

HOMAGE TO A DREAMER: ML SULTAN

Written By **Dr RONNIE GOVENDER**

On the occasion of the conferment by DUT of a Hon Doctorate to ML Sultan in 2014

Among Dr Govender's awards are:

- Life Time Achievement award - Dept of Arts & Culture
- Life Time Achievement - Arts & Culture Trust SA
- Commonwealth Writers' Prize - Best First Book Africa
- Gold Medal Award from English Academy South Africa
- Order of Ikhamangha - Our highest award in the Arts from the State President

Reciting the Poem at the Tribute 13 April 2019:

SHABNAM PALESA MOHAMED:

Social Justice Activist, Attorney, Talk Show Host, Public Speaker, Author, Poet and Media Commentator. Shabnam manages the Centre for Fine Art, Animation and Design. She received the inaugural Lady Fatima Activist Award 2013, and the Woman of Wonder Award 2018. Shabnam served 2 board terms with veteran NGO Advice Desk for the Abused, founded by Judge Navi Pillay and Dr Anshu Padayachee.

"Homage to a Dreamer."

He brushes aside the Eternal Question

Deep within his scriptures

Deep within his soul

Where am I in this vastness

That knows no End,

knows no Beginning?

His exertions saved instead

To grasp the sight that greets him

He sees it day by dreary day

etched in the faces of the innocents

in the bewildered faces

of ignorance

of hopelessness

of meek surrender

It is not in him to turn away

The young man trudges home

in the descending darkness

The train chugs away in the distance

Having disgorged the weary

Long distances to places of work

bustling factories

soulless industries

skirting Durban Bay

He walks home limbs heavy with

the burdens of another day's labour

His mind assailed with the enslavement

of the innocents

Silently he counts his pennies

Relieving mental pictures

Harried yet by relentless enactments

of ideology gone mad

flashing through his mind

They fail to dampen his spirit

Petitioning instead

An awakening

from wastelands

awash with the listlessness

of the broken

of mute surrender

of the resignation of the defeated,

the dammed,

the detritus of evolution's primal call

The survival of the fittest

unable to hold to the Truth

that lies deep within the self

unable to embrace the Eternal Truth

to embrace the path chosen

by Gandhi

by Luthuli

Though it be long and hard

I will take that road

In the descending darkness

In the lashing rain

there in the distance

a redeeming beacon of sweet release

the welcoming embrace of home

the unflickering lantern light of love

through misted windows of a humble tenement

moving mind and body to even greater resolve

to face another day of drudgery

"Yet will I emerge

from this Veil of Darkness"

The scriptures speak the way

My sweat will flow

My pennies will grow

To direct The Way

Out of this Veil of Ignorance

The young man's thoughts drive him from his work bench

Even as weary limbs protest

"I will free my people!"

Secret thoughts

Thoughts not given the shape of vengeful words

That they be easily blunted

By the profiteers of sweat

By the scorn of his peers

too cowed to dream

too cowed to dare

In the long hall lies the way

the way of all Truth

rejecting the crumbs of subservience

Even as the sweat floods his shoulders

Shoulders broadened by unrewarded labour

In the long haul lies the Truth

Truth rejecting the crumbs of the Imperious

His will strengthened by stubborn resolve

Even as the sweat drips down knitted brows

Never once doubting himself

Never once saying to himself

"Mohamed Lapa Sultan

Why are your goals so different?"

Instead secret thoughts cloud The Way

"My pennies gather

Till they can lift the burden of care

Of family"

Such thoughts of self are held in check

Heeding scriptural wisdom

Urging

True charity lies beyond the limits

Of blood

Of race

Of religion

Of self

He grits his teeth

even as sweat streams down his back

The Veil of Ignorance will be lifted

Revealing the freedom

that only the written word can truly restore

through brick and mortar

laying the foundations of learning

in life's infinite vastness

Thus arose from steadfast conviction

from back breaking labour

a house of learning

an edifice of enlightenment

of empowerment

Thus arose in a wasteland of enslaving ignorance

ML Sultan Technikon

The Way to the Truth

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