

**PAGE - 6 LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**

But then I slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free. I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did. That is when I joined the African National Congress, and that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of my people. It was this desire for the freedom of my people to live their lives with dignity and self-respect that animated my life, that transformed a frightened young man into a bold one, that drove a law-abiding attorney to become a criminal, that turned a family-loving husband into a man without a home, that forced a life-loving man to live like a monk. I am no more virtuous or self-sacrificing than the next man, but I found that I could not even enjoy the poor and limited freedoms I was allowed when I knew my people were not free. Freedom is indivisible; the chains on anyone of my people were the chains on all of them, the chains on all of my people were the chains on me.

Curtailed- reduce; impose a restriction on
Dignity- the state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect
Frightened- afraid or anxious
Monk- a member of a religious community of men typically living under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience
Virtuous- having or showing high moral standards
Indivisible- unable to be divided or separated

Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC) when he realised it is not only him whose basic rights were snatched away but of all those who looked like him. He had this fire inside him to free his people from the injustice. It was this fire that changed the author completely as a man, from being scared to brave, a lawyer to the one breaking the law, a family-man to a man without a home and a lively man into being a monk. It was the knowledge that he and his people have restricted freedom that made him into a selfless man as opposed to before. According to him, freedom cannot be divided. Snatching it away from some was equivalent to taking it away from everyone and that meant taking it away from the author.

I knew that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man’s freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else’s freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.

Prejudice- a strong dislike without any good reason

He mentions that the need to free the oppressor is as high as that of the oppressed because the oppressor is bounded by the shackles of hatred. He has the weight of all the people who he has tormented, for he carries the curses of all their families. For taking away someone else’s freedom and making them a prisoner, he becomes a prisoner of biasness. Thus, he is robbed of his humanity and need to be freed.