

# **Nelson Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom**

## **Oral Comprehension Check (Page 18-19)**

**1. Where did the ceremonies take place? Can you name any public buildings in India that are made of sandstone?**

**A.** The ceremonies took place in the lovely sandstone amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria, which were attended by dignitaries and world leaders of several nations. In India, the Rashtrapati Bhavan and Red Fort are two public buildings that are made of red sandstone.

**2. Can you say how 10 May is an ‘autumn day’ in South Africa?**

**A.** Generally, autumn season signifies the harvest season that is associated with abundance and prosperity. 10 May is an ‘autumn day’ in South Africa because on this auspicious day, the installation of South Africa’s first democratic, non-racial government took place in the presence of the largest gathering ever of international leaders on the South African soil.

**3. At the beginning of his speech, Mandela mentions “an extraordinary human disaster”. What does he mean by this? What is the “glorious ... human achievement” he speaks of at the end?**

**A.** In Mandela’s speech ‘an extraordinary human disaster’, he wanted to express the practice of Apartheid in South Africa. During this practice, there was a racial segregation of people based on colour and the Black people suffered the most as they were discriminated by the rest. They could not enjoy the right to freedom. Mandela was jailed as a prisoner for 18 years on the infamous ‘Robben Island’ where he was mistreated by the authorities. He considered it as “great glorious human

achievement” that he became the first Black President of South Africa where the Blacks were deprived of basic needs and suffered different kinds of discrimination and were treated badly.

**4. What does Mandela thank the international leaders for?**

**A.** Mandela felt extremely privileged to welcome the dignitaries and international leaders at the swearing-in ceremony because it was not too long ago when the South Africans were considered outlaws. He therefore, thanked all of them for having come from far and wide to witness the historical oath-taking ceremony of the first Black President of South Africa. This was a wonderful gesture of international recognition to a newly born free democratic nation. This event could be considered as a common victory for justice, peace and human dignity.

**5. What ideals does he set out for the future of South Africa?**

**A.** Mandela set the ideals of liberating the people of South Africa from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination. He wanted the people of the country to enjoy the right to freedom from all forms of bondage and prejudice.

**Oral Comprehension Check (Page 21)**

**1. What do the military generals do? How has their attitude changed and why?**

**A.** The highest military generals of South African defence force and police saluted and pledged their loyalty to Mandela. This was of great significance as otherwise during the Apartheid era they would have arrested him and put him behind bars. Their attitude changed towards Blacks due to the struggles and sacrifices that were put in by many heroes of South Africa. This struggle for freedom was not just a struggle with Apartheid, but

brought a massive change in mindsets of many people. Mandela believed that love is something that could be taught and human beings are naturally inclined towards love more, rather than hate.

**2. Why were two national anthems sung?**

**A.** On the auspicious occasion of the inauguration ceremony, two national anthems were sung – the Whites sang ‘Nkosi Sikelel – iAfrika’ and the Blacks sang ‘Die Stem’ that was the old anthem of the Republic. Both the anthems symbolized the equality of rights between Whites and Blacks.

**3. How does Mandela describe the systems of government in his country – (i) in the first decade, and (ii) in the final decade, of the twentieth century?**

- A.** 1. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the white-skinned people of South Africa patched up their differences and erected a system of racial domination against the dark-skinned peoples of their own land. This created the basis of one of the harshest, most inhumane, societies the world has ever seen or known.
2. In the final decade of the twentieth century, the previous system of government had been overturned forever and replaced by one that recognised the rights and freedoms of all peoples, regardless of the colour of their skin.

**4. What does courage mean to Mandela?**

**A.** According to Mandela, courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. A brave man is not one who does not feel afraid, but one who conquers that fear.

**5. Which does he think is natural, to love or to hate?**

**A.** Mandela thought that love comes more naturally to the human heart rather than hate.

## **Oral Comprehension Check (Page 24)**

### **1. What “twin obligations” does Mandela mention?**

**A.** Mandela mentions two obligations that every man has in life – (i) obligations to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children; and (ii) he has an obligation to his people, his community and his country.

### **2. What did being free mean to Mandela as a boy, and as a student? How does he contrast these “transitory freedoms” with “the basic and honourable freedoms”?**

**A.** Like any other kid, Mandela felt freedom meant to be happy, make merry and enjoy the blissful life in his childhood years. However, when a young fellow becomes an adult, the antics of childhood look transitory because all the childish activities are worthless from an adult’s perspective. When a person becomes an adult, he learns to earn a livelihood and earn his own bread and butter. In such a scenario, he understands the basic and honourable freedom in his family and the society that he lives in.

### **3. Does Mandela think the oppressor is free? Why/Why not?**

**A.** Mandela does not feel that the oppressor is free because in his opinion, an oppressor is like a victim of hatred who is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. He perceives that both the oppressor and the oppressed are robbed of their humanity and peace of mind.

## **Thinking about the Text (Page 24)**

**1. Why did such a large number of international leaders attend the inauguration? What did it signify the triumph of?**

**A.** Being a part of the inauguration ceremony, the international leaders showed a gesture of solidarity from the international community to the concept of end of Apartheid. This signified the victory of good over evil and the triumph of a tolerant society without any prejudice and discrimination of caste, colour or creed.

**2. What does Mandela mean when he says he is “simply the sum of all those African patriots” who had gone before him?**

**A.** By saying that he is “simply the sum of all those African patriots”, Mandela offers his tribute to all the people who had sacrificed their lives in favour of the struggle for freedom. He says that he shall always remain grateful and thankful to those who had gone before him because those freedom fighters had paved the path of co-operation and unity for him. Therefore, Mandela felt that when he comes to power, he would bring equality among his people along with their support and co-operation.

**3. Would you agree that the “depths of oppression” create “heights of character”? How does Mandela illustrate this? Can you add your own examples to this argument?**

**A.** Yes, I agree with the statement that “depths of oppression” do create ‘heights of character’. Nelson Mandela illustrates this by citing examples of great heroes of South Africa such as Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Chief Luthulis, Yusuf Dadoos, Bram Fischers, Robert Sobukwes among others who inspired other people by sacrificing their lives in the long struggle for freedom. In India’s pre-Independence era, there was a galaxy of great leaders who didn’t give up to the oppression of British rule such as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar

Vallabhbhai Patel, Lala Lajpat Rai, Chandra Shekhar Ajjad, Bhagat Singh and many more. Nelson Mandela seems to be absolutely right, if we compare them with the quality of political leaders that India is having today.

#### **4. How did Mandela's understanding of freedom change with age and experience?**

**A.** With age and rich experience, Mandela understood the essence of freedom in everyone's life. As a young boy, he always thought that he was born free and could do anything that he wanted. He strongly believed that as long as he obeyed his father and abided by the customs of his tribe, he was free in every possible way. However, as he grew older, he started feeling that freedom was required to raise a family and to earn livelihood, this started dominating his thoughts and views. In due course of time, he realised that he was selfish and was leading an illusionary life during his boyhood. He slowly understood that it was not just his freedom alone that was being curtailed, but the freedom of all the Black people was retrenched. Mandela understood that his people were being deprived and discriminated and this led him to develop a hunger for the freedom of his people.

#### **5. How did Mandela's 'hunger for freedom' change his life?**

**A.** During his youth, Mandela realised that it was not just his freedom alone that was being curtailed, but the freedom of all Black people. The hunger for his own freedom became the hunger for freedom for all his fellow brothers and sisters. In the process, this changed the fearful man to a bold rebel. Mandela sacrificed the comforts of a settled family life to fight for the freedom of his countrymen. He joined the African National Congress and this changed his perspective from a frightened young man into a fearless person who fought against racial prejudice and colour discrimination.