

**PAGE - 5 LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. Even in the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man’s goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.

 Grimmest- very serious or gloomy
Glimmer- shine faintly with a wavering light
Pushed to our limits- pushed to the last point in our ability to bear pain
Reassure- say or do something to remove the doubts

 One is taught by its society to hate humans because of their skin, colour, age, gender and religion. No one is inborn with hatred. The author’s idea is that if people can be taught hatred, they can also be taught love and brotherhood. In their most testing times in prison when they were being treated brutally, Mandela would see a pinch of humanity and kindness in one of the guards and that was enough to keep him going. He believes that goodness in human beings can be suppressed but never eliminated.

In life, every man has twin obligations — obligations to his family, to his parents, to his wife and children; and he has an obligation to his people, his community, his country. In a civil and humane society, each man is able to fulfill those obligations according to his own inclinations and abilities. But in a country like South Africa, it was almost impossible for a man of my birth and colour to fulfill both of those obligations. In South Africa, a man of colour who attempted to live as a human being was punished and isolated. In South Africa, a man who tried to fulfill his duty to his people was inevitably ripped from his family and his home and was forced to live a life apart, a twilight existence of secrecy and rebellion. I did not in the beginning choose to place my people above my family, but in attempting to serve my people, I found that I was prevented from fulfilling my obligations as a son, a brother, a father and a husband.

 Obligations- a duty or a commitment
Civil- courteous and polite
Inclination- natural tendencies of behaviour
Inevitably- unavoidably
Twilight- half-light, semi-darkness
Secrecy- the action of keeping something secret
Rebellion- the action or process of resisting authority, convention or control

 According to the author, every human being has its responsibility towards the family and as well as the society. Generally, under normal circumstances, a person can maintain the balance between the two but in countries like South Africa, it was never so easy. When a person of colour would come up for his society, he would be arrested and taken away from his family, thus keeping them from fulfilling both responsibilities. In the beginning, Mandela did not put his people over his family, but it was only later when he realised that in order to be there for his people, he was compromising his duties towards his own family.

I was not born with a hunger to be free. I was born free — free in every way that I could know. Free to run in the fields near my mother’s hut, free to swim in the clear stream that ran through my village, free to roast mealies under the stars and ride the broad backs of slow-moving bulls. As long as I obeyed my father and abided by the customs of my tribe, I was not troubled by the laws of man or God. It was only when I began to learn that my boyhood freedom was an illusion, when I discovered as a young man that my freedom had already been taken from me, that I began to hunger for it. At first, as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself, the transitory freedoms of being able to stay out at night, read what I pleased and go where I chose. Later, as a young man in Johannesburg, I yearned for the basic and honourable freedoms of achieving my potential, of earning my keep, of marrying and having a family — the freedom not to be obstructed in a lawful life.

 Stream- a small, narrow river
Mealies- a maize plant
Abided- obeyed
Boyhood- the state or time of being a boy
Illusion- a false idea or belief
Transitory- not permanent
Yearned- have an intense feeling or longing for something

 The author did not have the plan to stand against the apartheid system early in life. He lived his childhood like any normal child in South Africa. He only had to follow the rules set up by his father or the customs of his tribe. As soon as he grew up and began to learn the facts as to how people of colour are treated, he decided to stand against it. He had this urge for freedom from inside, earlier just for himself (staying out at night, etc.) and later for having a basic life not just for himself, but for everyone. In Johannesburg, they had to struggle for having a peaceful marriage, family and basic amenities which everyone has access to where law and order exists.