

Grade IX

Lesson 8. Reach for the Top (Part - 1)

- Santosh Yadav

Prose

Soul of the Chapter

Santosh Yadav is the only woman in the world to have conquered Mount Everest twice. Born in a small village in Haryana, she was the sixth child in a family with five sons. Though her name 'Santosh' stood for contentment but she was never satisfied with her place in a traditional way of life. She studied in her village school up to the age of sixteen. Her parents wanted her to get married at that age but she firmly declined the proposal. She left her house and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi. She decided to meet her educational expenses by working herself. But later on, her parents agreed to bear the expenses.

She went to Jaipur for higher educational where she decided to try her luck at mountaineering. She joined a course at Uttarkashi's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. There was no looking back after that. Equipped with iron will, physical endurance and an amazing mental toughness, she proved herself and conquered Mount Everest at the age of twenty. Within twelve months, she conquered it the second time.

In recognition of her achievements, one of the top honours, the Padmashree, was bestowed upon her by the Government of India.

NCERT Questions

Thinking About the Text

I. Answer these questions in one or two sentences each. (The paragraph numbers within brackets provide clues to the answers.)

1. Why was the 'holy man' who gave Santosh's mother his blessings surprised?

One day a holy man visited Santosh's house. He blessed her pregnant mother to have a son. But he was surprised when Santosh's grandmother told him that she did not want to have a grandson.



2. Give an example to show that even as a young girl Santosh was not ready to accept anything unreasonable.

Right from the very beginning, Santosh lived life on her own terms. She was not content with the traditional way of life and was not ready to accept anything unreasonable. Where other girls wore traditional Indian dresses, Santosh preferred shorts.

3. Why was Santosh sent to the local school?

Even though Santosh's parents could afford to send their children to the best schools, she was sent to the local village school because of the customs in the family.

4. When did she leave home for Delhi, and why?

When she turned sixteen and was under pressure to get married, Santosh threatened her parents that she would never marry if she did not get a proper education. Therefore, she left home and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi.

5. Why did Santosh's parents agree to pay for her schooling in Delhi? What mental qualities of Santosh are brought into light by this incident?

Santosh firmly told her parents that she would work part-time and earn money to pay her fee for her education. Seeing her firm determination and interest in studies, they agreed to pay for her schooling in Delhi.

II. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).

1. How did Santosh begin to climb mountains?

Santosh was residing in Kasturba Hostel in Jaipur. It was located amidst the Aravalli Hills. She used to watch the villagers going up the hills. Out of curiosity she joined them and found that they were mountaineers. She joined them and they motivated her to take up climbing.

2. What incidents during the Everest expedition show Santosh's concern for her teammates?

During the 1992 Everest mission, she provided special care to a climber who was dying at the South, the lowest point on a mountain ridge. She saved the life of another climber Mohan Singh by sharing her oxygen with him.

3. What shows her concern for the environment?

She brought down 500 kg of garbage from the Himalayas. This shows her concern for the environment.





4. How does she describe her feelings at the summit of the Everest?

Santosh literally felt on the top of the world. She unfurled the Indian tricolour. She says that her feeling was indescribable. It was a spiritual moment for her. She felt proud of being an Indian.

5. Santosh Yadav got into the record books both times she scaled Mt Everest. What were the reasons for this?

Santosh Yadav got into the record books both times she scaled Mt Everest. When she conquered Mt Everest for the first time at the age of 20, she became the youngest woman in the world to do so.

When she climbed it for the second time, she became the only woman in the world to achieve this feat.

III. Complete the following statement.

1. From her room in Kasturba Hostel, Santosh used to _____.

From her room in Kasturba Hostel, Santosh used to watch villagers going up the hill and suddenly vanish after a while.

2. When she finished college, Santosh had to write a letter of apology to her father because _____.

When she finished college, Santosh had to write a letter of apology to her father because she had got herself enrolled at Uttarkashi's Nehru Institute of Mountaineering without his permission.

3. During the Everest expedition, her seniors in the team admired her _____ while _____ endeared her to fellow climbers.

During the Everest expedition, her seniors in the team admired her climbing skills, physical fitness and mental strength while her concern for others and desire to work together with them endeared her to fellow climbers.

IV. Pick out words from the text that mean the same as the following words or expressions. (Look in the paragraphs indicated.)

1. Took to be true without proof (1): _____.

2. Based on reason; sensible; reasonable (2): _____.

3. The usual way of doing things (3): _____.





4. A strong desire arising from within (5): _____.

5. The power to endure, without falling ill (7): _____.

1. Assumed

2. Rational

3. Custom

4. Urge

5. Resistance

Solved Question Bank

Reference-to-Context Questions

Q. Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. The only woman in the world who has conquered Mt Everest twice was born in a society where the birth of a son was regarded as a blessing, and a daughter, though not considered a curse, was not generally welcome. When her mother was expecting Santosh, a travelling 'holy man', giving her his blessing assumed that she wanted a son.

a. The woman being talked about in the above passage is _____.

Santosh Yadav

b. Daughters were considered a curse in her society. True/False

False

c. Birth of a son was welcomed and considered a _____.

Blessing

d. _____ is the synonym of 'climbed' in the above passage.

'Conquered'

2. At sixteen, most of the girls in her village used to get married. Santosh was also under pressure from her parents to do the same.

A marriage as early as that was the last thing in her mind. She threatened her parents that she would never marry if she did not get a proper education. She left home and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi.

a. The marriageable age for the village girls was _____.

Sixteen

b. 'Without proper education, Santosh would never marry'. She told this to her parents.

True/False

True

c. She got admission in a _____ school.

Delhi





d. The synonym of 'warned' is _____.

'Threatened'

3. If her climbing skills, physical fitness and mental strength impressed her seniors, her concern for others and desire to work together with them found her a special place in the hearts of fellow climbers.

a. Her senior in the team admired her _____, _____ and physical fitness.

Climbing skills, mental strength

b. Santosh always had a _____ for others.

Concern

c. Fellow climbers hated her for her desire to work together. True/False

False

d. The opposite of the word 'senior' is _____.

'Juniors'

4. During the 1992 Everest mission, Santosh Yadav provided special care to a climber who lay dying at the South Col. She was unfortunately unsuccessful in saving him. However, she managed to save another climber, Mohan Singh, who would have met with the same fate had she not shared her oxygen with him.

a. The first line talks about _____ which was carried out in the year 1992.

The Everest mission

b. Santosh saved Mohan Singh, a climber, by sharing her _____ with him.

Oxygen

c. Santosh could not save the life of one of the climbers. True/False

True

d. Another word for 'fate' is _____.

'Destiny'

5. Within twelve months, Santosh found herself a member of an Indo-Nepalese Women's Expedition that invited her to join them. She then conquered the Everest a second time, thus setting a record as the only woman to have conquered the Everest twice.

a. Just in the span of _____ Santosh had joined a group of Indo-Nepalese

Twelve months/one year

b. She became the only woman to have climbed the Everest _____.

Twice





c. The invitation that Santosh received to join an expedition shows her popularity, success and expertise in her field. **True/False**

True

d. Word which means the same as 'voyage' is _____.

'Expedition'

6. Describing her feelings when she was literally 'on top of the world', Santosh has said, "It took some time for the enormity of the moment to sink in..... Then, I unfurled the Indian tricolour and held it aloft on the roof of the world.

a. Santosh, after reaching the top of the world took time to understand the importance of that moment. **True/False**

True

b. She had spread out the _____.

Tricolour/Indian flag

c. 'Held it aloft' in the passage means _____.

Held it up high

d. The word in the above lines that means the same as 'important or great in size' is _____.

'Enormity'

7. "The feeling is indescribable. The India flag was flying on top of the world. It was truly a spiritual moment. I felt proud as an Indian."

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

a. Santosh could not even put her feeling into _____.

Words

b. Santosh also believed in preserving the _____.

Environment

c. 500 kilograms of garbage was brought down from the Himalayas by Santosh and her fellow climbers. **True/False**

True

d. The word in the above lines that means 'having strong and sincere feelings' is _____.

'Fervent'





Short Answer Type Questions

1. How was Santosh different from other girls in her village?

Santosh was different from other girls in her village. She was not contented with the traditional way of life. She had begun living a life on her own terms from the very beginning. She did not wear traditional Indian dresses meant for village girls.

2. What decision Santosh had to take when she turned sixteen?

When Santosh turned sixteen, it was time for her to get married like other village girls. Most of the girls of her village got married when they turned sixteen. Her parents also pressed her for marriage. But Santosh refused to get married at an early age. She decided to continue her education.

3. What did her seniors think about Santosh's ability as a climber?

Santosh was always appreciated by her seniors for her abilities and leadership qualities. They found her climbing skills, physical fitness and mental strength admirable. Her helping nature brought her very close to her fellow climbers.

4. How did Santosh save the life of a fellow climber, Mohan Singh?

During one of her expeditions to Mount Everest, she saved the life of her fellow climber Mohan Singh who was short of oxygen. When Santosh noticed him dying, she shared her oxygen with him and saved his life.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Determination and correct choice of path always lead to success. Do you agree?

Elaborate with reference to the success story of Santosh Yadav.

Santosh Yadav was quite determined to choose her correct path. Born in a traditional family, she had to face many difficulties and opposition from her own family. Her parents wanted her to get married at the age of sixteen. She firmly opposed it and warned that she would never get married unless she got proper education. She went to Delhi and got herself enrolled without her father's permission. She decided to work part-time to meet her educational expenses. She went to Jaipur and joined the Mountaineering Institute. Her firm determination and hard work put her on the top of the world. She proved that nothing is impossible in this world if we are determined.





2. What inspired Santosh Yadav to be a climber? How does her life inspire you?

Santosh Yadav was different from the girls of her age. She was determined to choose her own way of life. She joined Maharani College at Jaipur. Her room in the hostel faced the Aravalli Hills. One day, she saw some villagers climbing the hills. She was fascinated to see them. She decided to climb the hills. She went there and met some climbers. Seeing her mental toughness and strong determination, the climbers encouraged her to take climbing seriously. She polished her climbing skills at Nehru School of Mountaineering rapidly and conquered the Mount Everest twice. She is an inspiration for all the ambitious girls. Her mental toughness, strong determination and willpower inspire us to undertake any task that we dream of, for nothing is impossible if one is determined and clear about one's aim like Santosh.

3. Both Santosh Yadav and Maria Sharapova reached the top of the world in their respective fields. How are they alike and different? Out of the two whom would you make your role model and why?

Both Santosh Yadav and Maria Sharapova started from scratch. They faced opposition right from the beginning. But their strong determination, hard work and mental toughness helped them to fulfil their dreams. Their background and monetary status differed. Maria Sharapova, unlike Santosh Yadav, did get the parental support in studies or career. Both are role models for me. Both reached the top in different situations. Both of them are fighters, determined and inspiring. However, being an India, Santosh had to face both social and economic problems. She did not get the professional and economic support from her parents as Maria got. So if I have to choose one, I would choose Santosh Yadav as my role model.

4. Santosh Yadav saved the life of one of her fellows on expedition. It is an example of team spirit. What would you do under such a condition?

Santosh Yadav was on her expedition when one of the six members, Mohan Singh, exhausted his oxygen cylinder. All the team members were worried about Mohan Singh as there was no extra source of oxygen. It was a question of life and death for them. Santosh Yadav could not see a team member dying like that. She had a sense of sacrifice and team spirit. Like a true Indian and a proud daughter of the country she decided to help her fellow climber, Mohan Singh. She risked her life and gave her share of oxygen to Mohan Singh. She could never forget that moment, which sparkles in his eyes, yes, it was the real team spirit that every sportsman must display. I would also have done the same in such a situation.





5. Do you think that if girls like Santosh are allowed to go to school in village, it will improve our society? Justify.

Yes, I agree that if girls like Santosh Yadav are allowed to go to school in villages, it will bring a change in our society. Girls are talented and if they get an opportunity, they can excel in all the fields. An educated girl can educate the entire family and can enhance the moral of the society. Gender bias is rooted deeply in our society. In the story, Santosh Yadav was not allowed to go out of her village school for higher education. She fought against the traditional system. Truly, Santosh is the role model to all village girls in India. In fact, the village girls are doing well in all fields. They have shown that they are not lagging behind in any fields. So, they should be given equal chances to grow.

6. According to you, what are the social customs that do not allow the girls to get proper education? Should we revolt against the old social system? Why/Why not?

There are many social customs like early marriage, looking after household chores, social insecurity, etc. which do not allow the girls to get proper education in rural areas. Girls are expected to lead a traditional way of life. Revolt against the social customs and age-old tradition will bring unrest in society. If we revolt against any system, we pay a heavy cost. But it does not mean that we should continue to be victim of the system. We need education and awareness. We need to change the mindset of people. We need to lead the battle. Mere modernity and westernization will not bring desirable changes. A remarkable change has come in our society. Now, girls are excelling in all the fields. So, 'revolt' is not a solution, reform is the need of the hour.

7. Like Santosh Yadav, your parents want you to settle like other girls in your society. But you are an ambitious girl and want to do something more in life. We see that some of the girls revolt against their parents and fall in bad company. They are misled and exploited. What will you do in such a situation? Elaborate.

It is true that most of the girls in our society do not get an opportunity to grow in their lives. They are confined to the four walls of their houses. There are many examples of ambitious girls who broke away from their families and tried to lead their own life. But how many of them succeeded is a pertinent question. Most of them fell in bad hands and got exploited. They turned out to be depressed, desolute and isolated in their prime lives. We cannot have a satisfied and happy life without the support of family and society. Being an ambitious girl one should try to win over the family, seek their support and assure them of





protection of values of family. I will not revolt against my family. I will take my parents into confidence before taking any step. I am sure our parents always think of our well-being.

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