

Chapter-2

Nelson Mandela : Long Walk to Freedom

Comprehension Check

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

Ans- The ceremonies took place in the campus of the Union Building of Pretoria, which were attended by dignitaries and leaders of many nations.

In India ; Rashtrapati Bhavan and Red Fort are buildings made of red sandstone.

2. Can you say how 10th May is an 'autumn day' in South Africa?

Ans- 10th May is an 'autumn day' in South Africa because on this day there was the largest gathering of international leaders on South African soil for the installation of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government.

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?

Ans- By 'an extraordinary human disaster', Mandela means to state the practice of apartheid in South Africa. During this, there was a racial segregation based on colour and the blacks suffered a lot. They were not allowed to demand freedom or any right. Mandela himself did spend many years on infamous 'Robben Island' as a prisoner where he was beaten mercilessly.

He considered it as great glorious human achievement that a black person became the President of a country where the blacks were not even considered human beings and were treated badly.

4. what does Mandela thank the international leaders for?

Ans- Mandela felt very privileged to welcome the international leaders at the swearing-in ceremony because not too long ago, the South Africans were considered outlaws. He thus thanks all of them for having come to witness the historical ceremony. This was a gesture of international recognition to a newly born free democratic nation and it could be

considered a common victory for justice, peace and human dignity.

5. what ideals does Nelson Mandela set for the future of south Africa?

Ans- Nelson Mandela set the ideals of liberating people from bondage of poverty, deprivation and suffering. He also set the ideal for a society where there would be no discrimination based on gender or racial origins.

6. what did the military generals do? How did their attitude change and why?

Ans- The highest military generals of south African Defence Force saluted Mandela and pledged their loyalty which was of great significance as during apartheid era they would have arrested him. The change in their attitude was because of struggle and sacrifices put in by many heroes of south Africa. This struggle not only ensured the freedom of a nation struggling with apartheid, but also brought a change in mindsets of many. He believed that love can also be taught and human being is naturally inclined towards love rather than hate.

7. why were the two national anthems sung?

Ans- On the auspicious occasion of the inauguration, two national anthems: one by the whites and the other by the blacks symbolising the equality of the blacks and the whites were sung.

8. How does Mandela describe the systems of government in his country (i) in the first decade, and (ii) in the final decade, of the 20th century?

Ans- (i) In the first decade of the century, the whites erected a system of racial domination against the blacks, thus creating the basis of one of the harshest and most inhumane societies the world had ever known.

(ii) In the final decade of the 20th century, the previous system had been overthrown and replaced by one which recognised rights and freedom of all people regardless of colour of their skin.

9. what does courage mean to Mandela?

Ans- For Mandela, courage does not mean the absence of fear but a victory

over it. According to him, brave men need not be fearless but should be able to conquer fear.

10. which does Mandela think is natural, to love or to hate?

Ans- For Mandela, love comes more naturally to the human heart than hate.

11. what 'twin obligations' does Mandela mention?

Ans- Mandela mentions that every man has twin obligations. The first is to his family, parents, wife and children; the second obligation is to his people, his community and his country.

12. 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"?

Ans- Like any other kid, for Mandela freedom meant to make merry and enjoy the blissful life. Once one becomes an adult, antics of childhood looks like transitory because most of the childish activities are wasteful from an adult's perspective. Once you are adult, you have to earn a

livelihood to bring the bacon home. It is only then when you get an honourable existence in the family and in the society.

13. Does Mandela think the oppressor is free? why/ why not?

Ans- Mandela does not think that the oppressor is free because according to him, an oppressor is a victim of hatred who is behind the basis of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. He realises that both the oppressor and the oppressed are robbed of their humanity and peace.

Thinking About The Text

1. why did such a large number of international leaders attend the inauguration? what did it signify the triumph of?

Ans- To be the part of the inauguration, international leaders showed a gesture of solidarity from international community to the idea of end of apartheid. It was the significance of the victory of good over evil and triumph of a tolerant society without any discrimination.

2. what does Mandela mean when he says he is "simply the sum of all those African patriots," who had gone before him?

Ans-

By saying that he is simply the sum of all those African patriots, Mandela wants to pay his tribute to all the people who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom. He says that he is grateful to those who had gone before him because those heroes of past had paved the path of cooperation and unity to him. Therefore, he could try to come to power to bring equality for his people with their support.

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?

Ans-

I agree with the statement that depths of oppression create heights of character. Nelson Mandela illustrates this by giving examples of great heroes of south Africa like Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu and others who were inspired to sacrifice their lives in the long freedom struggle.

India is full of such examples. During our freedom struggle there was a galaxy of leaders of great characters and the oppression of British rule created and encouraged people of noble characters like Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, JL Nehru, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Savarkar Bhagat Singh and many more. If we compare them with the quality of political leaders India is having today, then Nelson Mandela seems to be absolutely right.

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

Ans- with age and experience, Mandela understood the real meaning of freedom. As a young boy, he thought that he was born free and believed that as long as he obeyed his father and abided by the customs of his tribe, he was free in every possible manner. As he grew older, freedom to raise a family and freedom to earn livelihood started dominating his thoughts. Gradually he realised that he was selfish during his boyhood. He slowly understood that it was not just his freedom that was being

curtailed, but the freedom of all blacks. It was the freedom from fear and prejudice. Age and experience widened his perspective of freedom!

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

Ans- Mandela realised in his youth that it was not just his freedom that was being curtailed, but the freedom of all blacks. This changed the fearful man to a fearless rebel. He sacrificed the comforts of a settled family to fight for a greater cause. He joined the African National Congress, and this changed him from a frightened young man into a bold one who fought against racial prejudice.