

Section III Coromandel fishers/Poetry

Water is the ultimate source of life. It is also the source of food and sustenance. Like several other poets, Sarojini Naidu admired the beauty around her and wrote several poems on nature, love, life and death, patriotism and other similar themes.

Her poems were appreciated for their feather-like quality, their sophisticated style and imagery. In this poem, Naidu talks about a day in the life of a fisherman, while drawing rich images of the sea, of human lives and of nature.



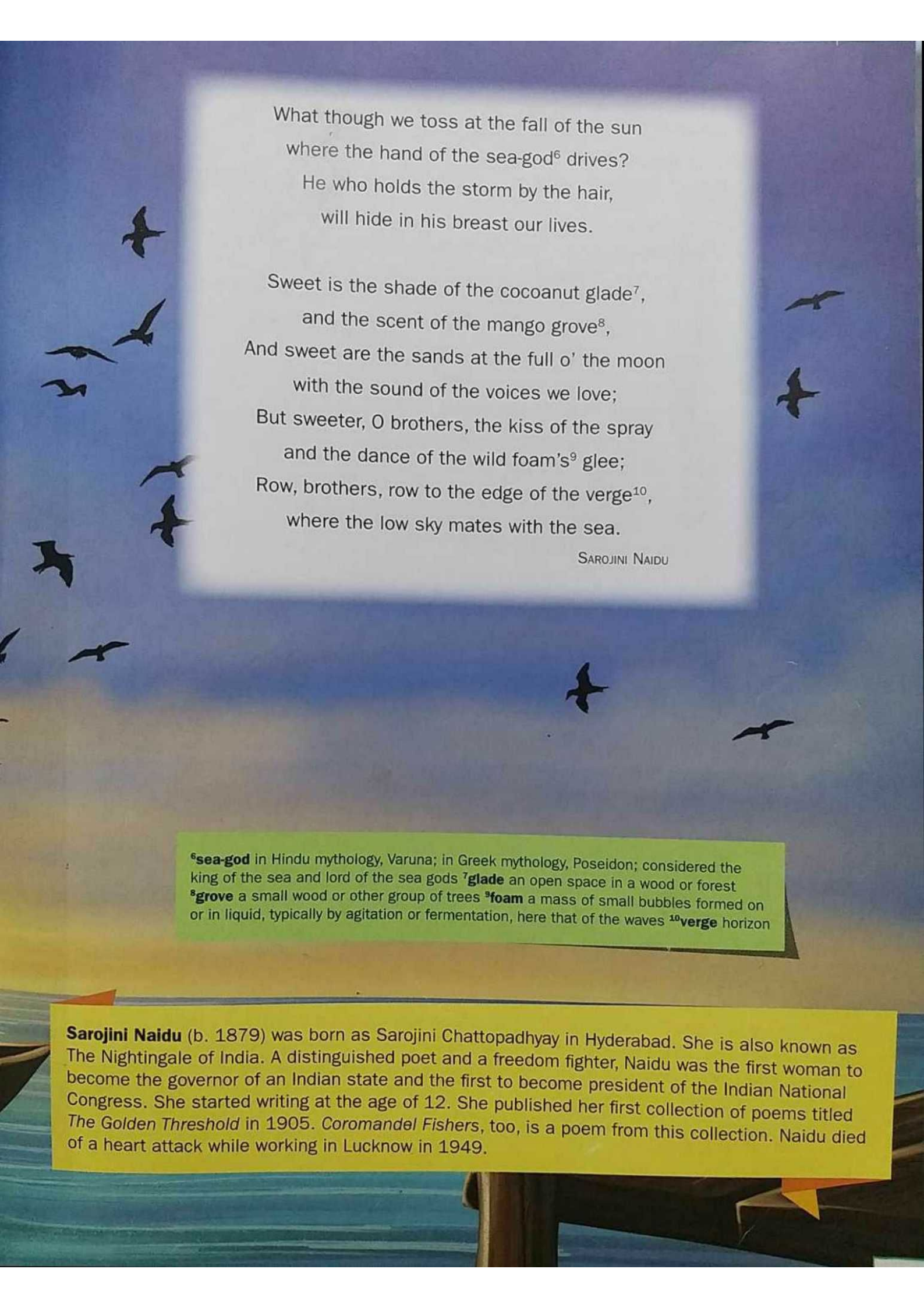
Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening¹ skies
pray to the morning light,

The wind lies asleep in the arms of
the dawn like a child that has cried all night.
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore
and set our catamarans² free,
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide,
for we are the kings of the sea!

No longer delay, let us hasten³ away
in the track of the sea gull's⁴ call,
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother,
the waves are our comrades⁵ all.

¹wakening the state of waking up; in this case, the skies that are waking up or emerging from sleep ²catamarans a yacht or other boat with twin hulls in parallel ³hasten be quick to do something ⁴sea gull a long-winged, web-footed seabird with a shrill call, typically having white feathers ⁵comrades colleagues or fellow members of an organization





What though we toss at the fall of the sun
where the hand of the sea-god⁶ drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair,
will hide in his breast our lives.

Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade⁷,
and the scent of the mango grove⁸,
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon
with the sound of the voices we love;
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray
and the dance of the wild foam's⁹ glee;
Row, brothers, row to the edge of the verge¹⁰,
where the low sky mates with the sea.

SAROJINI NAIDU

⁶**sea-god** in Hindu mythology, Varuna; in Greek mythology, Poseidon; considered the king of the sea and lord of the sea gods ⁷**glade** an open space in a wood or forest
⁸**grove** a small wood or other group of trees ⁹**foam** a mass of small bubbles formed on or in liquid, typically by agitation or fermentation, here that of the waves ¹⁰**verge** horizon

Sarojini Naidu (b. 1879) was born as Sarojini Chattopadhyay in Hyderabad. She is also known as The Nightingale of India. A distinguished poet and a freedom fighter, Naidu was the first woman to become the governor of an Indian state and the first to become president of the Indian National Congress. She started writing at the age of 12. She published her first collection of poems titled *The Golden Threshold* in 1905. *Coromandel Fishers*, too, is a poem from this collection. Naidu died of a heart attack while working in Lucknow in 1949.

COMPREHENSION SKILLS

A. Answer the following questions.

1. *To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of the sea!*
 - a. What does the poet refer to as the leaping wealth of the tide?
 - b. According to the poet, what must be done to capture the leaping wealth of the tide?
 - c. Why does the poet call the men who go to the sea the *kings of the sea*?
2. *No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea gull's call.*
 - a. Why is the poet asking the men who go to the seas to hasten?
 - b. Where will the sea gull lead the men to?
 - c. What do the men use to go to the seas?
3. *And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon
With the sound of the voices we love;*
 - a. Why does the poet call the sands sweet?
 - b. Whose voices do you think the poet is referring to here?
 - c. Why is the poet evoking these images?
4. Which line indicates that the lives of fishermen involve a lot of risks?
5. Why is the sea called the mother in the poem? What are the similarities between a mother and the sea?
6. What does the poet indicate in the last stanza of the poem? Why is it sweeter to go to the sea?
7. Describe a day in the life of a fisherman based on what you read in the poem. Why do you think we should appreciate his efforts? **VB**
8. Do you think that global warming and environmental exploitation have affected the seas as well? What do you think are the effects?

APPRECIATION

Imagery

Sarojini Naidu has made extensive use of **imagery** in her poem *Coromandel Fishers*. The purpose of using imagery in poems is to make the readers have a complete sensory experience—something that appeals to their senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. This kind of an experience helps the readers to connect with the poem at a deeper, personal level.

Look at these lines from the poem:

*Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade,
and the scent of the mango grove,
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon
with the sound of the voices we love;*

In the lines above, the poet evokes the reader's sense of touch, smell, and sound, all in a matter of four lines. The shade provided by the coconut trees appeals to the roughened skin of the fishermen. The sweet-smelling mango trees can enrapture the nasal senses of the readers. The beach sand on a full-moon night is sweet and cool for the feet. The voices of their loved ones will be no less than music to the ears of both the fishermen as well as we the readers.

- A.** Quote words, phrases, lines from the poem which seem to evoke the reader's senses of sight and taste. Explain in detail.
- B.** Look at this poem by a well-known American poet, Langston Hughes.

*What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?*

What kind of a dream do you think the poet is referring to? What kind of a sensory experience do these lines yield to?

- C.** Look at the list below. Write a few lines in verse on any three of the options, making use of imagery.
1. Your mother's voice
 2. Peacock's feathers
 3. Crowd on a train
 4. A silent night
 5. Any past memory
 6. School bell