



YUSUF MOHAMED DADOO

Born – 5th September 1909

Died – 19th September 1983

DR BETTY GOVINDEN

Yusuf Mohamed Dadoo was born on September 5th 1909 in Krugersdorp on the West Rand. He trained as a medical doctor in Edinburgh and returned to South Africa where he devoted his life to fighting apartheid. He played leading roles in the formation of The Communist Party of South Africa, the Transvaal Indian Congress, The Non-European United Front, and The South African Indian Congress, which joined the ANC to organize the Defiance Campaigns of the 1950. He worked closely with other ANC stalwarts such as Dr Moroka, Walter Sisulu, J B Marks, Yusuf Cachalia, Moses Kotane, Moses Mabhida and Bram Fischer. Dadoo played a leading role in forging links between Indians, Africans and Coloureds in the struggle against apartheid. He worked across the political spectrum, from fighting against the Pass Laws, to rallying support for African mine workers, to fighting for the rights of the working class. He was described as “one of the greatest sons of South Africa”.

POEMS

IN HONOUR OF

YUSUF MOHAMED DADOO

5th September 2009 - 100th Birthday Anniversary

1

From the lineage of the canefields
of Natal's dark history
you grew in stature to
lead your people to freedom.

Your ear trained to the groans of the poor
and leaders of your time
from across the world -
you defied the brute forces of oppression.

Through Sharpeville
and Rivonia,
you did not wince or waver
but strengthened the cause against tyranny.

With subterfuge and stratagem,
On pain of banning and imprisonment,
Torture and threats,
You stood firm and fearless.

In the struggle for land and liberty,
defiance against the Ghetto and Pass laws
You united the peoples of this land
across colour and class.

Against the profiteering of the powerful

You preached a revolution.

Against the forces of history

You fiercely spoke for the poor.

Come now to the beloved country

Remembering its many heroes and heroines

Who fought for freedom.

Your name is emblazoned

On the people's square in Orlando

And raised aloft on Durban's Grey Street;

Your spirit emboldens this age

To strive anew for justice and peace.



*My Personal Visit to the Grave of Yusuf Dadoo, Highgate Cemetery, London.
21st May 2009*

From across the miles
I hasten to this secluded spot

to pay my respects to your memory.
The city behind is busy with its counting

while you lie resting under the weed and wind.
Far from the battlegrounds of your motherland

You are interred with those of another place and time.
Your spirit is larger than this graying monument.

In the cool of the evening
do you communicate with your lofty neighbour¹

about the state of the world today?
What jokes you share? What sadness?

¹ Dadoo is buried opposite Karl Marx, who has an imposing edifice in his honour.

And do you resurrect your dreams?

I linger in reverie, hesitant to leave this sacred ground.

I walk up the hill breathless and stop awhile.

Spread across the sky

I see you in bright plumes of a rare bird²

Connecting past and present and future.

And your voice echoes beyond the silent tombs below
and permeates the world.

² This is a reference to the ANC's highest honour bestowed on Yusuf Dadoo in 1955, *Isitwalandwe-Seaparankoe*. The award was also bestowed on Chief Albert Luthuli and Fr Trevor Huddleston at the same time.

3

You stand strong to counter
the persecution of your people.

You see the Pass Laws
As the badge of slavery.

You fight poll tax and poverty,
And oppose the penury of sweat labour.

You spurn the trojan horses left within the ramparts
And rile against those who bartered away

the people's birthright for pieces of silver.
You understand the sacred right

of every citizen to be free without the stigma of inferiority.
Mounting the dock valiant and tall,

You straddle thought and action and
Confound the powerful.

You warn of the flood gates breaking loose
When justice is too long denied.

You gather peoples across the oceans
In the march of history unassailable,

You stand in the vanguard with vision and faith
To raise the call, 'Mayibuye i' Afrika !'

4

Flexing unflinching the sinews of struggle,
You measured your life in the power of Voice:
Open Letters,
Speeches on podiums,
Statements in court houses,
Statements before trials,
Statements on release,
Messages to the people,
Letters to statesmen, democrats, trade unions,
Addresses at gatherings,
Appeals for a fighting unity.
Ad infinitum.

You understood the force of the Word in space
To move mountains of apathy,
Shake sectarian walls and
Astound the oppressor
With the audacity of the oppressed.

5

You did not linger at the forked roads

To contemplate the course:

A life of comfort and privilege?

Or a span of suffering?

Instinctively you knew that from he who has much
more is expected.

In anguish for the weak

You chose to raise your voice.

You lived in the poors' dreams

That freedom's sun will rise

Above the darkened earth,

Decrepit spirits revive and

Flowers will blossom in the wasteland.

[by Dr Betty Govinden.

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