

## **NELSON MANDELA: A LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is an extract from the autobiography of Nelson Mandela (born- 18 July, 1918), the first Black President of South Africa. Excerpts from “Long Walk to Freedom” include description of the inauguration ceremony, citations from his speech, his journey to being a freedom fighter, the struggle, along with a tribute to other freedom fighters and countless other people who fought for their freedom. In South Africa, a brutal practice named “apartheid” was followed. Apartheid refers to the discrimination between people on the basis of their race. It was one of the most brutal societies where dark-skinned people were deprived of their basic rights. This lesson gives us an overview as to how Nelson Mandela along with others, carved their way to a society where there will be no discrimination on the basis of their colour, caste, race, age or gender.

### **Questions/Answers**

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

A. At the inauguration ceremony, there were a large number of international leaders to celebrate the end of apartheid system and to display their support for South Africa. It signified the triumph of justice over prejudice, courage over fear and right over wrong.

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

A. Mandela wanted to thank the generations before him who had fought for justice. He gathered his courage from these brave heroes and it is because of that, he fought fearlessly for what is right. Thus, he referred to himself as “simply the sum of all those African patriots” that had gone before him.

Q. 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 that “depths of oppression” create “heights of character”. Mandela illustrated this idea by the example of all those who had emerged as great freedom fighters after years of oppression and brutality. Though unintended, effect of all this was men with extraordinary courage and strength. One of the greatest examples is of our own country, where our people were exploited under British rule for about 200 years. As a result of oppression of such magnitude, India got freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru.

Q. How did Mandela’s understanding of freedom change with age and experience?

A. As a young boy, and a student, Mandela’s idea of freedom was to be able to stay out at night, read whatever he desired and go wherever he chose. On growing up as a man, he realised that these were “transitory freedoms” he was looking for because their “basic and honourable freedoms” had been taken away. There was no liberty to have a peaceful marriage, family and life. Dark-skinned people were deprived of their fundamental human rights. For them, freedom was an “illusion”.

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

A. Once Mandela realized his hunger for freedom, his life changed forever. It transformed him from a family-man to a man of his people and a frightened young man into a bold one. He built his entire life around fighting for the basic fundamental rights for his community. He was more selfless and virtuous than ever.

Q. Describe the value of freedom for the human beings and how it is important for the growth of civilization and humanism as described in the lesson 'Nelson Mandela : Long Walk to Freedom'.

A. Everybody whether human or other creatures want to live free as freedom is natural to all living beings. The value of freedom is better known to that human being who has not tasted it till he gets it. A person who is chained with the limits and not allowed to perform his duties freely, values freedom more than anyone else. For instance the value of freedom is known better to Mandela who remained behind the bars most of his life. Think about a bird or animal which is caged as they have the habit of living with full freedom but in the cage they are not free and their conditions are very pitiable. Similarly, life becomes a hell if we are deprived of freedom. There is no growth of civilization as it grows only when one has freedom. Similarly, humanism grows in the atmosphere of freedom.