

Helen Keller as Immortal Inspiration

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Abstract: Helen Keller is an example of inspiration for handicapped or disabled people. At the age of 19 years in 1882 she felt ill. Due to this illness she lost her sight and hearing.

She was writer, Lecturer and supporter for the handicapped people. She fought well in her life and became a figure of hope and courage for handicapped. She is known throughout the world for her courage. This paper will make an analysis of Helen Keller as an immortal inspiration in the light of her autobiographical book “The Story of My Life”. This was written by Keller when she was only twenty two years old. In this she reminds her childhood. She depicts her struggle with life in this play. She suffers with visual, speech and hearing mutilations. She also credits all those who have helped her in her life as a child with disabilities. She also writes about her triumph over her disabilities. This shows us the sufferings of a person who has been denied with sound and sight that also in childhood. This also teaches us lesson that how normal people can help the disabled people.

Key Words: inspiration, disabled, handicapped, courage, determination,

Helen Keller was born June of 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama as a normal child but unfortunately at the age of nearly two years she came down with a fever as a result of a severe congestion of the abdomen and mind. Her father Arthur Henley Keller was an editor of Tuscumbia North Alabamian and captain in the Confederate Army. Her mother Catherine Everett Keller also called Kate. She becomes abnormal, but her abnormality was a blessing in disguise for others as she becomes an inspirational figure for others. “The Story of My Life is an autobiographical story of Helen Keller. This book was dedicated to Alexander Gram Bell. In 1959 this was modified into a Broadway ‘The Miracle Worker. In 1962, on this play was made a film of the same name. In 1959 the Indian Hindi Film Black was also partially based on Keller’s life. She was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA on 1880 and died on 1968. She is an example of inspiration for handicapped or disabled people. She was writer, Lecturer and supporter for the handicapped people. She became blind at the age of 19 months. In 1887 Helen’s parents employ Anne Sullivan as a teacher and care taker for Helen.

She was a graduate of the Perkins School for the Blind. Anne makes Helen able to learn to communicate with the help of sign language. She taught how to write on Braille. She teaches her with the help of touching the words with fingers. She went to Perkins Institute for Blind in the month of May of 1888. She gets her education at Boston and New York. She completed her matriculation from Radcliffe College. She becomes the first disabled person to get BA. She has written twelve book and several articles. She is recipient of many honors and awards for her struggle in her life. She was awarded Academy Award for a documentary about her life. She was also awarded Presidential Medal of Freedom. Her works and awards are inspiration not only for her but also for other disabled people. At the age of eleven years in 1891, she wrote “The Frost King” her first book. “The Story of My Life” was published in 1903. This is her first book on autobiography which she wrote at the age of twenty two years.

Helen was a member of the Socialist Party and works for it like normal person works for this. She voiced for the women and supported them for the right to vote and right to control. She was co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union. In 1924 she joined a NGO American Foundation for the Blind. She was good speaker and so many famous speeches of her are preserved in the Helen Keller Archives. She had made seven trips of the world by visiting more than thirty five countries. She died on 1st June of 1968 at the age of 87. Her ashes are interred at Washington National Cathedral. She is remembered as a symbol of vigor and determination and is immortal due to her inspiration for the whole world will the life exists on this earth.

“The Story of My Life” in an autobiographical story of Helen Keller’s struggle with her physical impairments. In this story Keller depicts how she suffers with her physical impairments from her childhood when she was only two years old. In this play Keller reminds her struggle in her early childhood due to physical impairments and her struggle made her model for other disable persons. She depicts her struggle in her book “The Story of My Life” which she faces due to her physical impairments. She suffers in her early childhood with visual, speech and hearing mutilations. In this book she depicts her life from her childhood as she writes: “The journey, which I remember well, was very pleasant. I made friends with many people on the train.”

She also depicts her relation with her teacher Anne Sullivan who helps her to survive. Keller became blind and deaf in her early childhood at the age of nineteen months. She also credits all those who have helped her in her life as a child with disabilities. She also writes about her triumph over her disabilities. This shows us the sufferings of a person who has been denied with sound and sight that also in childhood. This also teaches us lesson that how normal people can help the disabled people. Keller is a source of inspiration for all who struggle with her physical impairments but wants to do something in their life. She depicts her childhood in the “The Story of

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My Life” as: “My parents were deeply grieved and perplexed. We lived a long way from any school for the blind or the deaf, and it seemed unlikely that anyone would come to such an out-of-the-way place as Tuscumbia to teach a child who was both deaf and blind. Indeed, my friends and relatives sometimes doubted whether I could be taught. My mother's only ray of hope came from Dickens's "American Notes." She had read his account of Laura Bridgman, and remembered vaguely that she was deaf and blind, yet had been educated. But she also remembered with a hopeless pang that Dr. Howe, who had discovered the way to teach the deaf and blind, had been dead many years. His methods had probably died with him; and if they had not, how was a little girl in a far-off town in Alabama to receive the benefit of them?”

Ms. Anne Sullivan is best known as Helen Keller’s teacher and companion who connected her with the outside world. Miss Sullivan was not only successful in bringing Helen out of darkness and uncertainty but also was instrumental in making her think and thereby helping her make a connection between the abstract and the physical world. Miss Sullivan and Helen Keller were together for forty-nine years. Helen describes the day Miss Sullivan came to the family home as: “THE most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.” On the afternoon of that exciting day Keller stood on the veranda and waiting for her teacher to come. Her mother shows her with the help of signs about the coming of the Miss Sullivan. She did not guess what to happen but guessed ‘that something unusual was about to happen’. She writes in her book “The Story of My Life” as: “THE most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.”

Helen Keller was initiated to language with the help of her teacher Miss Sullivan. Her experiences with Anne Sullivan helped her to learn sign language, rules, writings, and behaviors. Anne Sullivan taught her the letters of alphabets. Anne Sullivan makes Helen Keller able to learn words and communication. The two incidents narrated by Keller how she initiated language by Miss Sullivan are:

“The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride.”

“One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is *mug* and that "w-a-t-e-r" is *water*...”

Helen enjoyed the nature in the company of her teacher Miss Sullivan. She leans both the magnificent as well as ferocious aspects of the nature. The Munificent aspect of nature delights her. But she learnt that nature could be also is ferocious which terrifies her. Keller recalls about the natures beneficent and magnificent aspect as: “I RECALL many incidents of the summer of 1887 that followed my soul's sudden awakening. I did nothing but explore with my hands and learn the name of every object that I touched; and the more I handled things and learned their names and uses, the more joyous and confident grew my sense of kinship with the rest of the world.” Keller says about the furious aspect of nature when one day she was with her teacher on walk. She writes as “But about this time I had an experience which taught me that nature is not always kind.” The weather grew warm and humid. They stood under the cool shade of a tree. With her teacher's help Helen sat amidst the branches. Miss Sullivan went to fetch lunch and Helen was all alone. Helen felt paralyzed and frightened until Miss Sullivan came and helped her. Helen had learnt a new lesson that “Nature wages open war against her children and under softest touch hides treacherous”.

Helen Keller fought well in her life and became a figure of hope and courage for not only for handicapped but also for normal children. She is known throughout the world for her courage. She lived her life with persistence and determination even though she was disabled. She is not inspiration for disabled persons but for the normal ones also. Even though she has her own challenges in life but she was determined to help others selflessly. The main theme of her book “The Story of My Life” is importance of determination. The lesson of this story is that even the disabled and challenged can lead a healthy, purposeful and thrilling life.

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