the enormity of the moment to sink in... Then I unfurled the Indian tricolour and held it aloft on the roof of the world. The feeling is indescribable. The Indian flag was flying on top of the world. It was truly a spiritual moment. I felt proud as an Indian."

*top honours*: highest awards

*the enormity of the moment*: a very great moment

*sink in*: be understood

*held it aloft*: held it up high

Also a fervent environmentalist, Santosh collected and brought down 500 kilograms of garbage from the Himalayas.

*fervent*: having strong and sincere feelings

### Thinking about the Text

I. Answer these questions in one or two sentences each. (The paragraph numbers within brackets provide clues to the answers.)

1. Why was the 'holy man' who gave Santosh's mother his blessings surprised? (1)
2. Give an example to show that even as a young girl Santosh was not ready to accept anything unreasonable. (2)
3. Why was Santosh sent to the local school? (3)

4. When did she leave home for Delhi, and why? (4)
5. Why did Santosh's parents agree to pay for her schooling in Delhi? What mental qualities of Santosh are brought into light by this incident? (4)

II. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).

1. How did Santosh begin to climb mountains?
2. What incidents during the Everest expedition show Santosh's concern for her team-mates?
3. What shows her concern for the environment?
4. How does she describe her feelings at the summit of the Everest?
5. Santosh Yadav got into the record books both times she scaled Mt Everest. What were the reasons for this?

III. Complete the following statements.

1. From her room in Kasturba Hostel, Santosh used to \_\_\_\_\_
2. When she finished college, Santosh had to write a letter of apology to her father because \_\_\_\_\_
3. During the Everest expedition, her seniors in the team admired her \_\_\_\_\_ while \_\_\_\_\_ endeared her to fellow climbers.

IV. Pick out words from the text that mean the same as the following words or expressions. (Look in the paragraphs indicated.)

1. took to be true without proof (1): \_\_\_\_\_
2. based on reason; sensible; reasonable (2): \_\_\_\_\_
3. the usual way of doing things (3): \_\_\_\_\_
4. a strong desire arising from within (5): \_\_\_\_\_
5. the power to endure, without falling ill (7): \_\_\_\_\_





## Part II

### Maria Sharapova

#### BEFORE YOU READ

- A Russian girl, Maria Sharapova, reached the summit of women's tennis when she was barely eighteen. As you read about her, see if you can draw a comparison between her and Santosh Yadav.

- Match the following.

something disarming at odds with	quickly, almost immediately
glamorous attire in almost no time	more calm, confident and in control than people of her age usually are
poised beyond her years	in contrast to; not agreeing with
packed off	something that makes you feel friendly, taking away your suspiciousness
launched	sent off
heart wrenching	attractive and exciting clothes
	causing strong feelings of sadness
	started

- As you read, look for the answers to these questions.
  - Why was Maria sent to the United States?
  - Why didn't her mother go with her?
  - What are her hobbies? What does she like?
  - What motivates her to keep going?

1. THERE is something disarming about Maria Sharapova, something at odds with her ready smile and glamorous attire. And that something in her lifted her on Monday, 22 August 2005 to the world number one position in women's tennis. All this happened in almost no time. Poised beyond her years, the Siberian born teenager took just four years as a professional to reach the pinnacle.



*Maria Sharapova won the women's singles  
at Wimbledon in 2004*

2. However, the rapid ascent in a fiercely competitive world began nine years before with a level of sacrifice few children would be prepared to endure. Little Maria had not yet celebrated her tenth birthday when she was packed off to train in the United States. That trip to Florida with her father Yuri launched her on the path to success and stardom. But it also required a heart-wrenching two-year separation from her mother Yelena. The latter was compelled to stay back in Siberia because of visa restrictions. The nine-year-old girl had already learnt an important lesson in life — that tennis excellence would only come at a price.
3. “I used to be so lonely,” Maria Sharapova recalls. “I missed my mother terribly. My father was working as much as he could to keep my tennis-training going. So, he couldn’t see me either.
4. “Because I was so young, I used to go to bed at 8 p.m. The other tennis pupils would come in at



- 11 p.m. and wake me up and order me to tidy up the room and clean it.
5. "Instead of letting that depress me, I became more quietly determined and mentally tough. I learnt how to take care of myself. I never thought of quitting because I knew what I wanted. When you come from nothing and you have nothing, then it makes you very hungry and determined ... I would have put up with much more humiliation and insults than that to steadfastly pursue my dream."
  6. That toughness runs through Maria even today. It was the key to her bagging the women's singles crown at Wimbledon in 2004 and to her meteoric rise to the world number one spot the following year.
  7. While her journey from the frozen plains of Siberia to the summit of women's tennis has touched the hearts of tennis fans, for the youngster herself there appears to be no room for sentiment. The straight looks and the answers she gives when asked about her ambition make it amply clear that she considers the sacrifices were worth it. "I am very, very competitive. I work hard at what I do. It's my job." This is her mantra for success.
  8. Though Maria Sharapova speaks with a pronounced American accent, she proudly parades her Russian nationality. Clearing all doubts, she says, "I'm Russian. It's true that the U.S. is a big part of my life. But I have Russian citizenship. My blood is totally Russian. I will play the Olympics for Russia if they want me."
  9. Like any number of teenaged sensations, Maria Sharapova lists fashion, singing and dancing as her hobbies. She loves reading the novels of Arthur Conan Doyle. Her fondness for sophisticated evening gowns appears at odds with her love of pancakes with chocolate spread and fizzy orange drinks.
  10. Maria Sharapova cannot be pigeon-holed or categorised. Her talent, unwavering desire to succeed and readiness to sacrifice have lifted her to the top of the world. Few would grudge her the



riches she is now reaping. This is what she has to say about her monetary gains from tennis: "Of course, money is a motivation. Tennis is a business and a sport, but the most important thing is to become number one in the world. That's the dream that kept me going."

### \* Thinking about the Text

Working in small groups of 4–5 students, go back over the two passages on Santosh Yadav and Maria Sharapova and complete the table given below with relevant phrases or sentences.

Points of Comparison/Contrast	Santosh Yadav	Maria Sharapova
1. Their humble beginning		
2. Their parents' approach		
3. Their will power and strong desire to succeed		
4. Evidence of their mental toughness		
5. Their patriotism		

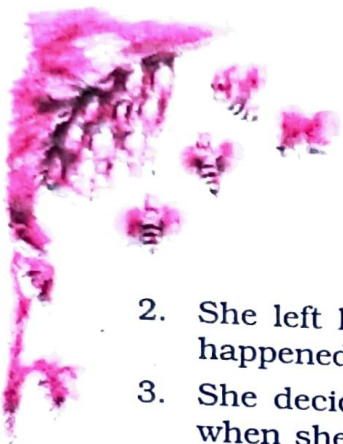
### \* Thinking about Language

Look at the following sentences. They each have two clauses, or two parts each with their own subject and verb or verb phrase. Often, one part (italicised) tells us when or why something happened.

- I reached the market *when most of the shops had closed*. (Tells us *when I reached*.)
- *When Rahul Dravid walked back towards the pavilion*, everyone stood up. (Tells us *when everyone stood up*.)
- The telephone rang *and Ganga picked it up*. (Tells us *what happened next*.)
- Gunjan has been with us *ever since the school began*. (Tells us *for how long he has been with us*.)

I. Identify the two parts in the sentences below by underlining the part that gives us the information in brackets, as shown above.

1. Where other girls wore traditional Indian dresses, Santosh preferred shorts. (Contrasts her dress with that of others)

- 
2. She left home and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi. (Tells us what happened after the first action.)
  3. She decided to fight the system when the right moment arrived. (Tells us when she was going to fight the system.)
  4. Little Maria had not yet celebrated her tenth birthday when she was packed off to train in the United States. (Tells us when Maria was sent to the U.S.)

II. Now rewrite the pairs of sentences given below as one sentence.

1. Grandfather told me about the old days. All books were printed on paper then.
2. What do you do after you finish the book? Perhaps you just throw it away.
3. He gave the little girl an apple. He took the computer apart.
4. You have nothing. That makes you very determined.
5. I never thought of quitting. I knew what I wanted.

### Dictation

Read the passage once. Then close your books. Your teacher will dictate the story to you. Write it down with the correct punctuation and paragraphing.

#### **The Raincoat**

After four years of drought in a small town in the Northeast, the Vicar gathered everyone together for a pilgrimage to the mountain, where they would pray together and ask for the rain to return.

The priest noticed a boy in the group wearing a raincoat.

"Have you gone mad?" he asked. "It hasn't rained in this region for five years, the heat will kill you climbing the mountain."

"I have a cold, father. If we are going to ask God for rain, can you imagine the way back from the mountain? It's going to be such a downpour that I need to be prepared."

At that moment a great crash was heard in the sky and the first drops began to fall. A boy's faith was enough to bring about a miracle that not even those most prepared truly believed in.

(translated by JAMES MULHOLLAND)

### Speaking

Imagine that you are Santosh Yadav, or Maria Sharapova. You have been invited to speak at an All India Girls' Athletic Meet, as chief guest. Prepare a short speech to motivate the girls to think and dream big and make an effort to fulfil their dreams, not allowing difficulties or defeat to discourage them. The following words and phrases may help you.

- self confident/confidence/sure of yourself
- self assured/assurance/belief in yourself
- morale/boost morale/raise morale
- giving somebody a boost/fillip/lift
- demoralising/unsure of yourself/insecure/lack confidence



\* Writing

Working in pairs, go through the table below that gives you information about the top women tennis players since 1975. Write a short article for your school magazine comparing and contrasting the players in terms of their duration at the top. Mention some qualities that you think may be responsible for their brief or long stay at the top spot.

### Top-Ranked Women Players

I. The roll of honour of women who enjoyed life at the summit since everybody's favourite player, Chris Evert, took her place in 1975.

Name	Ranked on	Weeks as No. 1
Maria Sharapova (Russia)	22 August 2005	1
Lindsay Davenport (U.S.)	October 2004	82
Amelie Mauresmo (France)	13 September 2004	5
Justine Henin-Hardenne (Belgium)	20 October 2003	45
Kim Clijsters (Belgium)	11 August 2003	12
Serena Williams (U.S.)	8 July 2002	57
Venus Williams (U.S.)	25 February 2002	11
Jennifer Capriati (U.S.)	15 October 2001	17
Lindsay Davenport (U.S.)	12 October 1998	82
Martina Hingis (Switzerland)	31 March 1997	209
Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario (Spain)	6 February 1995	12
Monica Seles (U.S.)	11 March 1991	178
Steffi Graf (Germany)	17 August 1987	377
Tracy Austin (U.S.)	7 April 1980	22
Martina Navratilova (U.S.)	10 July 1978	331
Chris Evert (U.S.)	3 November 1975	362

II. Which of these words would you use to describe Santosh Yadav? Find reasons in the text to support your choices, and write a couple of paragraphs describing Santosh's character.

contented determined resourceful polite adventurous considerate  
weak-willed fearful independent pessimistic patient persevering