

NATIONAL TREASURE MAROONED

By Ravi Naicker

The Patriarch hobbled down the narrow and dusty path

A daily feat pined for nearly three decades.

Each step savoured with gusto.

The dry winter landscape and undulating terrain.

Greeted by poor ragged children

Burdened with water containers carefully balanced on delicate heads

They immediately recognized Tata Nelson Mandela .

Their ululation resonated on the farm.

The golden grass mowed down by hungry cattle.

His childhood haunts descended like an avalanche

On the parched earth.

The towering Patriarch silhouetted

Against the dying embers of twilight.

A smile played around his mouth

Songs of joy composed in his heart.

As he entered his prison-style home
Thoughts of abject poverty at close proximity
Left him in deep regret and benevolence.
Years of incarceration and the struggle for emancipation
Mirrored the life of a marathon prisoner.
The foolishness and relentlessness of a p a r t h e i d
To imprison Black intellectuals...
Unleash and inflict Draconian measures
On raging torrents in the townships and cities.

Madiba's indomitable spirit of a freedom fighter
As old and hard as the hills.
Sustained by his soul force in his CELL.

First Black President, negotiator, reconciler.
Madiba had the heart of an altruist
The forgiving nature of a saint.
A global icon who exuded love and compassion without reserve.

His legacy: clinics, hospitals, schools, freedom and feeding schemes.

A multitude watched as the Hercules C130 transported his casket

To his final resting place – Qunu.

A kaleidoscope of memories

The struggle, years in exile cradling the AK47

Sabotage, fallen cadres, locked on Robben Island

Torn from beloved family yet enduring and hopeful

A crowning jewel indeed!

Let no future Government alter Madiba's vision

Hamba Kahle Tata Madiba.

Bio:

Ravi Naicker was raised on Glen Albyn Farm in KwaZulu-Natal. He teaches English at Amahlongwa Mission and is a poet, previously published in A Hudson View, Episteme and Criterion.