

| SPECIAL *Rama Sagar* EDITION |

HELEN KELLER



THE  
STORY *of my* LIFE

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED | WITH EXTENSIVE NOTES

# The Story of My Life



# The Story of My Life

HELEN KELLER

*Notes written by Nandini Nayar*

*Illustrated by Tapas Guha*



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Helen Keller (1880-1968)

## About the Author

On 27 June 1880, Helen was born to Kate and Arthur Keller in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Captain Keller had served in the Confederate Army and later worked for ten years as an editor of *The North Alabamian*. Kate Keller was the daughter of Charles W. Adams, a Brigadier-General in the Confederate Army and a cousin of the great general Robert E. Lee. The family lived in a beautiful house that had been built by Helen's grandfather in 1820.

Helen lost her eyesight and hearing following a mysterious fever that struck her when she was nineteen months old. As Helen grew older she felt frustrated by her inability to communicate and started becoming stubborn and wild. Fortunately Helen's mother came across a book by Charles Dickens in which he had written about a girl Laura Bridgman, who was deaf and blind but had been successfully educated. Eventually, the family managed to contact the Perkins Institute for the Blind, the same school where Laura had been educated. The director of the Institute sent Anne Sullivan, a twenty-year old lady, to instruct Helen at her home. On 3 March 1887 Miss Sullivan arrived to teach Helen and that was the turning point in Helen's life. It was also the beginning of an amazing

49-year-long relationship. Under Miss Sullivan's guidance, Helen began to read and write and discovered the world of knowledge. Overcoming one obstacle after another, one day, Keller graduated from Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts at the age of twenty-four—the first deaf-blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Helen's first book, *The Story of my Life*, was published in 1903 when she was just twenty-three years old. Later she wrote many more books and articles on various subjects such as socialism and women's rights. Keller used her writing to express her opinion on issues close to her heart. She was fearless in her criticism of things she disapproved of and lost no opportunity to fight for the right of women to vote. Helen travelled extensively around the world and worked tirelessly for the causes she believed in. Miss Sullivan's death in 1936 devastated Keller, but she continued to write and travel. In her later life, she devoted herself to raising funds for the American Foundation for the Blind. In an age when a woman's world was her home, Helen Keller's achievements were nothing short of a miracle.

In 1957, *The Miracle Worker*, a television drama based on Keller's life, was broadcast, immortalizing her amazing journey. In 1964 Keller was awarded the highest civilian honour of the US, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. On 1 June 1968 this remarkable woman breathed her last, leaving behind a legacy that would inspire countless others.

## Introduction

Helen Keller wrote the story of her life at the young age of twenty-two. Encouraged by her teacher, Anne Sullivan, she began to jot down episodes from her life, and published them as a series in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1903. A year later these articles were published as *The Story of My Life*.

The story is set in the social and intellectual environment of a southern state of America in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The American Civil War (1861–1865) had resulted in the abolition of slavery, the effects of industrialization were visible in a more comfortable life for many, and new discoveries in science were changing the way people looked at their world.

*The Story of My Life* is the story of Helen Keller's life up to the time when she fulfilled a lifelong ambition of graduating from Radcliffe College. The early part of the narrative is based on incidents narrated to Keller by her parents and teacher. The arrival of Miss Sullivan in her life was a watershed mark in the narrative, indicating the tremendous impact of the teacher on Keller's life. The latter part of the book expresses Keller's increasing confidence and control over her life. Keller's

response to books, places and people shows a mind that was sensitive and quick. The writer was specially receptive to the beauties of nature and literature.

*The Story of My Life* is a remarkable autobiography of a remarkable woman; remarkable because it gives us access to the process by which a deaf and blind girl emerges from the prison of her disability, becomes proficient in several languages and goes on to read not only the literature of several languages but mathematics and science as well. This autobiography was written at the beginning of the twentieth century, when although people like Alexander Graham Bell were working to help people with disabilities, technological advances such as we now have, were unimaginable. Helen Keller and the people who helped her were in a way pioneers in creating a world of hope for the differently abled.

Helen Keller's story fills us with a deep sense of respect for the woman who lived through amazing experiences and by writing about them touched millions of lives around the world.



*Helen Keller with 'Phiz'*



*8-year-old Helen with her teacher*



*Hearing Enrico Caruso talk*



*Anne Sullivan reading to Keller in 1898*



*Keller with Rabindranath Tagore*



*Medal awarded to Keller for being the guiding force of The American Foundation for the Blind*



*Helen Keller in India*

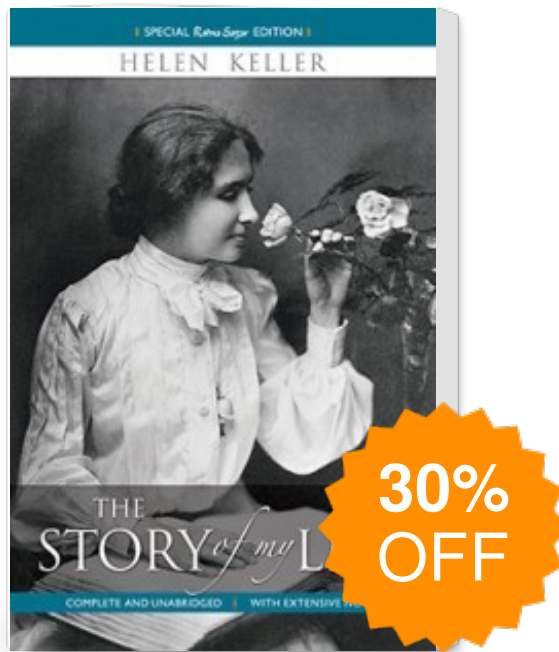
*The Story of My Life*

TO  
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Who has taught the deaf to speak and enabled  
the listening ear to hear speech from the  
Atlantic to the Rockies,

I DEDICATE  
*This Story of My Life*

# CBSE The Story Of My Life For Class 10



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