



PANORAMA
ENGLISH READER

Part -1

A Supplementary Reader for class IX



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“I’m going to dance again”

Najmul Hasan

Life is not a smooth journey. Turbulence, ups and downs are order of the day. The winner in the game of life is one who overcomes adversities and is undeterred by any challenge. Just as the crushing of a rose brings out its sweet fragrance, so the difficulties of life release the sweetness within us. Many a time adversities shatter our dream. It is only a person of strong will who despite his weakness and shortcomings rises above the sorrow of life to find more meaning to his life. Here is a story of one such dancer who met with an accident but through sheer dedication, devotion and commitment to her dance she could make it back to the stage again. Even that doctors believed Sonal would never dance again. She had met with a serious accident and had lost her legs. But Sonal Mansingh refused to believe the doctors. She believed in her potentialities and



“I’m going to dance again”

April 20, 1975. Bombay’s Rang Bhawan was full, the audience waiting impatiently. In the green room, Sonal Mansingh anxiously looked into the mirror and saw beads of perspiration shining on her face. Her hands and feet were cold.

She had felt like this once before – on her maiden performance in Bangalore. But that was fourteen years ago. Since then she had danced in India and abroad; she had been praised by everyone.

Today, however, Sonal was making a new start; this was the first time she would dance in public after a car accident in which she had been seriously injured just eight months earlier. Had her struggle to dance again been worth it? She pulled herself together, and with quick jingling

steps was on the stage. The spotlights were on her; she bowed, hands folded, and began her performance.

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In August 1974, Sonal Mansingh felt on top of the world. Trained at first in *Bharat Natyam*, she had mastered cult style and then had turned to *Odissi*. Now she was among the country's best classical dancers.

She was in Germany that month, teaching a course in Indian classical dance. Late on the evening of the 24th, she and her fiancé, George Lechner, were driving at 110 kph down a wet, lonely road. They suddenly saw a deer standing in the middle of the road. Lechner jammed on the brakes. The car slipped sideways, swung around, then turned over and rested on its roof. Lechner, trapped between the seat and the wheel, fainted.

"Sonal, are you all right?" He mumbled as he regained consciousness. There was no answer. He groped about in the darkness. There was no one beside him. As he struggled to free himself, a car pulled up and four men jumped out. They forced open a door of the car and dragged Lechner out. "Where is Sonal?" He asked.

Fetching torches from their car, the men began searching for Sonal. They found her about four meters away, on the road, She was still, eyes closed, as if asleep. Lechner was about to pick her up and say, "Let's get going" but he hesitated. "She doesn't look quite alive," he said to himself. Then sprinkled water on Sonal's face. She shook her head. "I'm cold," she groaned. "Please put a shawl on me". Saying this, she fainted.

At that moment, a police car arrived, and soon an ambulance was called. The ambulance men lifted Sonal carefully on to a stretcher and rushed her to the Municipal Hospital. In the emergency room she was given injections to ease the pain and then hurried to the X-ray room.

The X-rays showed that Sonal had been badly injured and had many broken bones. Her twelfth vertebra, four ribs and a collar-bone were fractured. Luckily her spinal cord had not been damaged in the crash. "She'd better be taken to the University Surgical Clinic at Erlangen," the doctor advised Lechner. "They have better facilities."

"I'm going to dance again"

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At Erlangen the doctors wanted to operate on her at once, and put Sonal into a cast. But, though semi-conscious Sonal shook her head saying "no" to an operation. "No operation, please, unless it is really necessary," Lechner told them. Two days later, Sonal was out of danger and she was put in a cast. This cast covered her from neck to hip and weighed four kilos.



The surgeon drew Lechner aside. "She is in no danger," he said. "But temporarily she has lost the use of her knees, toes, ankles and elbows, it will take months of exercises and hard work on Sonal's part before she can use them."

Twelve days later, the doctors agreed to allow Lechner to take Sonal to Montreal, where he worked. On the evening of their arrival at Montreal, friends visited them and were shocked at Sonal's condition. "The doctors don't know if Sonal will dance again," Lechner told them. "She will need great strength and will power to get well again." One of his friends suggested him to consult Dr. Pierre Gravel, a well-known Montreal doctor.

Gravel agreed to come immediately. But until he had studied the medical report and observed Sonal for several days, he couldn't say anything.

Sonal knew that soon she would be able to walk normally again. But she was growing more fearful that she would never dance again. "What am I alive for?" she thought. "Dancing is my life." For days, she lay on her bed, simply staring at the ceiling. Her mind was sometimes desperate with thoughts of the future. Her appetite had gone, and her nights were often sleepless.

Finally, Dr. Gravel gave his opinion. He examined her, then stood looking at her seriously. Sonal's heart sank. "I am afraid," he began, "that you may be able to dance again." He gave her a broad smile.

Not believing her ears, Sonal made him repeat what he had said, going over the words again and again. "I'm alive again," she thought. "No matter what happens, I'm going to dance again."

After three months, the cast was removed. Now came the period of hard work. For Sonal had to begin exercising. But every time Sonal moved, her muscles, after five months of disuse, hurt badly. Sometimes the pain was so great that she nearly fainted and was on the point of giving up. But years of dancing had given her great mental discipline. She continued her exercises knowing she would dance again.

Gradually, she learnt to move her toes, then her ankles and knees and then her body. Slowly, her health improved. She put on weight, she gained more control over her body. Six months after the accident, she began the basic dance steps that she had first learnt as a child nearly twenty-five years earlier. She lifted one foot and stamped it on the floor. She repeated the action with the other foot. But she couldn't keep it up. Her eyes filled with tears at her own helplessness. The next day, however, she managed it twice.

In March, Gravel agreed to let her return to India. He refused to be paid for his services. "Watching you recover was enough," he said. After a week with her parents in Bombay, Sonal flew to New Delhi to begin serious practice at home. On the first day, with the musicians sitting around her, she couldn't hold back her tears. Neither could anyone else.

Practising thirty minutes a day at first, Sonal gradually increased it to forty-five minutes, an hour, two hours. As the days went by, her body seemed lighter and her dancing slowly gained its former grace. A month later, she was ready.

* * *

At Rang Bhavan, Sonal danced as she had never danced before. She danced for two and half hours. The crowd was delighted. When the

music ended, she stood still, tears streaming down her face. "I have done it, I have done it," she kept repeating to herself. "I have found myself again."

Sonal married George Lechner in August 1975. Today she coaches classes at her dance academy in New Delhi and performs regularly both at home and abroad. "I now realise how precious life is," she says. "Each of my recitals is a prayer and a thanks-giving."

EXERCISES

A. Let's Answer:

1. Why was Sonal Mansingh making a new start at Rang Bhawan? Explain.
2. If you had undergone a similar experience in your life, what would you have done? Would you have resigned yourself to your fate or fought against the odds?
3. Describe how Sonal's car met with an accident?
4. What happened when the car carrying Sonal met with an accident?
5. How was Sonal rushed to the Municipal Hospital? Have you ever extended a helping hand to anyone who is lying unconscious after a serious accident?
6. This accident left Sonal shattered. She met with serious injuries. Enumerate.
7. How did Sonal react after she regained consciousness?
8. 'Where there is a will, there is a way'. How does it apply to Sonal Man Singh.

B. Let's Discuss

- a. Man is the 'Master of His Fate'.
- b. One can always make a beginning.

C. Let's Do

1. Collect photographs of some eminent classical dancers.
2. Do a project work on some important dance forms of Bihar.

SCALING GREAT HEIGHTS

Santosh Yadav is the only woman in the world that has scaled Mt Everest twice. She was born in the small village of Joniyawas of Rewari District in Haryana. 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.'



SCALING GREAT HEIGHTS

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.

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.

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."

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."

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.

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.

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 in 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.

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."

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



(Edited and adapted from 'Beehive' NCERT, New Delhi)

EXERCISES

A. Let's Answer

1. How can Santosh Yadav inspire the girls as well as their parents in India?
2. From where did Santosh take the inspiration of mountaineering?
3. "From the very beginning I was quite determined that if I chose a correct and rational path, the others around me had to change, not me." State some changes made by Santosh Yadav in her family custom.
4. Describe Santosh's team spirit during the expedition to Mt. Everest.
5. Describe briefly Santosh's life from a local village school to Uttar Kashi's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering.

B. Let's Discuss

- a. Early Marriage is a curse.
- b. Nothing can stop you if you have firm determination to do something.

C. Let's Do

1. Collect photographs of some eminent mountaineers.
2. Do a project work on the leading mountaineers in India.

