

# The Story of My Life

*Helen Keller*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Helen Keller overcame the seemingly insurmountable obstacles of deafness and blindness to become an influential lecturer and social activist. Keller has become, in American culture, an icon of perseverance, respected and honored by readers, historians, and activists. Her autobiography *The Story of My Life*, published in the United States in 1903, is still read today for its ability to motivate and reassure readers. In her time, Keller was a celebrity and the publication of her autobiography was met with enthusiasm. The book was generally well received, and Keller later wrote a follow-up called *Midstream, My Later Life* in which she tells what happened in the twenty-five years after the publication of *The Story of My Life*.

Keller began working on *The Story of My Life* while she was a student at Radcliffe College, and it was first published in installments in *Ladies' Home Journal*. Helping her was an editor and Harvard professor named John Albert Macy, who later married Keller's first teacher and lifelong companion, Anne Sullivan. In the book Keller recounts the first twenty-two years of her life, from the events of the illness in her early childhood that left her blind and deaf through her second year at Radcliffe College. Prominent historical figures wander among the pages of *The Story of My Life*—She meets Alexander Graham Bell when she is only six and remains friends with him for years; she visits the acclaimed American poet John Greenleaf Whittier; and she exchanges correspondence with people like Oliver Wendell Holmes and Mrs. Grover Cleveland.

## II. SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

- I. Early Childhood:** Helen Adams Keller was born on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, a little town of Alabama in the United States of America. Her family originated in Switzerland. Her grandfather bought large tracts of land in Alabama and finally settled there. Her father, Arthur H. Keller, had been a captain in the Confederate Army. She was born in a tiny house near the homestead. It was completely covered with vines, climbing roses and honeysuckles. It was the favourite haunt of humming birds and insects. The old fashioned garden of "Ivy green" was the paradise of her childhood. The beginning of her life was very simple. The day she started walking, she was one year old. Those happy days did not last long. Then came the illness which closed her eyes and ears.
- II. Illness that closed Keller's Eyes and Ears:** It was a mysterious disease. They called it acute congestion of the stomach and brain. The doctor thought that she would not live. The fever left her as suddenly and mysteriously as it had come. But the

rejoice was short-lived. No one, not even the doctor knew that she would never see or hear again. Except for some fleeting memories, all seemed very unreal and like a nightmare. Her hands felt every object and observed every motion. She felt the need of some communication with others and began to make crude signs. A shake of head meant “No” and a nod meant “Yes”. A pull meant “come” and a push meant “go”. In those days, Martha Washington, the child of her cook was her constant companion. She understood her signs better than the others. Her desire to express herself grew. Her failure to make herself understood through limited signs upset her. Her parents were deeply grieved and upset. It was very difficult to teach a deaf and blind child. Her mother’s only hope came from Dickens’s *“American Notes”*. She had read his account of Laura Bridgman who had been educated inspite of being a deaf and blind child. This led them to meet Dr. Alexander Graham Bell who advised Keller’s father to contact Mr. Anagnos, Director of the Perkins Institute in Boston. Within a week came a kind letter from Mr. Anagnos. He gave assurance that a teacher had been found for Helen Keller.

- III. Advent of Miss Anne Sullivan:** The arrival of Anne Mansfield Sullivan was the most important day in Keller’s life. It was the third of March, 1886, three months before she was seven years old. She stood on the porch dumb and expectant. She was like a ship in a dense fog at sea. “Light! give me light!” was the wordless cry of her soul. And the light of love shone on her in that very hour. Miss Sullivan held her close in her arms and gave her a doll presented by the blind children at the Perkins Institute. She slowly spelled into her hand the word “*d-o-l-l*”. Helen was at once got interested in her finger play and tried to imitate it. In the days that followed she learned to spell words like “*pin*”, “*hat*”, “*cup*” and a few verbs like “*sit*”, “*stand*” and “*walk*”. Gradually she understood that everything had a name and each name gave birth to a new thought.
- IV. Learning to Read—A Slow and Often a Painful Process:** Children who can hear can acquire language easily without any particular effort. But for a little deaf and blind child it was a very slow and painful process. Once Miss Sullivan touched her forehead and spelled with decided emphasis, “*Think*”. In a flash she knew that the word was the name of the process that was going on in her head. After she learnt to spell a few words, Miss Sullivan gave her slips of cardboard on which printed words in raised letters were written. She could arrange the words in little sentences. For example, “*doll*”, “*is*”, “*on*”, “*bed*”. It was her teacher’s genius and her loving tact which made the first years of her education so beautiful.
- V. Learned to Speak:** It was in the spring of 1890 that Helen Keller learned to speak. The impulse to utter audible sounds had always been very strong in her. She had known for a long time that people about her used a different method of communication from her. In 1890, Mrs. Lamson who had taught a deaf and blind child to speak in Norway came to see her. Then Miss Sullivan took her to Miss Sarah Fuller for advice and assistance. She offered to teach her. Her method was simple. She pressed her hand lightly over her face, and let her feel the position of her tongue and lips when she made a sound. Miss Fuller gave her eleven lessons in all. Helen Keller uttered her first connected sentence, “*It is warm*”. They were broken and stammering syllables but they were parts of human speech.
- VI. Charge of Plagiarism:** In the winter of 1892, Helen Keller wrote a little story called ‘*The Frost King*’ and sent to Mr. Anagnos of the Perkins Institute for the Blind. When the story was finished, she read it to her teacher. At dinner, it was read to the assembled family. Mr. Anagnos was delighted with “*The Frost King*” and published it in one of the reports of Perkins Institute. Later on it was discovered that a story

similar to '*The Frost King*' called '*The Frost Fairies*' by Miss Margaret Canby had appeared even before she was born. The two stories were so much alike in thought and language. It was evident that Miss Canby's story had been read to Helen. Her story was – a plagiarism. Mr. Anagnos suspected that Miss Sullivan and Helen had deliberately stolen the bright idea of another. The matter was brought before a court of investigation. Helen Keller was questioned and cross-questioned.

- VII. Visits to Niagara and the World's Fair:** In March, 1893 they went to Niagara. It was difficult to describe Helen Keller's emotion when she stood on the point which overhangs the American Falls. She felt the air vibrate and the earth tremble. Many people were surprised. They asked how she should be impressed by the wonders and beauties of Niagara. But Helen could fathom the beauty and music of Niagara as she could fathom or define love or religion or goodness.

During the summer of 1893, Miss Sullivan and Helen Keller visited the World's Fair with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. There she could see the marvels of invention, industry and all the activities of human life actually passed under her finger tips. The President of the World's Fair gave her the permission to touch the exhibits.

- VIII. Preparation for Radcliffe College:** Even when Helen was a child, she surprised her friends by declaring that she would go to Harvard. The thought of going to college became an earnest desire. She entered the Cambridge School to prepare for Radcliffe. She had a good start in English and French but suffered serious drawbacks to her progress. It was very difficult to have textbooks embossed in time. Each day Miss Sullivan went to the classes with her and spelled into her hand with infinite patience all that the teachers said. She took her preliminary examinations for Radcliffe in July 1897. She passed in everything and received "honours" in German and English. She began her second year at the Gilman School. She was full of hope and determination to succeed. Her preparation for college went on without interruption. She took her final examinations in June 1899 for Radcliffe College. At last, her struggle for admission to college ended but she entered Radcliffe only in the fall of 1900.

- IX. Reading: A Pleasure for Helen Keller:** Helen had a passion for reading. She depended on books for pleasure and wisdom. She read her first story in 1887 when she was just seven years old. At first she had only a few books in raised print. She read "*Our World*". Sometimes Miss Sullivan read to her spelling into her hand little stories and poems. The fascinating child's story "*Little Lord Fauntleroy*" was his favourite. During the next few years she read "*Greek Heroes*", "*Fables*", "*Bible Stories*", "*Tales from Shakespeare*", "*Robinson Crusoe*" and "*Heidi*". "*The Jungle Book*" and "*Wild Animals*" also attracted her. She preferred Homer to Virgil. In German she liked Goethe's '*Faust*' and in French she admired Moliere and Racine best.

- X. Pleasures and Amusements:** Reading was not her only pleasure. Helen Keller's amusements and pleasures were many and varied. She had love for the country and out-of-door sports. She learned to row and swim when she was just a child. She enjoyed canoeing on moon light nights. Sailing was her favourite amusement. Having leisurely walks in the countryside thrilled her. She had a subconscious memory of the green earth and murmuring waters. Blindness and deafness did not rob her of this gift. She had a soul sense which sees, hears, feels, all in one. Cycling was also one of her favourite pastimes. She loved the company of her dogs. During the rainy days, she amused herself indoors and liked to knit and crochet. She loved to frolic with children. Museums and art stores were also sources of pleasure and inspiration for her. Going to the theatre was a rare pleasure to her.

**XI. Men who Shaped and Influenced Helen Keller's Life:** Helen Keller showed her gratitude to her friends, acquaintances and people who helped in shaping and moulding her life. No doubt, the everlasting influence on her was of her teacher Miss Sullivan. She gave a new meaning, direction and purpose to her life. Bishop Brooks impressed upon her mind two great ideas—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Dr. Edward Hale was one of her very oldest friends. She had known him since she was eight. He had taught love for the country and kindness to the poor. Dr. Graham Bell had the art of making every subject he touched interesting. He impressed Helen Keller by his humour and poetic side. Bell's dominating passion was his love for children. He was never so happy as and when he had a little deaf child in his arms. In New York she met Mr and Mrs. Lorraine Hutton. They introduced Helen to many of their literary friends like Howells and Mark Twain. Mark Twain had his own way of thinking, saying and doing everything. All these friends, acquaintances and great figures made the story of her life and turned her limitations into beautiful privileges and opportunities.

### III. SUMMARY IN HINDI

**I. प्रारम्भिक बचपन-काल :** Helen Adams Keller का जन्म अमेरिका में Alabama के एक छोटे से कस्बे Tusculum में हुआ था। उसके परिवार का उद्गम Switzerland में हुआ था। उसके दादा ने Alabama में काफी जमीन खरीदी और अन्ततः वह वहाँ बस गया। उसका पिता Arthur H. Keller संघाधीन (Confederate) फौज में एक कप्तान था। उसका वासभूमि क्षेत्र के समीप एक छोटे-से घर में पैदा हुआ था। वह लताओं, चढ़े हुए गुलाबों और honey-suckles से पूरा ढका हुआ था। वह भिनभिनाते पक्षियों और कीटों का चहेता स्थान था। पुराने ढंग के 'Ivy Green' का बात उसके बचपन का स्वर्ग था। उसके जीवन की शुरुआत साधारण थी। जिस दिन उसने चलना शुरू किया, वह एक साल की थी। वे खुशी के दिन अधिक नहीं चल पाये। फिर वह बीमारी आयी जिसने उसकी आँखों और कानों को बंद कर दिया।

**II. बीमारी जिसने Keller की आँखों और कानों को बंद कर दिया :** यह एक विचित्र बीमारी थी। वे इसे पेट और दिमाग की तीक्ष्ण ऐंठन कहते थे। डाक्टरों ने सोचा कि वह जिंदा नहीं बचेगी। बुखार जितनी जल्दी से आया था उतनी ही जल्दी से चला भी गया। लेकिन खुशी थोड़ी देर की थी। कोई भी नहीं, डाक्टर भी नहीं जानता था कि वह कभी भी देख या सुन नहीं पायेगी। कुछ फिसलती हुई यादों को छोड़कर, शायद सभी कुछ काफी अवास्तविक सा और एक दुःस्वप्न जैसा लगता था। उसके हाथ हर वस्तु को अनुभव करते और प्रत्येक गति का निरीक्षण करते थे। उसे दूसरों से संप्रेषण करने की आवश्यकता महसूस हुई और उसने अपक्व इशारे करने शुरू कर दिये। सिर झटकाने का अर्थ “नहीं” और सिर हिलाने का अर्थ “हाँ” होता था। खींचने का अर्थ “आना” और धक्के का अर्थ “जाना” होता था। उन दिनों Martha Washington जो कि उसके रसोइये की लड़की थी उसकी पक्की सहेली थी। वह उसके इशारों को दूसरों से अच्छी तरह से समझती थी। उसकी स्वयं को अभिव्यक्त करने की इच्छा बढ़ती गयी। सीमित इशारों के द्वारा अपने को समझा सकने की असफलता उसे परेशान कर देती थी। उसके माता-पिता गहरे रूप से दुखी और परेशान हुए। एक अंधी और बहरी बच्ची को शिक्षित करना बहुत कठिन कार्य था। उसकी माँ की आशा सिर्फ Dickens की “American Nights” पर आधारित थी। उसने उसके द्वारा Laura Bridgman का वर्णन पढ़ा था जो एक बहरी और अंधी होने के बावजूद शिक्षित हुई थी। इससे वे Dr. Alexander Graham Bell से मिले जिसने Keller के पिता को Perkins Institute, जो अंधों की संस्था थी, के निर्देशक Mr. Anagnos से मिलने की सलाह दी। उसने विश्वास दिलाया कि Helen Keller के लिये एक शिक्षक को ढूँढ़ लिया गया था।

**III. Miss Anne Sullivan का आगमन :** Anne Mansfield Sullivan का आगमन Keller के जीवन में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण दिन था। वह 3 मार्च, 1886 था जब वह सात साल से तीन महीने छोटी थी। वह इयोद्धी पर चुपचाप और आशा से भरी खड़ी थी। वह गहरे कोहरे में समुद्र पर एक जहाज के समान थी। “प्रकाश! मुझे प्रकाश दो!” यह उसकी आत्मा की शब्दहीन चीख थी। और उसी घड़ी उस पर प्यार का प्रकाश चमक उठा। Miss Sullivan ने उसे अपनी भुजाओं में समेट लिया और Perkins Institute के अंधे बच्चों द्वारा दी गयी एक गुड़िया भेंट में दी। उसने

धीरे से उसके हाथ में “d-o-l-l” शब्द के हिज्जे लिखे। Helen ने एकदम उसकी अंगुली की गति और चाल में रुचि ली और उसकी नकल करने का प्रयत्न किया। आगे आने वाले दिनों में उसने “pin”, “hat” और “कप” जैसे शब्दों और “sit”, “stand” और “walk” जैसी कुछ एक क्रियाओं के हिज्जे लिखने सीखे। धीरे-धीरे उसे समझ आयी कि हर चीज का एक नाम है और हर नाम एक नये विचार को जन्म देता है।

**IV. पढ़ना सीखना—एक मंद एवं प्रायः कष्टदायी प्रक्रिया :** जो बच्चे सुन सकते हैं वे बिना किसी विशेष प्रयत्न के भाषा को आसानी से सीख सकते हैं। लेकिन एक बहरी और अंधी लड़की के लिये यह एक बहुत सुस्त एवं कष्टदायी प्रक्रिया थी। एक बार Miss Sullivan ने उसके माथे को छुआ और निश्चित दबाव के साथ “सोचो” शब्द के हिज्जे लिखे। उसी क्षण उसे इसका पता चल गया कि यह शब्द उस प्रक्रिया का नाम है जो उसके दिमाग में चल रही थी। जब वह कुछ अक्षरों के हिज्जे लिखना सीख गयी, Miss Sullivan ने उसे गतों की पंक्तियाँ दीं जिन पर उभरे हुए अक्षर लिखे हुए थे। वह उन शब्दों को छोटे वाक्यों में संजो सकती थी। उदाहरणस्वरूप : “गुड़िया”, “है”, “ऊपर”, “बिस्तर”। यह उसकी अध्यापक की प्रतिमा थी जिसने उसकी शिक्षा के प्रारम्भिक वर्षों को इतना खूबसूरत बना दिया था।

**V. बोलना सीखा :** 1890 की वसंत में Helen Keller ने बोलना सीख लिया था। जो शब्द सुने जायें उन्हें उच्चारित करने की भावना उसमें सदा प्रबल रही थी। उसे काफी लम्बे समय से इसका पता था कि उसके चारों ओर के लोगों की अभिव्यक्ति का तरीका भिन्न था। 1890 में Mrs. Lamson जिसने नार्वे में एक अंधी और बहरी लड़की को बोलना सिखाया था उस (Helen) से मिलने आयी। फिर Miss Sullivan उसे Miss Sarah Fuller के पास सलाह और सहायता के लिये ले गयी। उसने उसे पढ़ाने की पेशकश की। उसका तरीका आसान था। उसने हल्के से उसका हाथ अपने चेहरे पर दबाया और उसे अपने होठों और जीभ की स्थिति को बोलते समय अनुभव करने दिया। Miss Fuller ने उसे केवल 11 पाठ पढ़ाये। Helen Keller ने अपना पहला योजित वाक्य बोला, “अब गर्मी है।” वे टूटे और लड़खड़ाते हुए अक्षर थे परन्तु वे एक मानव भाषण का हिस्सा थे।

**VI. साहित्यिक चोरी ( भावहरण ) का दोषार्पण :** 1892 के शीतकाल में Helen Keller ने ‘The Frost King’ नामक एक छोटी कहानी लिखी और उसे Mr. Anagnos के पास भेज दिया जो Perkins Institute for the Blind का निर्देशक था। जब कहानी खत्म हो गयी, उसने अपनी अध्यापिका को इसे पढ़कर सुनाया। रात्रि-भोज पर यह इकट्ठे समूचे परिवार को सुनाया गया। Mr. Anagnos, ‘The Frost King’ से काफी प्रसन्न थे और उसने इसे Perkins Institute for the Blind की एक रिपोर्ट में प्रकाशित किया। बाद में इस भेद का पता चला कि ‘The Frost King’ जैसी ही एक कहानी ‘The Frost Fairies’ जो Miss Margaret Canby द्वारा उसके जन्म से पहले ही प्रकाशित करा दी गयी थी दोनों कहानियाँ भाव और भाषा में बिल्कुल समान थीं। यह स्पष्ट था कि Miss Canby की कहानी Helen को पढ़कर सुनायी गयी थी। उसकी कहानी साहित्यिक चोरी ( भावहरण ) की गयी थी। Anagnos को शक था कि Miss Sullivan और Helen ने जानबूझ कर दूसरे का एक बढ़िया विचार चुरा लिया था। मामले को जांच-पड़ताल के लिए कचहरी में ले जाया गया। Helen Keller को सवाल-जवाब के लिये तलब किया गया।

**VII. Niagara और World’s Fair की यात्राएँ :** March 1893 में वे Niagara गये। उस स्थान पर जो अमेरिकन झरनों के ऊपर झूलता है पर खड़े होकर Helen Keller की भावनाओं का वर्णन करना कठिन था। उसे हवा कम्पित होती और पृथ्वी कांपती अनुभव हुई। बहुत से लोग हैरान थे और उन्होंने पूछा कि वह Niagara के आश्चर्य और सुन्दरता से किस प्रकार प्रभावित हो सकती थी। वह Niagara की सुन्दरता और संगीत को वैसे ही भांप सकती थी जैसे वह प्रेम, धर्म या अच्छाई को अनुभव कर सकती थी।

1893 की गर्मियों में Miss Sullivan और Helen ने Dr. Alexander Graham Bell के संग ‘World’s Fair’ को देखा। वहां वह आविष्कारों के चमत्कार, उद्योग और सभी मानव गतिविधियों को अपनी अंगुलियों की पोरी के नीचे गुजार सकती थी। ‘World’s Fair’ के प्रधान ने उसे प्रदर्शनी की चीजों को छूने की अनुमति प्रदान कर दी थी। Dr. Bell ने अपने आनन्दपूर्ण तरीके से सबसे अधिक रुचि वाली वस्तुओं के बारे में वर्णन किया।

**VIII. Radcliffe College की तैयारी :** जब Helen एक बच्ची थी, उसने अपने मित्रों को यह घोषणा कर हैरान कर दिया कि वे पढ़ने के लिये Harvard जायेगी। कालेज में पढ़ने के लिये जाना उसकी एक सच्ची इच्छा बन गयी थी। उसने Radcliffe की तैयारी हेतु Cambridge स्कूल में दाखिला ले लिया। उसकी फ्रेंच और अंग्रेजी में अच्छी शुरुआत हुई लेकिन उसके विकास में गम्भीर बाधाएँ आ गयीं। पाठ्यपुस्तकों की समय पर नक्कासी करना (उत्कीर्ण, उभार) बहुत कठिन था। हर रोज Miss Sullivan कक्षाओं में उसके साथ जाती और असीम धैर्य के साथ



जो भी कुछ शिक्षक कहते उसे उसके हाथ में लिख देती। उसने Radcliffe के लिये प्रारम्भिक परीक्षा जुलाई 1897 में दी। वह हर विषय में पास हो गयी और उसे जर्मन और अंग्रेजी में विशिष्टता प्राप्त हुई। उसने Gilman School में अपना दूसरा साल आरम्भ किया। वह सफलता प्राप्त करने हेतु आशा और दृढ़ता से भरी हुई थी। बिना किसी बात के उसकी तैयारी चलती रही। उसने Radcliffe के लिये आखिरी परीक्षा जून 1899 में दी। आखिरकार, उसकी कॉलेज में प्रवेश करने की प्रतीक्षा का अंत हुआ लेकिन वह Radcliffe में केवल 1900 की पतझड़ में ही जा पायी।

**IX. Helen Keller के लिये अध्ययन का आनन्द :** Helen को पढ़ने का उन्माद था। वह आनन्द और ज्ञान के लिये पुस्तकों पर निर्भर थी। जब वह सिर्फ सात साल की थी तो उसने 1887 में अपनी पहली कहानी पढ़ी। पहले तो उभरे अक्षरों में बहुत ही कम पुस्तकें थीं। उसने “Our World” पढ़ी। कई बार Miss Sullivan ने छोटी कहानियाँ और कविताएँ उसके हाथों पर हिज्जे लिख कर उन्हें सुनाया। गजब की बच्चों की कहानी “Little Lord Fauntleroy” उसकी मनपसंद पुस्तक थी। अगले कुछ सालों में, उसने ‘Greek Heroes’, ‘Fables’, ‘Bible Stories’, ‘Tales from Shakespeare’, ‘Robinson Crusoe’ और ‘Heidi’ नामक पुस्तकें पढ़ीं। ‘The Jungle Book’ और ‘Wild Animals’ ने भी उसे आकर्षित किया। वह Virgil से अधिक Homer को पसंद करती थी। जर्मन में वह Goethe’s Faust और French में वह Moliere और Racine को सबसे अधिक पसंद करती थी।

**X. आनन्द और मनोरंजन :** पढ़ना ही उसका केवल मात्र आनन्द नहीं था। Helen Keller के आनन्द और मनोरंजन बहुत-से और भिन्न-भिन्न प्रकार के थे। उसे देहाती और घर से बाहर के खेल पसंद थे। अभी वह एक बच्ची ही थी जो उसने तैरना और किस्ती खेना सीख लिया था। वह चाँदनी रात के प्रकाश में Canoeing (नौका विहार) का आनन्द लेती थीं। Sailing (पाल की नौका चलाना) उसका मनपसंद मनोरंजन था। देहात में फुर्सत से सैर करना उसे आनन्द से भर देता था। उसे हरियाली पृथ्वी और खलखल करते पानी-प्रवाहों की अनजाने में ही यादें थी। अन्धेपन और बहरेपन ने इस भेंट में कोई बाधा नहीं पहुंचायी। साईकल चलाना भी उसका मनपसंद समय गुजारने का साधन था। वह अपने कुत्तों के साथ का आनन्द लेती थी। बारिश के दिनों में, वह घर में ही मनोरंजन करती और बुनाई और कशीदाकारी करना पसंद करती। वह बच्चों के साथ उछल-कूद पसंद करती थी। अजायबघर और कला केन्द्र भी उसके आनन्द और प्रेरणा के साधन थे। थियेटर जाना भी उसके लिये एक दुर्लभ आनन्द था।

**XI. वो हस्तियाँ जिन्होंने Helen Keller के जीवन को संवारा और प्रभावित किया :** जिन व्यक्तियों, मित्रों और जानकारों ने उसके जीवन के बनाने और विकसित करने में मदद की उनके प्रति अपनी कृतज्ञता को व्यक्त किया। निःसन्देह उसकी अध्यापिका Miss Sullivan का उस पर अमिट प्रभाव था। उसने उसके जीवन में एक नयी दिशा और उद्देश्य प्रदान किया। Bishop Brooks ने उसके दिमाग को दो महान विचारों से प्रभावित किया—ईश्वर की पैत्रिकता और मनुष्य का भाईचारा। Dr. Edward Hale उसके सबसे पुराने मित्रों में से थे। वह उसे 8 साल की आयु से ही जानती थी। उसने उसे देश-प्रेम और गरीबों के प्रति दया करना सिखाया। Dr. Graham Bell को हर विषय जिसे वह छू लेता था उसे रुचिकर बनाने की कला का पता था। उसने अपने हास्य और कवितामयी चरित्र से Helen को प्रभावित किया। Bell को बच्चों के प्रति प्यार का जुनून था। वह कभी भी उतना खुश नहीं होता था जितना कि एक बहरे बच्चे को अपनी भुजाओं में उठाकर वह होता था। New York में वह Mr. और Mrs. Laurance Hutton से मिली। उन्होंने उसे Howells और Mark Twain जैसे साहित्यिक मित्रों से मिलवाया था। Mark Twain का सोचने, कहने और हर चीज़ करने का अपना अलग ही अंदाज था। इन सभी मित्रों, जानकारों और महान हस्तियों ने उसके जीवन की कहानी को बनाया और उसकी सीमाओं को सुन्दर सौभाग्य और अवसरों में परिवर्तित कर दिया।

## IV. CHAPTERWISE SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

**Chapter I:** Helen Keller finds that the task of writing a biography is a difficult one. She tries to present in a ‘series of sketches’ the episodes that seem to her to be the most ‘interesting and important’.

The family on her father side came from Switzerland and settled in Maryland, U.S.A. Her grandfather bought large tracts of land in Alabama and finally settled there. Her grandmother Keller was the daughter of one of Lafayette’s aids, Alexander Moore. She was also second cousin of General Robert E. Lee. Her father, Arthur H. Keller, was a captain in the Confederate Army. Her mother, Kate Adams, was his second wife and many years

younger. Her father built a small house when he married her mother. It was completely covered with vines, climbing roses and honeysuckles. It was the 'favourite haunt of humming birds and bees'. Even before her teacher came, Helen could feel the hedges and smell of the first violets and lillies. The climbing roses filled the whole air with fragrance. In the morning they felt so soft washed in the dew.

Helen Keller writes that the beginning of her life was simple and much like the life of every other little child. She was the first baby of the family. She was named after her grandmother and called Helen Adams. While still very young, Helen tried to do and imitate what others did. At the age of six months she could utter "How d' ye" and 'Tea'. In those early months she also learnt to pronounce "water." She started walking the day she was a year old. Unfortunately, those happy days didn't last long. 'Then, in the dreary months of February came the illness'. The illness closed her eyes and ears. The doctors called it 'acute congestion of the stomach and brain.' She survived the illness but only never to see or hear again. It all looked very unreal, like a nightmare. But during the first nineteen months of her life she had caught 'glimpses of broad green fields, a luminous sky, trees and flowers. The darkness that followed could not wholly blot out those glimpses.

**Chapter II:** Helen Keller can't recall the first few months after her illness. She only knows that she was always either in the lap of her mother or clung to her dress. But she had her own way of knowing things. Her hands 'felt' every object and 'observed' every motion. But soon she felt the need of communicating with others. She started with making some crude signs. A shake of her head meant "No" and a nod meant "Yes". A pull meant "Come" and a push meant, "Go". Her mother made her understand a great deal. At the age of five she could distinguish her clothes from the rest. She waved hands to the guests. The sounds of doors indicated the arrivals and departures. It is difficult to tell when she first realised that she was different from others. She noticed that others talked while she made only the signs. She stood between two persons who were conversing and touched their lips. She couldn't understand and was vexed. She moved her lips but with no result. This made her very angry. She kicked and screamed until she was exhausted.

In those days, a little coloured girl, Martha, the child of their cook was her constant companion. Martha Washington understood her signs. She seldom had any problem with her. She generally submitted to Helen's 'tyranny'. Helen always had her own way. They spent a great deal of time in the kitchen. They used to feed hens and turkeys. They wandered through the sheds, the stable and the yard where cows and horses were kept. The two girls indulged in childish mischiefs. Once Martha seized the scissors and cut off one of Helen's curls. She would have cut them all off but for her mother's timely interference. Belle, her dog was another companion. She tried hard to teach Belle her sign language, but she was dull and inattentive. Many incidents of those early years are still fixed in her memory, isolated but clear and distinct. They made that 'silent, aimless, dayless life all the more intense'.

Once her old nurse saved Helen from being badly burnt while she was trying to dry her apron before the fire. Helen soon learnt the use of a key. Once she locked her mother up in the pantry for three hours before she could come out. Once her teacher Miss Sullivan had to be taken out through the window. Helen produced the key months after. They moved to a large new house from the little vine-covered house. Helen's father was 'most loving and indulgent'. He was devoted to his home and seldom left it except in the hunting season. He was a great hunter. Next to his family, he loved his dogs and guns. He loved entertaining guests. He raised finest watermelons and strawberries. His 'special pride' was his big garden. He was a wonderful storyteller. In the summer of 1896, Helen heard the news of her father's death. This was her first great sorrow- her first personal experience with death.

For a long time Helen considered her little sister as an 'intruder'. She ceased to be the 'only darling' of her mother. It filled her with jealousy. She loved her little doll Nancy and her cradle. She guarded both doll and cradle with the most jealous care. Once she found her little sister sleeping peacefully in the cradle. She grew angry and overturned the cradle. The baby might have been killed had her mother not caught her as she fell.

**Chapter III:** As Helen Keller starts growing her desire to express herself grows. No doubt she does make signs to express herself but they prove inadequate. Her failure is followed by outburst of passions. She feels tied down by invisible hands. She makes frantic efforts to free herself but fails. But the spirit of resistance is very strong in her. Her inability to express herself leads to breaking down into tears and physical exhaustion.

Helen's parents are 'deeply grieved and perplexed'. It is very difficult to find a teacher for a child who is both deaf and blind. Her mother's only hope was Dickens's *'American Notes'*. When Helen is about six years old, her father decides to take her to an eminent oculist in Baltimore. He has solved many hopeless cases. They are received by Dr. Chisholm very kindly in Baltimore. He advises her father to consult Dr. Alexander Graham Bell of Washington. Her father is dejected but Helen enjoys moving from place to place.

Dr. Bell's tenderness and sympathy impresses the little Helen. He understands her signs and she loves him at once. Dr. Bell advises her father to contact Mr. Anagnos, the Director of the Perkins Institute in Boston. Within a few weeks a letter comes from Mr. Anagnos assuming that a teacher for Helen Keller has been found. It is the summer of 1886 but Miss Sullivan arrives only in the following March. The arrival of Miss Sullivan, her teacher is like the arrival of Moses. Her inner voice seems to say: "Knowledge is love and light and vision."

**Chapter IV:** The arrival of her teacher Miss Sullivan is the most important day in the life of Helen Keller. She is amazed at the contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It is the third of March, 1887, three months before Helen is seven years old. On the afternoon of this eventful day, Helen stands on the porch, 'dumb and expectant'. The afternoon sun falls on her upturned face penetrating the bunch of honeysuckle flowers. She doesn't know what the future holds for her. Helen is like that ship that moves on in a dense fog. She is tense and anxious. "Light! give me light!" is the wordless cry of her soul. She stretches out her hand and someone takes it. Helen is held close in arms by one who has come to reveal all things to her. More than all things else to love her.

Miss Sullivan leads her into her room and gives her a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institute have sent it. The teacher slowly spells into her hand the word "d-o-l-l". Helen is at once interested in the finger play and imitates it. When succeeded in making the letters correctly, she is flushed with pleasure and pride. She goes on moving her fingers in monkey like imitation. Within a few days Helen learns to spell words like 'pin', 'hat' and 'cup'. She also learns a few verbs like 'sit', 'stand' and 'walk'. At last, she understands that everything has a name. One day the teacher puts a big doll in Helen's lap and spells "d-o-l-l". She tries to make her understand that the word "d-o-l-l" applies to both. Similarly Miss Sullivan tries to impress it upon her that "m-u-g" is mug and "w-a-t-e-r" is water. Helen becomes impatient and dashes the doll upon the floor. The cause of her discomfort is removed.

When the teacher asks her to wear her hat, Helen knows she is going out in warm sunshine. She realises that 'a wordless sensation may be called a thought'. It makes her hop and skip with pleasure.

In the well-house, someone is drawing water. Her teacher places Helen's hand under the cool stream and spells "w-a-t-e-r". Suddenly she feels a misty consciousness and



somehow the mystery of language is revealed to her. She realises that everything has a name, and each name gives birth to a new thought. Then she picks up the broken pieces of the doll. And for the first time she feels repentance and sorrow. She learns the words '**mother, father**', sister etc. This makes the world blossom for her.

**Chapter V:** The summer of 1887. Then followed Helen Keller's soul's sudden awakening. She just started exploring with her hands and learnt the name of every object that she touched. The more she learnt the names and uses, the more joyous and confident she became. Miss Sullivan took her by the hand across the fields to the banks of the Tennessee River. Sitting on the warm grass, she had her first lessons in the 'beneficence of nature'. She learnt how the sun and the rain make to grow trees out of the ground. She learnt how birds build their nests and how all creatures find food and shelter. As her knowledge of things grew Helen felt more and more the 'delight of the world', she was in. Miss Sullivan had taught Helen to find beauty in woods, in every blade of grass and in the curves and dimples of her baby sister's hand. But she was soon to learn that nature is not always kind. One day she climbed a wild cherry tree with her teacher's assistance. Miss Sullivan proposed having their luncheon there. She went to the house to fetch it. Suddenly a change passed over the tree. She realised that the sky had turned black. A thunderstorm could be expected at anytime. The immense and unknown fear gripped her. A chill terror crept over her. She longed for her teacher's return. She wanted to get down from the tree. The tree swayed and strained. Then came Miss Sullivan for her rescue. She seized her hand and helped her down. She had learnt a lesson. 'Nature wages open war against children, and under softest touch hides treacherous claws'. After that the mere thought of climbing a tree filled her with terror.

Helen Keller finally overcame her fear of climbing a tree. A mimosa tree was in full bloom. She became aware of a wonderful fragrance in the air. It seemed as if the spirit of spring had passed through the summer-house. She felt her way to the mimosa tree. She had never experienced anything so beautiful in the world before. It seemed to her as if 'a tree of paradise had been transplanted to earth'. She pulled herself up into the tree and kept on climbing higher and higher until she reached the top. She sat there for so long and felt like a fairy on a rosy cloud. After that she spent many happy hours in her 'tree of paradise' 'thinking fair thoughts and dreaming bright dreams'.

**Chapter VI:** Children who can hear acquire language without any particular difficulty or effort. The words that come out from others' lips, they catch on wings. For a deaf child acquiring language becomes a slow and often painful process. But, however slow and painful the process, the result is wonderful. It starts from naming the objects. And then advancing step by step one can comprehend 'the sweep of thought in a line of Shakespeare'. And now Helen Keller had 'the key to all language'.

At first when Helen's teacher introduced a new thing, she asked very few questions. Her ideas were vague and vocabulary inadequate. Gradually her knowledge of things grew and she learnt more and more new words. Her field of enquiry enlarged. Helen remembers when she first asked Miss Sullivan the meaning of the word 'love', she had brought a few early violets to the teacher. The teacher kissed Helen and put her arm gently round her and spelled into her hand, "I love Helen". Again Helen asked, "What is love?" The teacher drew closer. She pointed to her breasts and said, "It is here". She became conscious of the beats of her heart for the first time. The words puzzled her as she couldn't understand anything unless she touched it. She smelt the violets and asked if love meant the sweetness of flowers. The answer was "No". Then Helen pointed towards the warm sun shining on them and asked: "Is this not love?" Again the answer was "No". Helen was greatly puzzled and disappointed as the teacher couldn't show her "love".

One day Helen was putting beads of different sizes—two large and three small ones, and so on. She had made many mistakes. Finally, she noticed a very obvious error in the sequence. Miss Sullivan touched her forehead and spelled with ‘decided emphasis’, “Think”. And in a flash Helen Keller knew that “Think” was the name of the process that was going on in her head. This was Helen’s first perception of an abstract idea. Then suddenly the sun broke forth in all its glory. She asked: “Is this not love?” She replied that love is like the clouds that were in the sky before the sun came out. One can’t touch the clouds but can feel the rain that gladdens the flowers and the thirsty earth. Similarly, one can’t touch love either but can feel ‘the sweetness it pours into everything. The beautiful truth burst upon Helen’s mind. She felt that there were ‘invisible lines stretched’ between her spirit and the spirit of others.

Miss Sullivan continued the process for several years. A deaf child learns not in a month or a year. She learns from constant repetition and imitation. This problem is compounded if the child is deaf as well as blind.

**Chapter VII:** The next major step in Helen’s education was learning how to read. As she spelled a few words, her teacher gave her slips of cardboards. They had printed words with raised letters. She soon learnt that every printed word stood for an object, or a quality. She found slips of paper that represented, for example, “doll”, “is”, “on”, “bed”. Thus she learnt making a sentence out of words. At the same time she succeeded in carrying out the idea of the sentence with the things themselves. The game delighted her. She played it for hours with Miss Sullivan. Then from the printed slip she moved another step, to the printed book. For a long time she had no regular lessons. It looked more like play than work. Everything her teacher taught her, she illustrated it by a beautiful story or a poem. Miss Sullivan had peculiar sympathy with Helen’s pleasures and desires. They read and studied out of doors, preferring the ‘sunlight woods to the house’. All her early lessons had in them “the breath of the woods”. Indeed everything that could hum, or buzz, or sing, or blood had a part in her education. Noisy-throated frogs, crickets and little chickens trilled their ready notes for her. She felt the bursting cotton-balls. She could feel the gentle breeze and the silky rustling of the leaves.

The orchard was another favourite haunt of Helen. The large peaches would reach themselves into her hand. The apples tumbled at her feet. Their favourite walk was to the Keller’s Landing, a lumber wharf on the Tennessee River. There she spent hours building dams of pebbles all for fun. She never liked the study of arithmetics and the science of numbers. Miss Sullivan tried to teach her counting by stringing beads in groups. She studied Zoology and Botany in the same leisurely manner. Similarly, she learnt of fossils and the strange creatures that formed them. When a beautiful shell was given to her, she learned how a tiny mollusk had built the lustrous coil for his dwelling place. She also felt the blooming of a lily. She could also feel the frisking of tadpoles in a glass set. Thus she learned from life itself. When Miss Sullivan came, everything about Helen breathed of love and joy and full of meaning. It was her teacher’s genius, her love and sympathy that made her education so beautiful. She realised that a child’s mind is like a shallow brook. It ripples and dances merrily over the stony course. Miss Sullivan was so near to her that Helen scarcely thought of herself apart from her. Her being was inseparable from her teacher. Helen writes: “All the best of me belongs to her.”

**Chapter VIII:** The first Christmas after Miss Sullivan came to Tuscumbia was very special to Helen. She and Helen prepared surprises for everybody. They kept up the game of guessing. This grew more and more exciting as Christmas approached. On Christmas Eve the Tuscumbia school children invited Helen. In the centre stood a beautiful tree ablaze and shimmering in soft light. She danced around the tree in an ecstasy. She was

highly impatient for the real Christmas gifts. That night she lay awake a long time pretending to be asleep. She was keeping alert to see what Santa Claus would do when he came. Next morning she found surprises not only in the stocking only but everywhere in the room. When Miss Sullivan presented Helen with a canary, her “cup of happiness overflowed.” Her teacher taught her how to take care of the new pet. Everyday she prepared his bath, made his cage clean and filled his cups with fresh seeds and water. One morning she left the cage and went to fetch water for his bath. She left a big cat brush past her as she opened the door. She knew that she would never see her sweet little Tim sing again.

**Chapter IX:** Another important event in Helen’s life was her visit to Boston in May, 1888. She was accompanied by her mother and Miss Sullivan. This journey was quite different that she had undertaken to Baltimore two years ago. This time she sat quietly with Miss Sullivan. She took eager interest in all that her teacher told her about what she saw out of the car window. She told about Tennessee River, the great cotton fields, the hills and the woods and the crowd of the people. She had her doll Nancy in her arms. Nancy had a sad experience after their arrival in Boston. She was covered with dirt. The laundress at the Perkins Institute secretly carried her off to give Nancy a bath. This was too much for poor Nancy. When Helen saw her doll again, Nancy was a formless heap of cotton. She could not have recognised her at all except for her two bed eyes.

At the Perkins Institute for the Blind, she began to make friends with the little blind children. They knew the manual alphabet. It was a great joy to talk with other children in her own language. It took Helen some time to appreciate the fact that her new friends were blind. She remembered with surprise when they read books with their fingers. They were so happy and contented that she lost all sense of pain in the pleasure of their companionship. She felt thoroughly at home in her new environment. She regarded Boston as the beginning and the end of creation.

While they were in Boston, they visited Bunker Hill and her first lesson in history. The next day they went to Plymouth. It was her first trip on the ocean and first voyage in a steamboat. ‘How full of life and motion it was?’ She touched the great Plymouth Rock with her own hand. She thought of the pilgrims, those bravest and most generous men who sought a home in a strange land. In Boston she made friendship with William Endicott and his daughter. She also came to know of the great ships that were bound to Europe. She called Boston “The City of Kind Hearts”.

**Chapter X:** Helen and her teacher Miss Sullivan were to spend their vacation with their good friend Mrs. Hopkins at Cape Cod. The most vivid recollection of their stay at Cape Cod was the ocean. Helen had an intense desire to touch the mighty sea and feel it roar. She was excited as her long cherished wish was at last to be realised. She was helped into her bathing suit. He jumped out on the warm sand and fearlessly plunged into the cool water. The buoyant motion of water filled her with exquisite and quivering joy. Suddenly her joy was turned into terror. Her feet struck against a rock and the next moment the water rushed over her head. She thrust her water to grab some support but all her frantic efforts were in vain. The waves tossed her playing a game with her. The good and firm earth had slipped from her feet. At last, the sea threw her back on the shore. The very next moment Helen clashed her teacher’s arm. She asked Miss Sullivan: “Who put salt in the water?” After she had recovered from her first experience in water, she thought it a great fun feeling wave after wave dashing against the rock. The air throbbed with their pulsations. The tang of the fresh and free seawaves was really fascinating. She could feel the ‘dash and roar of the rushing sea.’ One day Miss Sullivan captured a great horseshoe crab. It suddenly occurred to Helen that he might make a beautiful pet. She seized him by the tail and carried him home. It was put in a trough near the well. But

the next morning, he had disappeared. Nobody knew where he had gone or how he had escaped. Helen was disappointed. But soon she realised her mistake. It was not kind or wise to take that poor dumb creature out of his element. She was happy that he had returned to the sea.

**Chapter XI:** Helen returned to her Southern home from Cape Cod in autumn. She was full of joyous memories. In the North she had enjoyed at the richness and variety of her experiences. She had a new and beautiful world at her feet. Her life was full of motion. She met many people who talked with her by spelling into her hand. She spent the autumn with her family at their summer cottage on a mountain. It was 14 miles from Tuscumbia. It was called Fern Quarry. Three frolicsome little streams ran through it. The opening was filled with ferns. The rest of the mountain was thickly wooded with great oaks. Vines stretched from tree to tree. The place was always full of butterflies and buzzing insects. Their cottage was on the top of the mountain among oaks and vines. Many visitors came to Fern Quarry. In the evening men played cards and whiled away the hours talking and telling stories of fishing and hunting. She could feel the deep breathing of the dogs and the hunters as they lay on their beds. She could hear the stamping of the horses and their neighing loudly. Later in the evening they made preparations for a barbecue. Meat was hung over big sticks over the fire. The savoury odour of the meat made her hungry long before dinner.

The hunting party made its appearance in twos and threes hot and weary. Everyman declared of seeing at least one deer but couldn't kill it.

Forgetting their disappointment, the party sat down to a feast of veal and roast pig.

On some morning Helen and her teacher rambled in the woods, trees and vines. They always returned to the cottage with armfuls of ferns and flowers. They also went nutting. She enjoyed breaking the shells of hickory nuts and walnuts. At the foot of the mountain there was a rail road. The children watched the trains whiz by. Her little cousin Mildred would cry: "I see the train!" Helen felt the hot breath from the engine on her face. The smoke and the ash almost choked them. They reached home long after dark. They found the cottage empty. The family were all out searching for them.

**Chapter XII:** After her first visit to Boston, Helen spent almost every winter in the North. Once she visited a New England village with its frozen lakes and vast snow fields. She could enjoy 'the treasures of snow' for the first time. The trees and bushes were bare. The birds had flown. Their empty nests were filled with snow. All life seemed to have ebbed away. The earth seemed benumbed by the icy touch. Then the chill air portended a snow storm. A snowy night covered the village. In the morning everything was white. One could hardly recognise a feature of the landscape. Only a vast expanse of snow and nothing else. In the evening they sat around the great fire and told merry tales. They were totally shut in from all communication with the outside world. On the third day the snow eased and the sun came out. Helen put on her cloak and hood and went out. The air stung her cheeks. They succeeded in reaching a pine grove. The rays of the sun fell upon the trees and the twigs sparkled like diamonds. The drifts were gone. Another storm came. The lake lay frozen and hard beneath the sun.

Their favourite pastime during the winter was tobogganing. Plunging through drifts and leaking hollows, they could shoot across lake's gleaming surface to the opposite bank. "What a joy!" "What a thrilling madness!" They felt themselves 'divine'.

**Chapter XIII:** It was in the spring of 1890 that Helen Keller learned to speak. The urge to utter audible sounds had always been strong. She used to make noises keeping one hand on her throat and the other felt the movements of her lips. Before she lost her sight and hearing, she was fast learning to talk. But after her illness she had ceased to speak

because she could not hear. There was, however, one word the meaning of which she still remembered. It was 'water'. She pronounced it "wa – wa". She had known for a long time that the people used a method of communication that was different from hers. She had to depend on the manual alphabet. She felt always a sense of dissatisfaction and restraint. She persisted using her lips and voice. Once she heard the story of Ragnhild Kaata. It resulted in breaking down of that great barrier.

In 1890, Mrs. Lamson returned from a visit to Norway and Sweden. She told Helen the story of a deaf and blind girl Ranghild Kaata in Norway. She had actually been taught to speak. Helen was on fire with eagerness. She resolved that she, too, would learn to speak. Miss Sullivan took her to Miss Sarah Fuller, the principal of Horace Mann School. She offered to teach Helen herself. Miss Fuller's method was simple. She passed her hand lightly over her face and let Helen feel the position of her tongue and lips when she made a sound. Helen was eager to imitate every motion. In an hour she had learnt six elements of speech. M, P, S, T, I. Miss Fuller gave her eleven lessons in all. When she uttered her first connected sentence: "It is warm", she was highly surprised and delighted. No doubt, they were broken and stammering syllables but she was out of the bondage now.

It would be wrong to think that she could really talk in this short time. She had only learnt the 'elements of speech'. Miss Fuller and Miss Sullivan could understand her but not the other people. It was Miss Sullivan's genius and untiring patience and devotion that led Helen towards natural speech. She laboured night and day before she could be understood even by her most intimate friends. She needed Miss Sullivan's help in her efforts to articulate each sound clearly and combine all sounds in a thousand ways. In reading her teacher's lips Helen was wholly dependent on her fingers. She had to use the sense of touch in catching the vibrations of the throat, the movements of the mouth and the expressions of the face. Many a time she was discouraged. But her work was 'practice, practice, practice'. She used to repeat ecstatically, "I am not dumb now". Constant practice makes the fingers very flexible. At last the happiest of happy moments arrived. She had made her homeward journey, talking to Miss Sullivan. The train stopped at the Tuscumbia station. And the whole family was there on the platform. Her mother pressed her close to her heart when she uttered the first syllables. Little Mildred kissed her hands and danced. Her father expressed his pride and affection in a big silence.

**Chapter XIV:** In the winter of 1892, Helen Keller wrote a little story called "The Frost King". She sent it to Mr. Anagnos, of the Perkins Institute for the Blind. She wrote the story when she was at home and after she had learnt to speak. Her thoughts flowed freely and easily and she felt a joy in the composition. At that time she 'eagerly absorbed everything she read without a thought of authorship. When finished the story was read to the teacher and later to the assembled family. They were surprised that Helen could write so well. She sent it to Mr. Anagnos who published it in one of the Perkins Institutes' reports. But Helen's happiness was short-lived. It was discovered that a similar story "*The Frost Fairies*" by Miss Margaret T. Canby had appeared before her 'The Frost King' in a book. The two stories were very much alike in thought and language. It was evident that Miss Canby's story had been read to her and her story was a plagiarism. When she understood it, she was grieved. She had disgraced herself. Mr. Anagnos was deeply troubled but he seemed to believe her. But one of the teachers laid her conclusions that Helen's story was an imitation of "*The Frost Fairies*". Mr. Anagnos felt deceived. He suspected that Helen and her teacher, Miss Sullivan had deliberately stolen the bright thoughts of Miss Canby's story to win his admiration. She was brought before a court of investigation composed of teachers and officers of the institution. She was questioned and cross-questioned. The judges wanted her to acknowledge that Miss Canby's story was read to her. She wept that night. She imagined that she should die before morning.



Miss Sullivan had never heard of "*The Frost Fairies*" or of the book in which the story was published. Later on it was found out that perhaps Mrs. Hopkins might have read it to Helen when she was on a vacation. In her trouble Helen received many messages of love and sympathy. Miss Canby herself wrote kindly, "Some day you will write a great story out of your own head". But that kind prophecy was never fulfilled. She was so conscious that while writing sentences even to her mother she would check if she had not read them in a book. The habit of assimilating what others wrote and giving it out again as her own was common in her early writings. When she wrote about the old cities of Greece and Italy, she borrowed her glowing descriptions from various sources. Those early compositions were mental gymnastics. Like all inexperienced persons she was learning writing by assimilation and imitation of ideas. It is only after years of practice that even great writers learn to write every word by way of their minds. Helen thought that 'trying to write is very much like trying to put a Chinese puzzle together. We have a pattern in mind which we wish to work out in words'. She quotes Stevenson: "There is no way to become original, except to be born so". The sad experience might have done her good and set her thinking on some of the problems of composition seriously. Her only regret was that she lost one of her dearest friends, Mr. Anagnos.

**Chapter XV:** Helen Keller spent a year after the "Frost King" incident with her family in Alabama. She was very happy. "The Frost King" was forgotten. Helen Keller started writing a sketch of her life. She was still very cautious. The thought what she wrote might not be absolutely her own troubled her thoughts. Sometimes she said to herself: "Suppose it should be found that all this was written by someone long ago". Miss Sullivan helped and consoled her in every way she could think of. She was then twelve years old. She wrote 'timidly, fearfully, but resolutely'. Now her thoughts turned inward and she could see and think things invisible. In 1893 she made a trip to Washington and visited Niagara and the World's Fair. It was quite difficult to describe Helen's emotions when she felt the air vibrate and the earth tremble at the Falls. Miss Sullivan and Helen visited the World's Fair with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. There she could see the India of her books with its Shivas and elephant - gods. There were also the Pyramids. At a little distance was a model of the Santa Maria, the famous ship of Columbus. The President of the World's Fair gave her permission to touch the exhibits. Everything fascinated her. At the Cape of Good Hope exhibit, she learnt about the mining of diamonds and cutting and polishing of precious stones. Dr. Bell accompanied her everywhere and described to her the objects of greatest interest. All these experiences added many new words and terms to her vocabulary.

**Chapter XVI:** Before October, 1893, Helen Keller had studied various subjects by herself. She studied the histories of Greece, Rome and the United States. She had a French grammar in raised print. She knew some French and enjoyed using new words. Gradually she acquired the sufficient knowledge of French to read La Fontaine's "*Fables*" and other books. She gave considerable time to the improvement of her speech. She recited passages from her favourite poets to Miss Sullivan. She corrected her pronunciation. She learnt Latin and Latin grammar from Mr. Irons in Pennsylvania. She found arithmetic quite boring. She learnt for the first time reading an author critically. At first she didn't take interest in studying Latin grammar and analysing every word. But as she got deeper into subject, the beauty of Latin language delighted her. She started enjoying reading Latin passages and trying to make sense. There is nothing more beautiful than the fleeting images and sentiments expressed by a language. Miss Sullivan spelled into her hands whatever Mr. Irons said. Helen was just beginning to read Caesar's "*Gallie War*" before she went to her home in Alabama.

**Chapter XVII:** In the summer of 1894, Helen Keller attended the meeting at Chautauqua of the American Association to promote the teaching of speech to the deaf with Miss Sullivan. The school was chosen especially for obtaining the highest advantage in vocal culture and training in lip-reading. Her German teacher Miss Reamy used the manual alphabet while teaching German. Within a year, Helen could read “Wilhelm Tell” with pleasure. She made more progress in German and found French more difficult. Helen’s progress in lip-reading and speech was not what her teachers had hoped and expected it would be. They aimed too high and the disappointment was inevitable. She still avoided and disliked arithmetic. But she pursued her other studies, especially physical geography, with great interest. The two years in New York were happy ones and looked back to them with genuine pleasure. She especially remembered the walks they all took together every day in Central Park. It was beautiful in all its aspects. In the spring they sailed on the Hudson River and wondered about on its green banks. But her bright days in New York were darkened by a great sorrow. Mr. John P. Spaulding of Boston died in February, 1896. He was very kind and tender to Helen Keller and Miss Sullivan. His death left a vacancy in their lives that had never been filled.

**Chapter XVIII:** In October 1896 Helen Keller entered the Cambridge School for Young Ladies. The thought of going to college took root in her heart. Going to the Cambridge School was the nearest approach she could get to Harvard. In this way, she could fulfil her childish declaration. At the Cambridge School, Miss Sullivan attended the classes with her and interpreted to her the instructions given. The instructors had no experience of teaching the blind and the deaf. Her only means of conversing with them was reading their lips. She had been well trained in English by Miss Sullivan. She had a good start in French and received six months instruction in Latin. But she was most comfortable in German. In spite of those advantages, her progress was not smooth. Miss Sullivan could not spell out in her hand all that the books required. Her instructors soon became familiar with her imperfect speech to answer her questions and correct mistakes. Each day Miss Sullivan went to the school and spelled into Helen’s hand whatever the teachers said. It required a lot of patience. The German teacher gave her special lessons twice a week. She finished arithmetic, reviewed her Latin grammar and read three chapters of Caesar’s “*Gallic War*”. In German she read, partly with her fingers and partly with Miss Sullivan’s assistance. She read Schiller, Heine, Riehl and Goethe. In English she read Shakespeare, Burke and Macaulay’s “*Life of Samuel Johnson*”. She was impressed with Burke’s masterly speech and eloquence.

At the Cambridge school, Helen enjoyed the companionship of seeing and hearing girls of her age. She joined them in many of their games, took long walks with them and discussed books with them. Some of the girls learnt to speak to her and Miss Sullivan didn’t have to repeat their conversation. At Christmas, Helen’s mother and her little sister spent the holidays with her. It made her most happy in sharing happy hours with them. She took her preliminary examination for Radcliff in July 1896. She passed in everything, and received “honours” in German and English.

It was though advisable to have her examinations in a room by herself. The noise of the type writer could disturb others. If she passed with higher credit in the preliminaries than in the finals, there were two reasons. In the finals no one read her work over to her. Secondly, in preliminaries she offered subjects which she was quite familiar with.

**Chapter XIX:** Helen Keller began her second year at the Gilman school with hope and determination to succeed. Mr. Gilman wanted her to study mathematics that year. She had physics, algebra, geometry, astronomy, Greek and Latin. She lacked important apparatus for some of her studies and faced a lot of difficulties. The classes were very

large and teachers could not give her special instruction. Miss Sullivan was obliged to read all the books to her and interpret for the instructors. For the first time in eleven years 'it seemed as if her dear hand would not be equal to the task'. She could not solve problems in physics, algebra and geometry until they bought a brail writer. She encountered a lot of difficulties. Sometimes she lost all courage. Little by little, Helen's difficulties began to disappear. The embossed books and other apparatus arrived. She threw herself into the work with renewed confidence. Algebra and geometry continued to defy her efforts. Actually, she had no aptitude for mathematics. The different points were not explained to her as fully as she wished. Mr. Gilman realised that she was overworked and should remain at his school three years longer. Helen didn't like the idea as she wanted to enter college with her class. The difference of opinion between Gilman and Miss Sullivan resulted in Helen's withdrawal from the Cambridge school. She continued her studies under a tutor, Mr. Merton Keith of Cambridge. For eight months Keith gave her lessons five times a week in Boston. In this way' her preparation for the college continued uninterrupted. She enjoyed her work and got on faster and did better work than she ever did in school. She didn't find algebra and geometry not even half as easy as languages and literature. But Mr. Keith made even mathematics interesting. He taught her to reason clearly and logically. Helen Keller took her final examinations for Radcliffe College in June 1899. The college authorities didn't allow Miss Sullivan to read the examination papers to her. The brail didn't work well in geometry and algebra. She had always done her work in braille or in her head. The administrative board of Radcliffe didn't realise how difficult they were making her examinations. Nor did they understand the peculiarities of a deaf and blind student. They put many obstacles in her way. But Helen was determined to succeed. At last, she overcame all obstacles. She earned her admission to Radcliffe College.

**Chapter XX:** Helen's struggle for admission to Radcliffe College ended successfully. She could now enter Radcliffe whenever she pleased. It was thought best that she should study another year under Mr. Keith. Therefore, her dream of going to Radcliffe was realised only in the fall of 1900. She was excited on the first day at Radcliffe. She had tried her strength by the standards of those who could see and hear. She began her studies with eagerness. She could feel within herself the capacity to know all things. She was entering a new world of 'beauty and light'. The professors were the embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. But Helen soon realised that 'the college was not quite the romantic lyceum' she had imagined. The lack of time was a big hurdle. In college, there was no time to commune with one's thoughts. 'One goes to college to learn, it seems, not to think'. She studied French, German, history, English composition and English literature. She studied Corneille, Moliere, Racine and Sainte-Beuve in French. She read Goethe and Schiller in German. She studied history from the fall of the Roman Empire to the 18th century and Milton in English literature. She couldn't make notes during the lectures as her hands were busy listening. She could only jot down what she could remember at home.

Unfortunately, very few of the books required in the various courses were printed for the blind. She was obliged to have them spelled into her hand. Actually, she needed more time to prepare her lessons than other girls. While other girls laughed, sang and danced, she spent hours reading a few chapters. It made her rebellious but she gained her confidence and composure. She made her way in a zig-zag manner slipping back many times. But she was determined to succeed. She got more eager and went on climbing higher and higher. Her vision was broadened.

Last year at Radcliffe Helen studied English composition, the Bible, the governments of America and Europe, Horace and Latin comedy. She relished English because the teacher

brought before her 'literature in all its original freshness and power'. The last year was the happiest year as she was studying subjects that especially interested her. But Helen realised that 'college is not the universal Athens' she thought it was. No doubt, one met the great and the wise in college but they seemed to be 'mummified'. She thought that literature 'depends more upon the depth of our sympathy than upon our understanding'. She felt like the proverbial bull in a china shop when she thought of her overburdened mind. A thousand odds and ends of knowledge came crushing her head like hailstones. Helen Keller thought that the examinations were the chief bugbears of her life. She faced them successfully many times, yet they rose again with vengeance. It is rather disgusting that just at the moment when she needed her memory and sense of discrimination, those faculties flew away.

During her stay at Redcliffe, there was the 'transition from romantic to actual'. She learnt many things there. Knowledge is not only 'power' but is 'happiness' too. One can't be deaf to the great throbs of humanity. Nor can one be 'deaf to the harmonies of life'.

**Chapter XXI:** Helen Keller depended on books not only for pleasure and for wisdom but also for the knowledge. She first read a story in May, 1887 when she was just seven years old. At first, she had only a few books in raised print like "*Our World*". She read them over and over. Sometimes Miss Sullivan spelled into her hands little stories and poems. Actually Helen began to read in right earnest when she was in Boston. She spent a lot of time in the Institution library and took down whatever book her fingers lighted upon. The words themselves fascinated her. Her impressionable mind retained many words and sentences. "*Little Lord Fauntleroy*" was the first book of any consequence that she 'read understandingly'. It was a fascinating child's story. At first the reading was constantly interrupted as she didn't know many words. Miss Sullivan came to her help and guidance. Later on, at her request, Mr. Anagnos had the story embossed and Helen read it again and again.

During the next two years she read many books at her home or her visit to Boston. Some of them were "*Greek Heroes*", La Fontaine's "*Fables*", Hawthorne's "*Wonder Book*", "*Bible Stories*", Lamb's "*Tales from Shakespeare*", Dickens, "*The Pilgrim's Progress*", and "*Robinson Crusoe*". Stories in which animals are made to talk and act like human beings never appealed to her very strongly. But she felt genuine interest in '*The Jungle Book*' and "*Wild Animals*" because they were real animal stories and not caricatures of men. Helen enjoyed antiquity, Ancient Greece exercised a mysterious fascination for her. She liked the pagan gods and goddesses walking on earth and talked face to face with men. '*The Iliad*' was her favourite. Great poetry whether written in Greek or in English needed no interpreter than a 'responsive heart'. The finest passages of '*The Iliad*' lifted her soul. She forgot her physical limitation. Her liking for '*The Aeneid*' was not as great as that for '*The Iliad*'. Virgil is 'serene and lovely like a marble'. Homer is a beautiful animated youth in the full sunlight.

Helen began to read the Bible much before she could understand it. The stories of Greeks were so full of charm for Helen but those of the Bible were devoid of any interest. She had read the Bible for so many years with joy and inspiration. She loved it as she loved no other book. She wished that the literature of the past might be purged of all that is ugly and barbarous in it. She liked the simplicity and 'terrible directness of the book of Esther'. She also liked the story of Ruth for her oriental charms. '*Macbeth*' of Shakespeare impressed her most. For a long time the ghosts and witches haunted her in her dreams. She read '*King Lear*' after '*Macbeth*'. The two other characters that she liked very much were of Shylock and Satan. But she could never hate them completely. Shakespeare's songs and sonnets were as wonderful and fresh as his dramas.



Helen Keller loved history next to poetry. She had read every historical work that she had been able to lay her hands on. Green's *'History of the English People'* and Freeman's *'History of Europe'* impressed her. In her college reading she became familiar with French and German literature. The Germans put strength before beauty, and truth before convention, both in life and in literature. Goethe and Schiller were her favourite German writers. She liked Moliere and Racine best among the French writers. She also admired Balzac and Victor Hugo. She liked the American writer Mark Twain. Literature was Helen's 'utopia'.

**Chapter XXII:** Helen Keller tries to explain that she has many other pleasures and amusements other than reading books. She has a great attraction for the country and out-of-door sports. She learnt to row and swim at a very early age. She can't guide the boat very well. Someone usually manages the rudder while she rows. She loves to contend with wind and wave. She also enjoys canoeing on moonlight nights. She loves touching a little fish or a pond lily. But her favourite amusement is sailing. In the summer of 1901, she visited Nova Scotia and Halifax. It was really so interesting, so beautiful! Once they went in a sail-boat to watch the races. They faced the fury of a storm. The boat was driven down by the gigantic waves. Down came the main sail. At last cold, hungry and tired, they reached their pier. She visited Wrentham, one of the loveliest villages in New England. She had a special attraction for the 'king-tree' which stood there 800 or 1000 years. Some people think that all sensations reach us through the eye and the ear. They forget that her whole body is alive to the conditions about her. She can also feel the grinding of heavy wagons and machinery.

Several times she visits the narrow, dirty streets where the poor live. She 'grows hot and indignant'. She realises that the sun and the air are God's free gifts to all. She is pained to realise that the poor are forced to live in such inhuman and dirty surroundings.

She enjoys cycling next to a leisurely walk. Most of the time her dog accompanies her on a walk or ride or sail. When she is indoors, she likes to knit and crochet. She also plays game or two of checkers or chess with a friend. If alone, she plays a game of solitaire. She loves to frolic with children. Museums and art stores are also sources of her pleasure and inspiration. She can feel the heart-throbs of the ancient Greeks in their marble gods and goddesses. Going to the theatre is another pleasure of Helen Keller. She enjoys having a play described to her while it is being acted on the stage. She has met a few great actors and actresses like Miss Ellen Terry, Sir Henry Irving and Jefferson who played *'Rip Van Winkle'*. Sometimes a sense of isolation enfolds her like a cold mist when she sits alone. 'Then comes hope with a smile and whispers, "There is a joy in self-forgetfulness". So she tries to make the light in others' eyes her sun and the music in others' ears her symphony. She tries to make the smile on others' lips her own happiness.

**Chapter XXIII:** Helen Keller describes men and women who contributed to make her life happy and meaningful. They were men of letters, scientists, priests, editors and friends who sweetened and ennobled her life. One of such persons was Bishop Brooks. As a child she loved to sit on his knee while Miss Sullivan spelled into her hand beautiful words about God and the spiritual world. Very often when she was puzzled to know the multiplicity of so many religions, he said: "There is only one religion—the religion of love". Bishop Brooks believed in the 'fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man'. Helen Keller found no creed more soul-satisfying than Bishop Brook's creed of love.

Helen remembers Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. She met Dr. Holmes many times and she loved the man as well as the poet. Dr. Edward Hale was one of Helen's very old friends. She had known him since she was eight and her love for him increased with her years. He was very helpful and kind to her and Miss Sullivan in times of trial and sorrow. He has been 'a prophet and inspirer of men'.



Helen Keller had spent so many happy days with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. She spent hours listening to what he had to tell her about her experiments. He was very humorous and poetic too. His dominating passion was his love for children. He was never so happy as and when he had a little deaf child in his arms.

During his two years in New York, Helen met many distinguished people. It was a great privilege to meet Mr. and Mrs. Hutton.

William Dean Howells and Mark Twain were special favourites of Helen Keller. Mark Twain had his own ways of thinking, saying and doing everything. There were host of other interesting people she met in New York. Those were the people who had made the story of her life. They were the people who had turned her limitations into beautiful privileges and opportunities.

## V. TEXT-BASED QUESTIONS SOLVED

### A. QUESTIONS ON THEME AND PLOT

**Q1. Evaluate Helen Keller's 'The Story of My Life' as an autobiography, describing the struggles and achievements of her life.**

**Ans.** Helen Keller's famous autobiography *'The Story of My Life'* explores the challenges she faced as a deaf and dumb child and her struggles of communicating with the world. The autobiography was dedicated to Alexander Graham Bell. He had taken a personal interest in Helen's blindness and deafness. Helen Keller also shows her gratitude to her wonderful teacher Miss Sullivan. Helen Keller was born on a plantation in Tuscumbia, Alabama, on June 27, 1880 to Captain Keller. She contracted an illness which left her deaf and blind. By the age of seven, Helen had over sixty home signs to communicate with her family. In 1886, Helen Keller's mother sent her to Dr. Chisolm and Graham Bell. Bell advised her parents to contact Perkins Institute for the Blind. The advent of Miss Sullivan was the most important event in her life. Anne Sullivan arrived in Keller's house in March, 1887. She immediately began to teach Helen to communicate by spelling words into her hand. Gradually, she learnt from Miss Sullivan the names of all the familiar objects in her world.

The autobiography describes graphically Helen's herculean efforts to get an education. She entered The Cambridge School for Young Ladies before gaining admittance to Radcliffe College in 1890. She graduated from Radcliffe at the age of 24, in 1904. She was the first person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. One of Keller's earliest pieces of writing was *'The Frost King'* (1891) at the age of eleven. There were allegations that the story had been plagiarised from Margaret Canby's *'The Frost Fairies'*. At the age of 22, Keller published *'The Story of My Life'* (1903), written during her time in college. Keller depended on books for pleasure and wisdom. She started with *'Little Lord Fauntleroy'*. She went on to read *"Greek Heroes"*, La Fontaine's *"Fables"*, Hawthorne's *"Wonder Book"*, *"Bible Stories"*, *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*, *"The Arabian Nights"* and *"Robinson Crusoe"*. In *'The Story of My Life'* Helen also writes about her pleasures and amusements. Swimming, rowing, canoeing on moonlight nights and sailing were her favourite amusements. Helen Keller had a sixth sense - 'a soul sense' which could see, hear, feel all in one. She loved to visit museums and art stores. Music and theatre thrilled her. In the end, the autobiography describes the important persons whom she valued more

than anything else in life. They were Bishop Brooks, Henry Drummond, Dr. Everett Hale, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Mrs. Hutton, Dean Howell's and of course, Mark Twain. These were the persons and friends who had made the story of her life. They turned her limitations into beautiful privileges and achievements.

**Q2. Describe the theme of Helen Keller's 'The Story of My Life'.**

**Ans.** The Story of My Life' is based on the value of perseverance. It also glorifies the tireless and undying spirit of overcoming insurmounting hurdles and obstacles in life. Due to sheer perseverance, a deaf and dumb child Helen Keller learnt to communicate and interact with the outward world in a meaningful way. There is no doubt that at moments she felt helpless and frustrated but Helen was determined to succeed. She was a wonderful fighter.

Helen Keller overcame the seemingly insurmountable obstacles and blindness. She became an icon of perseverance and untiring struggle throughout the world. The autobiography *'The Story of My Life'* was written when she was only 22 years old. Her autobiography *'The Story of My Life'* still motivates and guides thousands of those unfortunate blind and deaf children for whom there is only darkness and silence in the world. She lived in her isolated world until Miss Sullivan came to open up a world of communication to her. Anne taught her manual sign language, braille and lip-reading. Helen's achievements are awesome. She had a thirst for knowledge and her love for learning and books was intense. It is quite amazing how she could lead a productive and purposeful life with all her handicaps.

Another important theme of the autobiography is the message that even the blind and the deaf can lead a wholesome, purposeful and exciting life. Helen Keller set an example for all the physically challenged, especially the deaf and the dumb. She became the first blind and deaf to earn a bachelor degree. She enjoyed reading Shakespeare, Dickens and had good grounding in Greek and Latin. She read almost all the leading French and German writers. She loved swimming, sailing, canoeing, visiting mountains and beaches. She had an inner eye that could feel the beautiful sights, sounds, inner and smells of Nature. She loved the company of the famous and great personalities of her times such as Alexander Graham Bell and Mark Twain.

**Q3. Describe the plot or the structure of Helen Keller's 'The Story of My Life'.**

**Ans.** Helen Keller's *'The Story of My Life'* was published in 1903 when she was at the age of twenty two. It includes the story of her life and was written during her time in Redcliffe College. The story of Keller's ability to communicate despite of her insurmountable handicaps immediately fascinate people. Her story gives us an idea of what it means to be both deaf and blind. She faces extraordinary difficulties, limitations and handicaps with courage and grace. The plot or the storyline of *'The Story of My Life'* covers only her childhood and young womanhood. The story of Helen Keller's life is incomplete as she had more than sixty years yet to live. Her story serves as a model for what the physically disabled can accomplish. The storyline starts with the mysterious illness that left her deaf and dumb when she was just one and a half years old. The advent of Miss Sullivan changed the very course of her life. The first five chapters describe how Miss Sullivan taught her words by spelling them into her hands. In this way, she learnt words like "d-o-l-l", "s-i-t", "p-i-n", "h-a-t", "c-u-p", etc. The next important step in her education was learning to read. She learnt to speak in 1890. The winter of 1890 was darkened by the charge of plagiarism against her for writing *'The Frost King'*.

Chapters XVI to XXI describe Helen's struggle to read various subjects and languages and to get an education. She became the first deaf and blind to earn a university degree.

'*The Story of My Life*' devotes Chapter XXII to describe Helen's pleasures and amusements. Swimming, rowing, canoeing, sailing were her thrilling pastimes. Blindness and deafness couldn't rob her of her sixth sense—a soul sense which would see, hear, feel, all in one. The last chapter XXIII is devoted to great men of letters and friends like Bishop Brooks, Dr. Hale, Dr. Graham Bell, Mr. & Mrs. Hutton and of course, Mark Twain. They made the story of Helen's life and transcended her limitations to new privileges and opportunities.

**Q4. Describe Helen Keller's early life before the advent of her teacher Miss Sullivan.**

**Ans.** Helen Keller was born on a plantation in Tuscumbia, Alabama on June 27, 1880 to Captain Arthur Keller. Her father was a former officer of the Confederate Army. Helen was the first baby in the family. The happy days didn't last long. In the month of February came the illness that closed her eyes and ears. Except for some fleeting memories, all seemed like a nightmare. But during the first nineteen months of her life she had caught faint glimpses of green fields, sky, trees and flowers. The darkness that followed could not wholly blot them out. Her hands started feeling every object and observed every motion. She started making crude signs to communicate with others. A shake of head meant "No" and a nod, meant "Yes". A push meant "Go" and a pull meant "Come". At five, she learned and understood a good deal of what was going on about her. She could fold her clothes and wear them. She began to realise that she was different from other people. Her mother and friends didn't use signs as she did but talked with their mouths. In those days, a little coloured girl, Martha, the daughter of her cook understood her signs. They spent a great deal of time kneading dough balls and feeding the hens and turkeys. Belle, her dog was her other companion. The family consisted of her father and mother, two older half-brothers, and afterwards, a little sister, Mildred. For a long time she regarded her sister an intruder as she had ceased to be her mother's only darling.

Helen's desire to express herself grew. Her failures to make herself understood was followed by outbursts of passion. Her mother's only ray of hope came from Dickens's "*American Notes*". She had read an account of Laura Bridgman who had been educated instead of being deaf and blind. At the age of six, Dr. Alexander Graham Bell advised her father to contact Mr. Anagnos, the director of the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. Within a few weeks Mr. Anagnos gave a comforting assurance that a teacher, Miss Sullivan had been found to teach Helen. Naturally, the most important day in all her life was the one on which her teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan came. It was the third of March, 1887. And 'the light of love shone' on her in that very hour.

**Q5. How was the advent of Anne Mansfield Sullivan, the most important day in her life? Describe the 'immeasurable contrasts' between the two lives which it connects'. How did Helen Keller react at her first meeting with Miss Sullivan?**

**Ans.** Certainly, the advent of Anne Mansfield Sullivan was the most important day in Helen Keller's life. Helen was filled with wonder when she considered the immeasurable contrasts before and after her arrival in her life. On that day she stood on the porch, dumb and expectant. She was like a ship at sea in a dense fog before her education began. "*Light, give me light !*" was the wordless cry of her

soul. And the light of love shone on her in that very hour. She felt approaching footsteps and stretched out her hand. She was caught up and held close in the arms of her teacher. She had come to reveal the light of knowledge and above all, to love her.

Miss Sullivan gave her a doll sent by the little blind children at Perkins Institute. She spelled into her hand the word “d-o-l-l”. Helen was at once interested in the finger play and tried to imitate it. When she was able to spell the words correctly, she was filled with childish pride and pleasure. In the days that followed she learnt to spell ‘pin’, ‘hat’, ‘cup’ and a few verbs like ‘sit’, ‘stand’ and ‘walk’. She understood that everything had a name. Gradually she came to know that a wordless sensation was called a ‘thought’. Somehow the mystery of language was revealed to her. She knew that “w-a-t-e-r” meant something cool that was flowing over her hand. The living word ‘awakened’ her soul. Each name gave birth to a thought. Helen learned a great many new words that day. These words made the world blossom for her, ‘like Aaron’s rod, with flowers.” For the first time Helen longed for a new day to come.

**Q6. Describe the ‘slow and often painful process’ through which the deaf and blind child Helen Keller acquired the ‘key to all language’? How did she learn to spell and read words?**

**Ans.** It was really ‘a slow and often painful process’ through which the deaf and blind child Helen Keller acquired the key to ‘all language’. Children who can hear can acquire language without any special effort. The first word that her teacher, Miss Sullivan spelled into her hand was “d-o-l-l”. In the days that followed she learned to spell many words like “pin”, “hat”, “cup” and a few verbs like “sit”, “stand” and “walk”. At that time she even didn’t know that everything has a name. Then she realised that a wordless sensation was called a ‘thought’. She understood that everything had a name and each name gave birth to a new thought. Miss Sullivan had taught her to find beauty in the fragrant woods and in every blade of grass. She linked Helen’s earliest thought with nature. She made her feel that ‘birds and flowers’ and she herself were ‘happy peers’.

Helen Keller’s ideas were vague and her vocabulary was inadequate. But as she learned more and more words her field of inquiry broadened. One morning she asked Miss Sullivan the meaning of the word “love”. Miss Sullivan put her arm gently round her and spelled into her hand, “I love Helen”. “What is love?” she asked. Miss Sullivan drew her closer and pointing to her heart said, “It is here”. Once Helen was finding difficulty in stringing beads of different sizes. She was puzzled. Miss Sullivan touched her forehead and spelled the word with decided emphasis, “Think”. In a flash Helen knew that the word was the name of the process that was going in her head. Miss Sullivan had a wonderful faculty for description. Helen was not interested in the science of numbers. But Helen learnt from life itself. When Miss Sullivan came, everything about her breathed of love and joy and full of meaning.

**Q7. Describe Helen Keller’s stay at the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston.**

**Ans.** It was Alexander Graham Bell who advised Helen’s parents to contact the Perkins Institute for Blind for her education. It was the institute where Laura Bridgman, a deaf and blind child had been educated. It was located in South Boston. Michael Anaganos, the director, asked former student Anne Sullivan to become Keller’s instructor. Miss Sullivan herself was visually impaired.

Helen made friends with the little blind children. It was a unique pleasure to talk with other blind children in her own language. Until then she had been speaking through an interpreter like a foreigner. All the eager and loving children gathered round her and joined heartily in her frolics. They could read the books with their fingers. They were so happy and contented that she lost all sense of pain in the pleasure of their companionship. With the blind children she felt thoroughly at home in her new environment.

Helen learnt to speak in the spring of 1890. The impulse to utter audible sounds had always been strong within her. Mrs. Lamson, who had been one of Laura Bridgeman's teachers came to see Helen. She had taught a deaf and blind child to speak in Norway. Helen resolved that she would learn to speak. Miss Fuller offered to teach her and gave eleven lessons in all. Her first connected sentence was, "It is warm."

**Q8. When and how did Helen Keller learn to speak? How did she feel when she spoke to her mother and little Mildred after arriving home in Tuscumbia?**

**Ans.** It was in the spring of 1890 that Helen Keller learned to speak. The impulse to utter audible sounds had always been strong within her. She used to make noises. She kept one hand on her throat while the other hand felt the movements of her lips. She was pleased with anything that made a noise. It was her urge to feel the cat purr and the dog bark. She was entirely dependent on the manual alphabet. But she was determined to use her lips and voice. Friends discouraged her. But the story of Ragnhild Kaata inspired her to succeed. In 1890, Mrs. Lamson returned from Norway and came to see Helen Keller. She told her of a deaf and blind girl named Ragnhild Kaata. Mrs. Lamson had taught her to speak. Helen resolved that she too would learn to speak. Miss Sullivan took Helen to Miss Sarah Fuller. She offered to teach her herself. Miss Fuller passed Helen's hand over her face and let her feel the position of her tongue and lips when she made a sound. She was eager to imitate every motion and in an hour had learned six elements of speech: M, P, A, S, T, I. Miss Fuller gave eleven lessons in all. She was filled with delight and surprise when she uttered her first connected sentence. She uttered "It is warm." They were broken and stammering syllables. But they were parts of a human speech. Miss Sullivan's untiring patience and devotion helped her to progress towards natural speech.

Helen had learnt to speak. At last, the happiest moment of her life arrived. The train stopped at the Tuscumbia station. The whole family stood at the platform. Her mother pressed her close to her trembling with delight. Every syllable that Helen uttered delighted her. The little Mildred seized, kissed her hand and danced. Seeing his daughter uttering audible sentences, he expressed his pride and affection in a big silence.

**Q9. How did Helen write a little story called 'The Frost King' and how was it received by Mr. Anagnos of the Perkins Institute for the Blind? Why did Helen call the incident a dark 'cloud' in her 'childhood's bright sky'? Was Helen guilty of plagiarism?**

**Ans.** A little story, 'The Frost King' which Helen Keller wrote and sent to Mr. Anagnos, created a lot of trouble for her. It was like a dark cloud in her childhood's bright sky'. For a long time she lived in anxiety, doubt, fear and shame. She was accused of plagiarism.

Helen Keller wrote the story when she was at home. Miss Sullivan described to her the beauties of the late foliage. Her descriptions revived the memory of a story



which must have been read to her. Helen must have retained that story unconsciously. When the story was finished, she read it to her teacher. At dinner the story was read to the assembled family. They were surprised that Helen could write so well. It was her story and she had written it for Mr. Anagnos. She sent it to him on his birthday. Mr. Anagnos was delighted with "*The Frost King*" and published it in one of the Perkins Institute reports. It was discovered that a story similar to "*The Frost King*" called '*The Frost Fairies*' by Miss Margaret T. Canby had already appeared. Actually it was published in a book called "*Birdie and His Friends*" even before Helen was born. The two stories were very much alike in thought and language. It was evident that Miss Canby's story had been read to Helen. Helen's story, '*The Frost King*' was a plagiarism.

Mr. Anagnos thought that he had been deceived. Helen tried to explain her position. But he turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of love and innocence. He suspected that Helen Keller and Miss Sullivan had deliberately stolen the bright story of Miss Canby. Helen was brought before a court of investigation. She was questioned and cross-questioned. As she lay in her bed that night, she wept and her spirit was broken. In her trouble she received many messages of love and sympathy. Miss Canby herself wrote kindly. "Someday you will write a great story out of your own head,....."

**Q10. Describe Helen Keller's visit to Niagara in 1893 and her visit to the World's Fair with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell.**

**Ans.** The chief events of the year 1893 were Helen Keller's visits to Niagara and the World's Fair. She went to Niagara in March, 1893. It was a unique experience for her. It was difficult to describe her emotions when she stood on the point which overhangs the American Falls. She felt air vibrate and the earth tremble.

It might seem strange to many people that a blind and deaf girl should be impressed by the wonders and beauties of Niagara. What could that beauty and music meant to her? How could a blind and deaf girl see the waves rolling up the beach or hear their roar? To Helen Keller visiting Niagara was an uplifting experience.

During the summer of 1893, Helen Keller visited the World's Fair with Miss Sullivan and Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. She recalled those days when her childish fancies became beautiful realities. She saw many wonders from different parts of the world. All the marvels of invention, industry and the activities of human life actually passed under her finger tips. There she could feel the glories of India with its 'Shivas and elephant gods'. There was the land of the Pyramids with long processions of camels. The President of the World's Fair gave her the permission to touch the exhibits. Everything fascinated her, especially the French bronzes. Dr. Bell went everywhere with them. He in his own delightful way described to Helen the objects of greatest interest. All these experiences added a great many new words in Helen's vocabulary. It matured her to appreciate 'the real and the earnest in the workaday world.'

**Q11. Describe Helen Keller's struggle at the Cambridge School to be prepared for Radcliffe College. How did she succeed in her mission?**

**Ans.** In October, 1896, Helen Keller entered the Cambridge School for Young Ladies. Her mission was to get herself prepared for Radcliffe. Even when she was a little child, she surprised her friends with an announcement. She declared that someday she would go to college—to Harvard. It was decided that she should go to Cambridge

so that she could get to Harvard. At Cambridge her plan was to have Miss Sullivan attend the classes with her and interpret to her the instruction given. Her studies for the first year were English history, English literature, German, Latin, Arithmetic, Latin composition and occasional themes.

There were serious drawbacks to her progress. Miss Sullivan could not spell into her hands all that books required. She had another difficulty. She couldn't get textbooks embossed in time. Each day Miss Sullivan went to the classes with her and spelled into her hand all that the teachers said with patience. She took a special delight in Schiller's wonderful lyrics and Goethe. She read Shakespeare, Burke and the 'Life of Samuel Johnson'. She took her preliminary examinations for Radcliffe in July 1897. She passed in everything, and received "honours" in German and English. In the second year at the Gilman school she confronted unforeseen difficulties. The books in mathematics were not embossed in time. Little by little, difficulties began to disappear. For eight months she received coaching at home and the preparation for the college went on without interruption. She took her final examination on 30th June, 1899 but her dream of entering Radcliffe was fulfilled only in the fall of 1900.

**Q12. Describe Helen Keller's experience at Radcliffe. Why did she say, 'But college is not the universal Athens I thought it was?'**

**Ans.** The first day at Radcliffe was very exciting. She had looked forward to it for years. She started her studies with eagerness and hope. She felt within her the capacity to know all things. The lecture-halls seemed filled with the spirit of the great and the wise. The professors were the embodiment of wisdom. But soon Helen Keller realised that 'college was not quite the romantic lyceum' she had imagined. Many of her dreams "faded into the light of common day." Gradually she began to realise that there were disadvantages in going to college.

Helen soon realised that one goes to college to 'learn' and not to 'think'. In the college, there was no time to communicate with one's thoughts. In the classroom she was practically alone. The professors were as remote as they were speaking through a telephone. The lectures were spelled in her hand as rapidly as possible. The significance and meaning of the lecturer got lost in her effort to keep in the race. Very few of the books required in the various courses were printed for the blind. She was obliged to have them spelled into her hand. As a result, she took more time to prepare her lessons than other girls. But there were exceptions too. Scholar like Kittredge would lovingly back Shakespeare "as if new sight were given to the blind." She felt like the proverbial bull in the china shop. 'A thousand odds and ends of knowledge came crashing about her head like hailstones.' Helen discovered that 'college is not the universal Athens' she thought it was. There one doesn't meet the great and wise face to face. One does not even feel their living touch. They seem mummified. But Helen never gave up the precious science of patience. She took her education as she would take a walk in the country, leisurely.

**Q13. Helen Keller 'depended on books not only for pleasure and for the wisdom they bring to all who read, but also for that knowledge which comes to others through their eyes and ears.' Justify the statement highlighting her interest in various authors and their books.**

**Ans.** Helen Keller had a passion for books. She started reading when she was just seven years old. From that age she had constantly 'devoured' every printed page that came within her reach. She didn't study regularly nor according to rule. At first

she read a few books like 'Our World' in raised print. She preferred reading herself to being read to. She began to read in good earnest during her first visit to Boston. She wandered from bookcase to bookcase in the library to pick up books of her choice. The words themselves fascinated her. Her true interest in books started from 'Little Lord Fauntleroy'. Then she read 'Greek Heroes', 'Fables', 'Bible stories', Lamb's 'Tales from Shakespearare', 'The Arabian Nights', 'The Pilgrim's Progress', 'Robinson Crusoe', 'Little Women' and 'Heidi'. The stories in which animals were made to talk like human beings never appealed to her. But she loved 'The Jungle Book' and 'Wild Animals' because they were real animals and not caricatures of men. She loved antiquity and ancient Greece with pagan gods and goddesses fascinated her. Greek poetry suited her responsive heart. Her admiration for 'The Aenid' was not so great as for Homer's 'Iliad'. The stories of the Greeks were full of charm for her and the stories of the Bible didn't interest her so much. Shylock and Satan were her favourite characters. Next to poetry she loved history. Her favourites were: Green's 'History of English People', Freeman's 'History of Europe' and Swinton's 'World History'. She loved to read German literature for its strength, beauty and truth. Goethe's 'Faust' fascinated her. Of all the French writers she loved to read Moliere and Racine best. She loved to read Mark Twain and Scott. In a word, literature was her 'utopia'. No barriers of senses could shut her out from the sweet and gracious discourse of her book-friends.

**Q14. Reading was not the only pleasure of Helen Keller; her pleasures and amusements were many and varied. Describe her favourite amusements and pleasures as mentioned in Chapter XXII of 'The Story of My Life'.**

**Ans.** No doubt, books fascinated Helen Keller but books were not the only pleasure for her. Right from her childhood she had special love for the country and out-of-door sports. She learned to row and swim at a young age. She liked to contend with wind and wave. She enjoyed canoeing, especially on moonlight nights. Sailing was her favourite amusement. The memories of it was a joy forever. She discovered that every man has a subconscious memory of the green earth and murmuring waters. Even blindness and deafness can't rob him of the inherited capacity of the sixth sense. There is 'a soul-sense that sees, hears, feels, all in one.' All sensations reached her not through the eye and the ear but her whole body was alive to them.

Next to a leisurely walk in the countryside she enjoyed a "spin" on her bicycle. She loved her dog companions, particularly her bull terriers. Her dog friends understood her limitations and always kept close to her when she was alone.

Rainy days kept her indoors. She liked to knit and crochet. She loved to frolic with children. She could manage to read their lips. Museums and art stores were also sources of her pleasure and inspiration. Going to the theatre was a rare pleasure. It was her privilege to meet a few great actors and actresses.

No doubt, sometimes a sense of isolation enfolded her like a cold mist. But then, all of a sudden came hope with a smile and whispers. So she tried to make the light in others' eyes, her sun, the music in others' ears, her symphony and the smile on others' lips her happiness.

**Q15. Who were the people, acquaintances and public figures who had helped and guided Helen Keller to transcend her limitations giving her a new purpose and happiness in her life? How did she show her indebtedness to them?**

**Ans.** In the last chapter of 'The Story of My Life' Helen Keller sketches the names of all her friends, and public figures who contributed in making her life happy and

purposeful. Their influences sweetened and ennobled her life. Helen disliked hypocrisy in human relations. A heart handshake or a friendly letter gave her genuine pleasure. Helen Keller counted it one of the sweetest privileges of her life to have known and conversed with many men of genius. She enjoyed the joy of Bishop Brooks' friendship. As a child She loved to sit on his knee and clasp his great hand. He impressed upon her mind two great ideas—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. She remembered meeting Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. She saw Holmes many times and learned to love the man as well as the poet. His gentle courtesy won her heart. Dr. Edward Everett Hale was one of her very oldest friends. She had known him since she was eight and her love for him increased with her years. He had been a prophet and the inspirer of men.

Helen Keller could never forget the contribution of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell in shaping her life. He had advised her parents to send Helen to the Perkins Institute for the Blind. She had spent many delightful hours listening to him about his experiments. He had a humorous and poetic side and loved children passionately. During her two years stay in New York she had many opportunities to talk with distinguished people. She met Laurence Hutton and Mrs. Hutton. He introduced Helen to his literary friends like William Dean Howells and Mark Twain. They were also gentle and sympathetic. Twain had his own way of thinking, saying and doing things. To sum up, Helen Keller remembered all those friends, acquaintances and public figures who made the story of her life. They turned her limitations into beautiful privileges and opportunities.

## **B. QUESTIONS ON CHARACTERS**

**Q1. Give a character sketch of Helen Keller as it emerges out of her autobiography, 'The Story of My Life'.**

**Ans.** Helen Adams Keller was an American author, political activist and lecturer. She was the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard. She set an example for thousands of deaf and blind persons to conquer their handicaps and attain miraculous achievements.

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880 at a plantation called Ivy Green in Tuscumbia. It was in Alabama state of the United States of America. Her father Captain Arthur H. Keller was a former officer of the Confederate Army. Her mother, Kate Adams Keller, was a cousin of Robert E. Lee. The Keller family originated from Switzerland. Helen Keller was not born blind and deaf. A mysterious disease left her deaf and blind.

The advent of Anne Sullivan was the greatest moment in the life of Helen Keller. The desire to express herself grew in her. Before the arrival of Miss Sullivan she used to communicate through few signs. Helen was a great fighter. She started learning to spell simple words like "d-o-l-l", "pin", "hat" and few verbs like "sit", "stand" and "walk". She was thrilled when the mystery of language was revealed to her. She realised that everything had a name and each name gave birth to a thought. Through a slow and often painful process she progressed from learning to read to acquiring the skill of speaking. It was Miss Sullivan's genius and Helen's untiring devotion and patience that brought miraculous results.

Nothing could stop the deaf and blind girl from earning a bachelor degree from Harvard. But she had to wage a long struggle to get admission in Radcliffe College. She surprised the world when she became the first blind and deaf person to earn a

bachelor degree. Helen Keller had a passion for reading. She loved ancient Greeks, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Dickens. She was equally comfortable in French and German literature. Her pleasures and amusements were many and varied. She loved swimming, rowing, sailing and walking leisurely in the countryside. She loved visiting places. Her visits to Washington, Niagara and the World's Fair broadened her knowledge and vision. Helen was fortunate to have the company of many great persons like Alexander Graham Bell, Mark Twain, Father Brooks and many others who shaped and made the story of her life.

**Q2. Draw a character sketch of Anne Mansfield Sullivan highlighting her monumental efforts and patience to teach a deaf and dumb girl to speak and write.**

**Ans.** Miss Anne Mansfield Sullivan had the greatest influence on the life, character and achievements of Helen Keller. She gave a new direction, meaning and purpose to Helen's dark life. Miss Sullivan inherited all those traits and characteristics that go in making a perfect teacher. She was a picture of tireless patience and unending devotion. It was her constant encouragement, help and guidance that made Helen Keller first deaf and blind in the world to earn a bachelor degree.

It was Graham Bell who advised the parents of Helen Keller to contact the Perkins Institute for the Blind. The director, Mr. Anagnos asked a former student Miss Anne Sullivan to become Keller's instructor. Miss Sullivan was herself a visually impaired 20 years old lady. It was the beginning of a 49-year-long relationship. The relationship evolved into Miss Sullivan becoming Helen's governess and then eventual companion. Anne Sullivan arrived at Keller's house in March 1887. She immediately began to teach Helen to communicate by spelling words into her hand, beginning with "d-o-l-l" for the doll. It was Miss Sullivan who unfolded and developed Helen's skills and possibilities. It was Sullivan's genius as a teacher, her sympathy and loving tact which made learning so beautiful and interesting for Keller. She felt that her being was inseparable from her student. All that was best in Helen Keller had been awakened by the loving touch of Miss Sullivan. Anne Sullivan stayed as a companion to Helen Keller long after she taught her. Anne Sullivan married John Macy in 1905. She remained a constant companion to Keller till she died in 1936.