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SPM: NOVEL

# Sing to the Dawn

Chapter Summaries

# CHAPTER 1

**Dawan** wakes up before sunrise and goes to the river with her younger brother, **Kwai**. She sings the song she had composed on her own and her brother sways to the rhythm. They wake up very early because they are anxious about the examination results announcement at school later that day which will award the highest scorer a scholarship at a school in the city. They discuss the unfairness of paying tax to the landlord after having to work so hard on the land. Dawan and Kwai are both sure that Kwai will get the scholarship. Kwai wants to bring back new technology, knowledge and fairness to the village. Dawan, however, doesn't believe that she can ever win although she is clever because she is "just a girl".



# CHAPTER 2

At school, the **teacher** leads a discussion about **unfair taxation system** in the village and makes pupils think about why the landlords have the rights to own the lands in the first place. The pupils all agree that they need a system that is fairer. The class becomes livelier as everyone shares possible solutions. Kwai also voices out his opinions **confidently**. Dawan **shyly** asks questions and tries to give her opinions when prompted by the teacher despite getting jeered by **Vichai** and the other boys in her class. Dawan doesn't understand why the teacher wants to hear her opinions because she is sure that Kwai or someone else will get the scholarship. So, when the teacher announces her as the winner, Dawan is shocked speechless.



# CHAPTER 3

The shock gradually turns into fear as Dawan tries to run after Kwai who runs away after looking unfathomably at her after school ends. Dejected, Dawan walks home, dreading how she is to tell her family the news about the scholarship. As expected, **Father** becomes **enraged**, accusing Dawan of robbing Kwai's right. **Mother** is also not very supportive because she believes father will not let Dawan go. **Grandmother**, however, instantly congratulates Dawan and wants to show her support by walking with her to her cousin Noi's house to seek more support for Dawan. Dawan's mother decides to accompany Dawan to Noi's house instead, showing that she actually cares and wants to support her daughter but is possibly fearful of her husband.



# CHAPTER 4

At Noi's house, Dawan admires colourful postcards of cityscapes. **Noi** used to always tell stories about how wonderful the city is. However, instead of being happy, Noi tells them about how "ugly and cruel" the city really is for the poor. Mother tries to reason with Noi, saying that maybe Dawan will have a better experience because she is going there to learn, not to work but Noi only scoffs at the idea. A man called **Mr. Phaspras** arrives to see **Ghan**, Noi's husband. It turns out the couple have been paying a sum of money every month to the man because he arranged for Ghan to be spared from being enlisted into the army. However, even after Noi and Ghan keep dissuading her, Dawan decides to stick to her decision. She wants to go to the city school. She wants to see everything "with her own eyes".



# CHAPTER 5

On the way home from Noi's house, they meet Kwai. Mother walks straight home while Dawan stops and waits for Kwai to catch up. Kwai impatiently asks a lot of questions. Dawan tells him that Noi will not be backing her up.

Kwai eventually tells Dawan that he went back to see the teacher after school and found out that he placed second in the examination. If Dawan is not allowed to go, Kwai will be the one to replace her. Angered by this, Dawan insists that she can bring positive changes back to the village too but Kwai thinks there isn't much she can do because she is "just a girl". Dawan asks Kwai to promise not to tell father about placing second. Kwai however refuses to promise her that.



# CHAPTER 6

At dinner, Mother tries to get Father to discuss about Dawan's scholarship but she is quickly silenced. Kwai asks if Father would let him go if he had won the scholarship instead and Father confirms that he will. Dawan fears that Kwai will tell father about placing second. Fortunately, Kwai keeps quiet and goes out somewhere. Dawan then goes to the river to think alone. She almost gives up when her uncertainties creep back into her mind but decides to fight for her rights. As she thinks about how to persuade her father, she sees a monk bathing in the river under the moonlight and remembers the Head Monk whom father respects greatly. She will go to the temple the next day to pray and ask him to persuade Father on her behalf as the man is known to be a kind person.



# CHAPTER 7

Dawan arrives at the marketplace early in the morning. She wants to buy a lotus bud first before entering the temple so she can at least offer something for merits. She meets **Bao**, Vichai's sister. Bao expresses her support for Dawan and gives her a fresh lotus bud for free, refusing to accept Dawan's money (which is not enough anyway). She tells Dawan about how she is forced to work at the market, never given the chance to go to school because she is a girl. Vichai also never stands up for her like Kwai did in the beginning. Before Dawan goes into the temple, Bao warns her to not place too much hope in the Head Monk because he may not support her as he is also a man. Dawan thanks Bao for supporting her and heads into the temple.



# CHAPTER 8

Dawan joins the morning prayer and then waits for the Head Monk to finish his breakfast before telling him the purpose of her visit. The man knows right away who she is when she tells him of her intent to study in the city school. He tells her about the transience of life, about how everything ends and dies in the end. He tells her it's not worth it to pursue happiness when everything will turn into nothing one day. Angered by his analogies, Dawan insists that she has the right until the Head Monk finally admits he can't support her when he himself doesn't believe that a "***mere schoolgirl***" can do anything for the society. Dawan asks if he would support Kwai if he had won. The Head Monk's response is similar to her father's, which makes Dawan livid and frustrated. She runs away from the temple, knowing she doesn't have his support.



# CHAPTER 9

Coming down from the temple, Dawan leans against a tree to compose herself. Bao tries to comfort her. Dawan tells Bao what transpired in the temple and says she is thinking of giving up. Bao lets Dawan free a caged sparrow at no cost to show her that she should not give up on her only chance. Dawan realises she is just like the caged sparrow; it doesn't immediately fly out even after the cage door is opened. She thanks Bao for making her realise that. Suddenly, Vichai arrives, livid that Bao doesn't take money from customers again. He hits Bao, causing Bao to free all the caged sparrows just to spite him. Dawan comes out of hiding to help but Kwai gets to Bao first, stopping Vichai. Upon seeing Kwai, Bao immediately feels like she has just received "fake help" because she believes Kwai bullies his own sister. Kwai tries to hit Bao in retaliation of her accusations but Dawan stops him. He pushes her to the ground, injuring her leg. He runs away in shock. Dawan is helped by Noi and Bao before she limps home in the rain.



# CHAPTER 10

Instead of going straight home, Dawan heads to the river to find that Kwai is already there. Dawan worries that Kwai will catch a cold under the rain so she asks Kwai to take shelter under the bridge with her. Kwai stubbornly refuses. They talk about what transpired at the marketplace. Kwai starts realising how wrong he is for trying to get in Dawan's way when he himself used to talk about fairness and about helping people. He asks her if she really thinks he's a bully but Dawan says only Kwai has the answer to that. When Dawan leaves the umbrella Bao gave her to Kwai and runs away in the rain, Kwai realises how Dawan is kind enough to forgive and love him even after he had hurt her. He makes up his mind to support Dawan, takes the umbrella and runs after her to go home together.



# CHAPTER 11

On the way home, Dawan and Kwai cross path with their father, who looks livid with anger. Their teacher thinks Father knows all about the exam results and when they met, he asked Father which child he is going to send away for schooling. He thinks Kwai had betrayed his trust. Dawan asks Kwai if he is sure that he won't regret letting Dawan take the chance. Kwai simply looks at his tired and scared-looking sister. He doesn't want to see her sad anymore. Back at home, the three of them have a discussion. The children try to reason with Father that he should let Dawan go. Father doesn't believe that a girl can do anything for the village but turns out that his belief stems from the societal values around them instead of his own. After much shouting and arguing, finally, father hesitantly gives Dawan his permission. Dawan is delighted but sad at the same time when she notices that Kwai silently cries and then tries to hide his tears.



# CHAPTER 12

It's finally the day for Dawan to leave. She goes to the river first and finds Kwai there. He refuses to go home and see her off when the bus comes. Dawan thanks Kwai again and asks him to sing her song on her behalf in the mornings that she is far away from home, promising that she won't sing the song elsewhere. Kwai finally breaks down and asks why Dawan has to go away, tells her how things will never be the same without her. He cries that he is going to miss her and Dawan breaks down in tears because she wishes she can bring everyone with her. For a moment, she doubts if she could really leave everything behind but the sight of lotus buds floating on the surface of the river gives her hope that everything will be alright.



# CHAPTER 13

The villagers gather at Dawan's house to see her off when the bus arrives. She sneaks up into the house to change her clothes and gather her belongings. When grandmother asks if she's ready, Dawan cries and tells her she has not packed everything away, like the house and Kwai. Grandmother tells her that everything will be okay and gives her a jar of water with a lotus bud inside. The lotus will bloom later in the day, gradually, just like Dawan. She too will blossom into a dependable person. Mother is both sad and happy to see her off. Father tells her Kwai won't come home to see her off. Dawan gets onto the bus and her journey begins. When the bus passes by the river, she hears Kwai singing her song before she sees his figure, hugging himself as he sings. She sings along until she can no longer see him. In the glass jar, the lotus starts to bloom.



**THE END & GOOD LUCK!**

