

Notes for the Teacher Units

REACH FOR THE TOP

This unit has two biographical pieces that depict persistent endeavours to reach the top. Part II of this unit is taken from a newspaper. The language is very current and idiomatic. An exercise of matching words and phrases to their meanings has been given as a pre-reading activity to facilitate students' understanding and appreciation of this part of the text.

In this unit students are asked to imagine that they have to give a speech. They may wish to read the texts of well-known speeches such as Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny'. A speech is a formal use of spoken language. It must be prepared meticulously.

The language is formal but should be made powerful by the use of balance ("Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." — Kennedy), imagery ("The light has gone out of our lives" — Nehru) and other such rhetorical devices. It can be enriched by the use of examples and anecdotes.

The Writing task of composing an article for a school magazine can be prepared for by looking at other examples of such articles in newspapers. This task makes a beginning in helping students to write for the print media. Encourage them to work within a given word limit (such as 500 words, or 1000 words), and to use everyday, contemporary language.

Help students to write a description of Santosh Yadav's character by drawing their attention to her background, likes and dislikes, her humanity and her contribution to society.

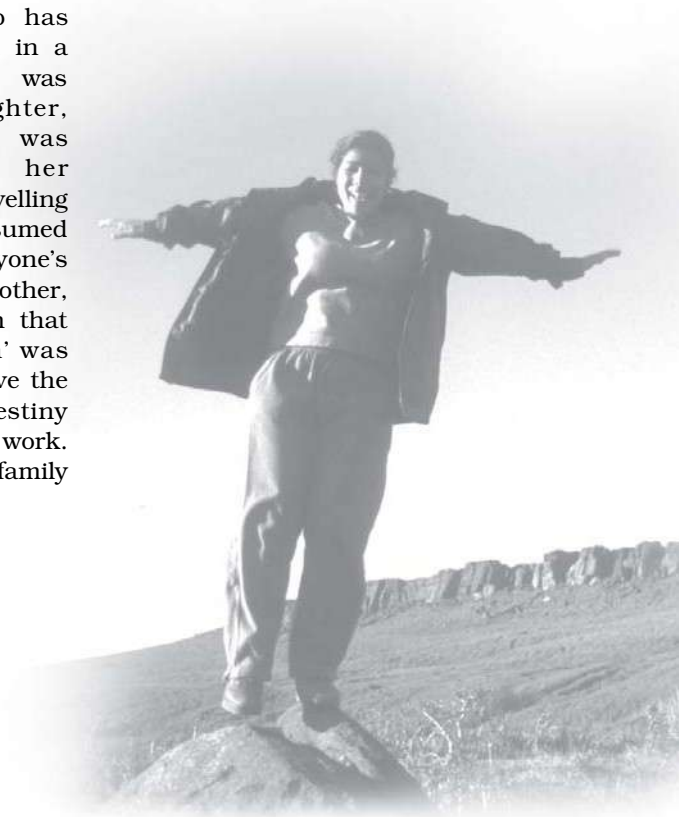
Part I

Santosh Yadav

BEFORE YOU READ

- *Think for a while and make a list of three to five persons you idolise, or admire very much for their achievements. Your idols may be from any sphere of life — sports, medicine, media, or art and culture.*
- *Your teacher will then discuss your choices with you to find out who the top five idols of your class are.*

1. The only woman in the world who has scaled 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. But, to everyone's surprise, the unborn child's grandmother, who was standing close by, told him that they did not want a son. The 'holy man' was also surprised! Nevertheless, he gave the requested blessing . . . and as destiny would have it, the blessing seemed to work. Santosh was born the sixth child in a family with five sons, a sister to



five brothers. She was born in the small village of Joniyawas of Rewari District in Haryana.

2. The girl was given the name 'Santosh', which means contentment. But Santosh was not always content with her place in a traditional way of life. She began living life on her own terms from the start. Where other girls wore traditional Indian dresses, Santosh preferred shorts. Looking back, she says now, "From the very beginning I was quite determined that if I chose a correct and a rational path, the others around me had to change, not me."
3. Santosh's parents were affluent landowners who could afford to send their children to the best schools, even to the country's capital, New Delhi, which was quite close by. But, in line with the prevailing custom in the family, Santosh had to make do with the local village school. So, she decided to fight the system in her own quiet way when the right moment arrived. *And the right moment came when she turned sixteen.* At sixteen, most of the girls in her village used to get married. Santosh was also under pressure from her parents to do the same.
4. A marriage as early as that was the last thing on her mind. She threatened her parents that she would never marry if she did not get a proper education. She left home and got herself enrolled in a school in Delhi. When her parents refused to pay for her education, she politely informed them of her plans to earn money by working part time to pay her school fees. Her parents then agreed to pay for her education.
5. Wishing always to study "a bit more" and with her father slowly getting used to her urge for more education, Santosh passed the high school examinations and went to Jaipur. She joined Maharani College and got a room in Kasturba Hostel. Santosh remembers, "Kasturba Hostel faced the

in line with:
following or in
accordance with;
according to

the last thing: the
least important
thing

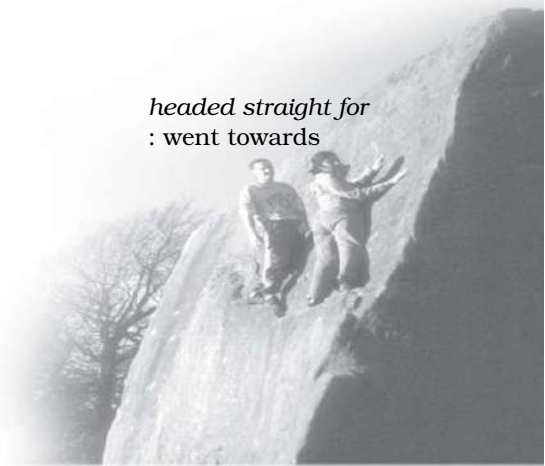
Aravalli Hills. I used to watch villagers from my room, going up the hill and suddenly vanishing after a while. One day I decided to check it out myself. I found nobody except a few mountaineers. I asked if I could join them. To my pleasant surprise, they answered in the affirmative and motivated me to take to climbing.”

*check it out: find out
(the truth)*

6. Then there was no looking back for this determined young girl. She saved money and enrolled in a course at Uttarkashi’s Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. “My college semester in Jaipur was to end in April but it ended on the nineteenth of May. And I was supposed to be in Uttarkashi on the twenty-first. So, I did not go back home; instead, I headed straight for the training. I had to write a letter of apology to my father without whose permission I had got myself enrolled at Uttarkashi.”

7. Thereafter, Santosh went on an expedition every year. Her climbing skills matured rapidly. Also, she developed a remarkable resistance to cold and the altitude. Equipped with an iron will, physical endurance and an amazing mental toughness, she proved herself repeatedly. The culmination of her hard work and sincerity came in 1992, just four years after she had shyly asked the Aravalli mountaineers if she could join them. At barely twenty years of age, Santosh Yadav scaled Mt Everest, becoming the youngest woman in the world to achieve the feat. If her climbing skills, physical fitness, and mental strength impressed her seniors, her concern for

*headed straight for
: went towards*



others and desire to work together with them found her a special place in the hearts of fellow climbers.

Iron will, physical endurance and mental toughness characterise Santosh Yadav.

8. 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.
9. Within twelve months, Santosh found herself a member of an Indo-Nepalese Women's Expedition that invited her to join them. She then scaled the Everest a second time, thus setting a record as the only woman to have scaled the Everest twice, and securing for herself and India a unique place in the annals of mountaineering. In recognition of her achievements, the Indian government bestowed upon her one of the nation's top honours, the Padmashri.
10. Describing her feelings when she was literally 'on top of the world', Santosh has said, "It took some time for the enormity of the moment to sink in ... Then I unfurled the Indian tricolour and held it aloft on the roof of the world. The feeling is indescribable. The Indian flag was flying on top of the world. It was truly a spiritual moment. I felt proud as an Indian."

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

top honours:
highest awards

the enormity of the moment: a very great moment

sink in: be understood

held it aloft: held it up high

fervent: having strong and sincere feelings

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? (1)
 2. Give an example to show that even as a young girl Santosh was not ready to accept anything unreasonable. (2)
 3. Why was Santosh sent to the local school? (3)

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

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

1. How did Santosh begin to climb mountains?
2. What incidents during the Everest expedition show Santosh's concern for her team-mates?
3. What shows her concern for the environment?
4. How does she describe her feelings at the summit of the Everest?
5. Santosh Yadav got into the record books both times she scaled Mt Everest. What were the reasons for this?

III. Complete the following statements.

1. From her room in Kasturba Hostel, Santosh used to _____
 2. When she finished college, Santosh had to write a letter of apology to her father because _____
3. During the Everest expedition, her seniors in the team admired her _____ while _____ 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): _____