

Long Walk to Freedom

- 10th of May was a day of freedom for South Africa and there was a huge gathering of international leaders and dignitaries.
- Inauguration ceremony or swearing in ceremony was held in Union Building in Pretoria and first non-racial government took the charge.
- Nelson Mandela gave a speech on the victory for justice, peace and human dignity. Mandela pledged to liberate his people from poverty, suffering and discrimination.
- A colourful show by jets and helicopters to show military's loyalty took place.
- Two national anthems were sung-the old 'Nkosi Sikelel' by the whites and the new 'Die stem' by the blacks.
- A new system that recognized the rights and freedoms of all people was formed. Mandela remembered and thanked the people who sacrificed their lives for the freedom.
- Salutation to some great freedom fighters – Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Chief Luthuli, Yusuf Dadoo and others.
- Mandela said in speech that a country is rich because of its people, not because of the minerals. Courage is not the absence of fear but the victory over it. People should love others and not hate them due to color or religion. Love comes naturally, not by force, which is the natural goodness.
- He also stated that a man should try to make a balance between his duties – duty to his family and duty to his community and country. A black person was treated badly and not allowed to perform his duties.
- According to Mandela, freedom has many aspects like – for a kid it is to run and play, for adult it is to fulfil the need of his own and his family. Real freedom means equal rights for everyone.
- Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC). He desired for people to live with dignity and respect. He wanted the oppressor and the oppressed to be liberated

Q1: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?

Answer : The 'extraordinary human disaster' that Mandela mentioned at the beginning of his speech refers to the inhuman practice of apartheid i.e., the racial discrimination suffered by the blacks at the hands of whites in South Africa. At the end, the 'glorious human achievement' that he spoke of refers to the establishment of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial government.

Q2: 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?

Answer (i) 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 people of their own land, thus creating the basis of one of the harshest and most inhumane societies the world had ever known.

(ii) In the last decade of the twentieth century, the previous system had been overturned forever and replaced by one that recognized the rights and freedoms of all peoples, regardless of the colour of their skin.

Q3: 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"?

Answer : As a boy, Mandela did not have a hunger to be free as he thought that he was born free. As long as he obeyed his father and abided by the customs of his tribe, he was free in every way he knew. As a student, he wanted certain "transitory freedoms" only for himself, such as being able to stay out at night, read what he pleased and go where he chose. He then talks about certain "basic honourable freedoms" such as achieving his potential of earning his living and of marrying and having a family. He builds the contrast between these two freedoms by stating that the transitory freedoms he wanted were limited to him, whereas the honourable freedoms had to do more with his and his people's position in the society.

Q4: 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?

Answer : Yes, I agree that the "depths of oppression" create "heights of character". Mandela thought that the decades of brutality and oppression had an unintended effect of creating many African patriots with unimaginable heights of character. Thus, he felt that the greatest wealth of South Africa is its people. In a similar manner, Bhagat Singh remained courageous while facing utmost cruelty at the hands of British.

Q5: How did Mandela's understanding of freedom change with age and experience?

Answer : As a boy, Mandela did not have a hunger for freedom because he thought that he was born free. He believed that as long as he obeyed his father and abided by the customs of his tribe, he was free in every possible manner. He had certain needs as a teenager and certain needs as a young man. Gradually, he realized that he was selfish during his boyhood. He slowly understands that it is not just his freedom that is being curtailed, but the freedom of all blacks. It is after attaining this understanding that he develops a hunger for the freedom of his people.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS (100-150 words)

Q1: Write the character sketch of Nelson Mandela.

Q2: What were the difficulties faced by Nelson Mandela in achieving freedom for his people?