

Ch 2 - A Long Walk to Freedom

- Nelson Mandela

Theme

The lesson pays tribute to those black heroes and patriots who waged a relentless struggle against the apartheid or the racist regime of South Africa. Here we find a description of the inauguration ceremony held in the Union Building attended by politicians and dignitaries from more than 140 countries.

Nelson Mandela gives a message of peace and unity of mankind. He foresees a new regime which will be based on the equality of men and women. He hopes that in the new regime there will be no exploitation of man by man. There will be no room for racism and segregation in the new order. The autobiography conveys a strong message of justice and equality. It also conveys simultaneously that courage, persistence and fortitude and an indomitable will to pursue the truth can never fail. Mandela conveys with unshakable conviction that love and not hate comes naturally to humans and any system that goes against this natural tendency creates a class of oppressors and the

oppressed and breeds injustice, cruelty and eventually great sorrow.

Answer the following Questions

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

A 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?

A As South Africa is in the Southern Hemisphere, May falls in the autumn season. Thus 10th May is an 'autumn day':

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 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?

A 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 internationally recognition to a newly born free democratic nation and it could be considered as a common victory for justice, peace and human dignity.

5. What ideals does Nelson Mandela set for the future of South Africa?

A 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?

A 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 brought a change in mindsets of many. He believed that can also be taught and human being is naturally inclined towards love rather than hate.

7. Why were two national anthems sung?

A On the auspicious occasion of the inauguration, two national ~~at~~ 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 twentieth century ?

A (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 overturned and replaced by one which recognised rights and freedom of all people regardless of color of their skin.

9. What does courage mean to Mandela?

A For Mandela courage does not mean the absence of fear but a victory over fear. 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?

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

11. What "twin obligation" does Mandela mention?

A Mandela mentions that every man has twin obligations. The first is to his family, parents, wife and childlike 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"?

A 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's 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?

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

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

A By saying that he is simply the sum of all those African patriots, Mandela wants to pay his tribute to ~~all~~ all the people

A 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.

15. 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 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 co-operation and unity for him.

16. Would you agree that the "depths of oppression" create "height of character"? How does Mandela illustrate this? Can you own example to this argument?

A 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 oppression of British rule created and encouraged people of noble characters like Mahatma Gang Gandhi, Lala Rajput Rai, JI Nehru, Chandra Shekher Ajad, Sardar Fau 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.

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

A 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 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.