**Chapter- 8**

**Reach for The Top**

**By– Maria Sharapova**

 ‘Reach for The Top’ topic has been bifurcated in two part. Each part of the topic contains a heroic story of two young girls. The heroine in the first part is a young Mountaineer Santosh Yadav and the heroine of the second part is Maria Sharapova a tennis sensation of the world. Santosh Yadav was born in a small village of Haryana state. She belonged to an agriculturist family. Her family was of the opinion of traditional values and they were adamant to.keep their prevailing customs but she rose to the highest glory by her hard efforts. In the same way, Maria Sharapova rises to the top of the tennis world with her hard efforts. She became the world’s number one tennis sensation and now becomes the most glamorous sensation of the modern world.

**Introduction (2):**

This biographical sketch briefly describes the world-renowned tennis star Maria Sharapova’s rise to the top in the world of tennis. It also tries to unravel the secret behind her phenomenal success – rigorous labour and immense sacrifice on her and her parents’ part.

**THEME**

 The account is biographical in nature and focuses on the grand achievements of the tennis player, Maria Sharapova who earned the title of the world number one in women’s tennis in 2005. The author reveals that one has to pay a price for reaching the top in the form of hard labour, rigorous training, and sacrifice. Sometimes one has to undergo mental torture too on this path to success, but its rewards are always sweet and satisfying.

**TITLE**

The title “Reach for the Top” is very appropriate for this account of Maria Sharapova’s journey as a top-class tennis player. This journey started with early training in her childhood and culminated in her becoming the number one in the world of tennis. The ‘top’ symbolizes the highest point reached by Maria Sharapova. She reached this ‘top’ by the dint of her earnest efforts and diligent work. Thus, the title is apt in that it salutes the courage and strong will-power of this young tennis star who overcame all hardships and obstructions to reach the top.

**MESSAGE**

This account of Maria Sharapova’s success story conveys the message that diligence, hard work and dedication never go unrewarded. Dreams can be realized only if one works earnestly, putting one’s heart and soul in translating them into reality. Nothing can obstruct those who stick to their path with an unstaggering devotion.

**CHARACTERS**

**Maria** **Sharapova**

Maria Sharapova is among the most renowned woman tennis stars of all times who is equally admired for her game and for her attractive looks. Former number  1, Maria Sharapova is an inspiration for everyone, especially the sportswomen.

Right from her childhood, Maria was calmer, more composed, more confident and more tolerant than other children of her age. She had immense will-power and tenacity that gave her the strength to make sacrifices few people can make – separation from her mother, living alone in a hostile hostel, gruelling training schedules and only occasional meetings with her father. She put up patiently with the torment and humiliation inflicted on her by her fellow trainees. Thus, very early in her life, she learned that excellence comes at a price.

 Maria has always been motivated by her spirit of competitiveness and she has always toiled hard to achieve her goals. Her achievements in the world of tennis and her earnings from it are well-earned and most-deserved.

Maria is also a true patriot. Although she has spent many years in the U.S., she takes immense pride in her Russian identity and retains Russian citizenship, although she remains indebted to the country of her adoption for its contribution to her life and career. She wishes to play for Russia in the Olympics if she gets an opportunity.

 Maria is as successful a businesswoman as she is as a sportsperson. She has skillfully handled her endorsements and is a fashionista who has a love for sophisticated evening gowns. She loves pancakes and chocolate spread with fizzy orange drinks.

**Yuri and Yelena Sharapova**

Yuri and Yelena Sharapova are Maria Sharapova’s father and mother respectively. Their contribution to maria ‘s success is immense and cannot be measured in words. They identified their daughter’s potential at a very young age and decided to get her world-class training in the U.S. They knew well that it was going to be expensive and difficult, still they extended their full support to their talented daughter. Yuri worked very hard to pay for Maria’s training and Yelena tolerated the heart-wrenching separation from her dear child for two years. As parents, they displayed unflinching faith in their child’s abilities which gave Maria the boost to keep going ahead and to keep countering the challenges that came her way.

**Summary:**

“Reach for the Top” (Part II) briefly narrates the life and career of Maria Sharapova, one of the world’s best-known tennis stars.

 Maria’s father brought her to the U.S. to be trained in tennis when she was barely nine. Her mother Yelena could not accompany her due to Visa restrictions. In the U.S. she missed her mother badly but she knew that the sacrifice was an inevitable part of her big aspirations.

 Apart from the pangs of separation from the mother, the child also suffered harassment from her inconsiderate fellow trainees, who were older in age. At the training academy, Maria would go to bed at 8 p.m as she was very young. Her fellow trainees would return at 11 p.m. and to bully her, would wake her up and make her tidy the room. Instead of getting frustrated at this treatment, Maria saw its positive side and drew mental strength from this humiliation. This mental toughness gradually became a trait of her personality that helped her both as a person and as a sportswoman. It proved to be instrumental in helping her to reach the zenith of glory in the world of tennis. She bagged the women’s singles crown at Wimbledon in 2004 and became the number one tennis player in the world.

Hard work, dedication and mental courage paved the way to success for Sharapova. Imbued with patriotic sentiments, she feels proud to be a Russian. Though grateful to the U.S. for bringing out the best in her, she would like to represent her own country Russia at the Olympics.

Although Maria is fond of fashion, singing and dancing, she focuses all her attention on tennis. She considers tennis as both a business and a sport, which has poured riches in her life. However, her main aim is to shine as a tennis player. It is this aspiration that constantly governs her mind and motivates her for ceaseless efforts.

**Value Points**

* Maria Sharapova was born in Siberia, Russia, in 1987. She led a charge of Russian players who came to achieve great success in the women’s game.
* She has brought her own brand of glamour to tennis by designing her own unique tennis outfits.
* At the 2007 US Open, she wore a dress with over 600 crystals sewn into it.
* She got her first tennis racket when she was four from the father of Grand Slam winner Yevgeny Kafelnikov.
* At the age of six, she attended a tennis clinic in Moscow run by Martina Navratilova, who recognized her talent and recommended that she should go to the USA to study at a famous tennis academy in Florida.
* She moved to the USA with her father in 1994. Neither of them could speak English. They had very little money and went to the tennis academy by bicycle every day.
* She turned professional in 2001 and a year later became the youngest girl ever to reach the junior final at Wimbledon.
* She won her first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon when she was 17. She is one of several top players who are known for loud on-court grunting. She has been the world’s highest-paid sportswoman and the women’s number one several times.