

TALK COMPETITION ESSAY

Courage and determination. Two things which are needed the most in our lives. People have been hailed in the past for showing feats of courage during hard times. But the history books have gaping holes in them, not mentioning the thousands of other people, who may not be as famous, but have done just as courageous deeds. There have been people who have fought for their country, freedom of speech and rights they had been denied. However, there have been other examples of determination and courage, which haven't been mentioned as much. I am going to write about someone who is not well known, not world-famous, but someone who has done things which will never be forgotten. That person is Margaret Elizabeth Noble.

Margaret Elizabeth Noble, born on 28 October 1867, was an Irish teacher, author and social activist. She was born to a college professor, from whom she learnt about the ideal service to God. She was later married to an Welsh youth but he died soon after their engagement. In November 1895, she met Swami Vivekananda for the first time, who had come from America to visit London and stayed there for three months. On a cold afternoon, Swami Vivekananda was explaining Vedanta philosophy in the drawing room of an aristocratic family in London. Lady Isabel Margesson, a friend of Margaret, invited Ebenezer Cooke, who was part of the teaching staff at Margaret's 'Ruskin School', to this meeting. Margaret went with him, with much curiosity and interest. Margaret did not know this evening would change her life completely. In November 1898, she travelled to India with Swami Vivekananda and opened a school for poor and deprived girls, who lacked education. She also went to the girls' homes to make sure they were not experiencing any financial issues, which was one of her many examples of generosity.

But then there were many problems the country was facing. India was held captive by the British and they began a long fight to freedom. Riots and protests had become common and India was facing a national crisis. Then, to make matters worse, a plague struck Calcutta and millions of people died, the vast majority of the deceased being impoverished and necessitous. During this excruciatingly hard time, Margaret Elizabeth Noble nursed and took care of the penurious and sickly people who had been infected. She was considered a philanthropic, courageous and holy person, whose altruism saw no limits. Furthermore, like it is commonly said, it is during difficult and tricky times that you see the very best in people, and Margaret Elizabeth Noble was a gleaming example.

Within a few days of her arrival in India, on 17 March 1898, Margaret met Sarada Devi. It was St. Patrick's Day, a very holy & special day in Margaret's life, and she recounted it as her "day of days." Until her death in 1911, Elizabeth Noble remained one of the closest associates of Sarada Devi. On 13 November 1898, the Holy Mother Sarada Devi came to open Margaret's newly

founded school. After worshipping God, Sarada Devi consecrated the school and blessed it. Elizabeth Noble was delighted and recorded her feelings later as "I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessings, spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future." The first photograph of Sarada Devi was taken at Margaret's house. She wrote in a letter to her friend Nell Hammond about Sarada Devi after her first few meetings with her, "She really is, under the simplest, most unassuming guise, one of the strongest and greatest of women." As they were so alike, they became very good friends and showed more examples of philanthropy throughout the city of Calcutta.

Another example of her courage portrayed during hard times was during the British Raj, when they had taken over India. She wanted to inspire a sense of nationality amongst the Indians. She was a fearless person, and remained unshaken by the fact that she could be convicted or even killed for treason. She was also determined to get rid of imperialism in the country. These were very daring deeds and could have ended very badly, but she was bold and determined to prove her point. This, to date, is one of her many lionhearted feats, which she is still remembered for.

For this and many other deeds she did for India, Swami Vivekananda gave her a unique name: Sister Nivedita. 'Nivedita' meant 'Dedicated to God', which was one of her strongest beliefs. Through this belief, she committed deeds of utmost courage, valiance and righteousness. She may not have been the strongest person on the planet and she may not have killed a fire-breathing dragon, but what she had done would leave a legacy that would never be erased. When she died on 13th October 1911 (aged 43) at Roy Villa, Darjeeling, Vivekananda wrote on her epitaph: 'Here lies Sister Nivedita, who gave her all to India'. Swami Vivekananda also wrote a poem to Sister Nivedita called- 'A Benediction to Sister Nivedita'. In this poem, Vivekananda condensed all his hopes, aspirations, and good wishes for his disciple, Nivedita:

The mother's heart, the hero's will
The sweetness of the southern breeze,
The sacred charm and strength that dwell
On Aryan altars, flaming, free;
All these be yours and many more
No ancient soul could dream before-
Be thou to India's future son
The mistress, servant, friend in one.

In conclusion, Margaret Elizabeth Noble was one of the most courageous and determined people of all time. You do not need to be the strongest or the biggest to be a courageous person. All you

need to do is to believe in yourself. She did that and is now remembered as one of the most influential people of all time.

Kudos, to Sister Nivedita!



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