

Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom

- Nelson Mandela remembers the tenth of May 1994. This was the day when South Africa's first non-racial and democratic government was established. The autumnal day was bright and clear. For the past few days, Nelson Mandela was besieged by dignitaries and world leaders who were coming to pay their respects before the swearing-in ceremony. The swearing-in ceremony was the largest gathering of international leaders in South Africa.
- The ceremony took place in a beautiful sandstone amphitheatre formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria. For decades this had been the seat of white supremacy and now it was the site of a rainbow gathering of an array of people of different colours and nations. Mandela was accompanied by his daughter, Zenani, on the day of the swearing-in ceremony. Mr de Klerk was first sworn in as second deputy president, followed by Thabo Mbeki as first deputy president.
- When Mandela swore as the first black President of non-racial and democratic South Africa, **he pledged to obey and uphold the Constitution** and to **devote himself to the well-being and betterment of the Republic and its people**.
- He went on to describe the system of apartheid as an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long.
 - He also said how South Africa emerged from a country of outlaws to a democratic country. The South Africans were previously considered so because South Africa practiced a policy of apartheid and many countries broke off diplomatic ties with the nation.
 - He thanked the international guests for having come to witness the swearing-in ceremony and his investiture as the President since this could be considered as a common victory for justice, peace and human dignity. Mandela felt privileged to be the host to the nations of the world because not too long ago, the South Africans were considered outlaws.
 - Mandela proclaimed that they have achieved political emancipation
 - **Ideals for future of South Africa:** He pledged to liberate all South Africans from the clutches of **poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender** and other discrimination. He wanted freedom to reign and wished that never again should South Africans face the oppression of one by another.
 - Finally, he made the solemn promise that "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another. The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement."

A few moments later, the gathering witnessed a spectacular array of South African jets, helicopters and troop carriers which roared in perfect formation over the Union Buildings. It was not only a display of pinpoint precision and military force but also a manifestation of the military's loyalty to democracy and the new freely and fairly elected government. Although the highest generals of the South African defence force and police, whose chests were bedecked with ribbons and medals, saluted Mandela, he knew that a few years ago they would have arrested him. Finally, a chevron of Impala jets left a smoke trail of **black, red, green, blue** and **gold** of the new South African flag.

The day was symbolized by the playing of the two national anthems- the vision of whites singing 'Nkosi Sikelel -iAfrika' and blacks singing 'Die Stem', the latter being the old anthem. Although that day neither group knew the lyrics of the anthem they once despised, they would soon know the words by heart. Both the anthems were sung in order to symbolize equality.

On the day of the swearing-in ceremony, Nelson Mandela was overwhelmed with a sense of history.

- 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.
- 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, irrespective of the colour of their skin.
- Mandela doesn't ignore the fact that this feat has been achieved through the unimaginable sacrifices of thousands of men whose courage, determination and resilience were indispensable in bringing about the political change.

- He pays tribute to South African patriots by saying that he was simply a sum of all of them. In other words, he was just a mere representative of all those who sacrificed. Nelson is also pained that he was not able to thank them and that they were not able to see what their sacrifices had wrought.
- **The policy of apartheid created deep and lasting wound in the country and its people in the form of social divisions and distinctions. All of them will spend several years, if not generations, to recuperate from this profound hurt.**
 - The decades of oppression and brutality had an unintended effect- it produced the Oliver Tambo, the Walter Sisulu, the Chief Luthulis, the Yusuf Dadoos, the Bram Fischers, the Robert Sobukwes, etc.
 - These were men of extraordinary courage, wisdom and generosity.
 - **Reason:** Depths of oppression created such heights of character. Mandela is saying that character develops in the school of adversity. He means that when one is in troubled waters, his real character will develop.
 - Mandela uses definite article with proper nouns to refer many people of Oliver Tambo's, Walter Sisulu's, etc. type or kind, whose names may be obscure.
 - Mandela declares the fact that apart from being rich in minerals and gems, South Africa has produced many noble men who are true wealth of the country. These people are finer and truer than the purest diamonds.
 - **Meaning of Courage:** It is from the South African patriots that Mandela learnt the meaning of courage. He had seen men and women risk and give up their lives during the course of the struggle for political change. He had noticed men stand up to attacks and torture without breaking, showing strength and resilience that defies imagination. He learned that courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. A brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers his fear and moves forward.
 - **Love and Hatred:** Nelson believed that if people can learn to hate, then they can be taught to love because love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.
 - Even during the grimmest times in prison, when Nelson was pushed to his limits, he could often see a glimpse of humanity in the one of the guards. This was enough to keep him going.
 - Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.

According to Nelson Mandela, every man has twin obligations- obligations to his family, parents, children and wife; and has an obligation to his people, community and country. In a civil and humane society, each man is able to accomplish those obligations according to his inclinations and abilities. But in a country like South Africa and in a period when apartheid was practiced, it was impossible for a man of colour to fulfil both those obligations.

- **Another trouble caused by apartheid:** Under the apartheid system, a man who was not white and who tried to live as a human being, do mundane things and fulfil his duty was ripped away from his family and was coerced to live a secluded life.