

Mandela – The Mahatma of South Africa

From fire brand activist to non-violent reformer of Apartheid

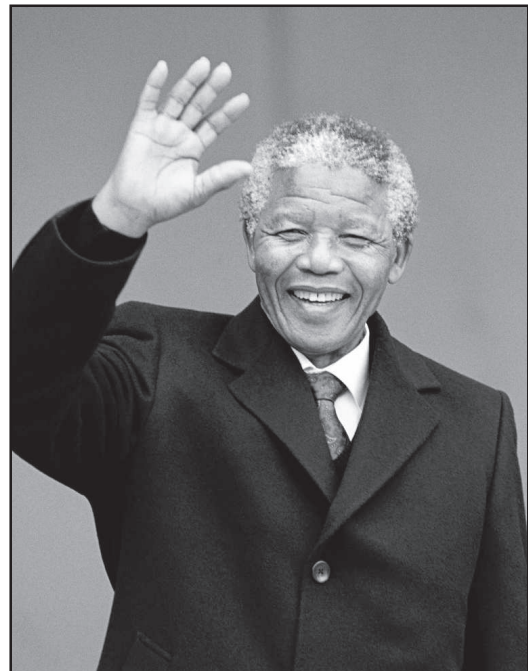
NELSON MANDELA who brought dignity and grace to the life of the Black population of South Africa, was laid to rest at the burial pit on the 15th of December 2013. The location was Kulu his native village. The sky was clear. According to the belief of Shosa community to which he belonged, sunshine at the time of burial is considered a sign of the God receiving the soul of the deceased. After Mandela's death on the 5th December, there was heavy rain lashing South Africa with dark clouds on the sky.

Nelson Mandela was more than just a freedom fighter. He proved what Gandhiji used to say "one determined human being can change the course of history dramatically for the better." The radical that he was in the 1950s (he was the first commander of ANC's African National Congress guerrilla army), turned out to become a successful negotiator of peaceful settlement for equal rights for all

South Africans. In his youth he was a confrontationist and fought for the cause of getting equality for the Blacks of the country with the Whites who ruled South Africa with apartheid.

Like Gandhiji, Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) was born to a traditional chief and adviser in the court of the local king. He was groomed to become a royal counselor, like his father. But he preferred or destiny took him on a different trajectory. As commander of ANC's guerilla army, he organised a bombing campaign (in December 1961) and was jailed. One year after this incident and the police raiding an ANC training camp in Rivonia near Johannesburg, Mandela was placed on trial for sabotage and acts of violence. The judge sentenced Mandela to life imprisonment with hard labour.

Mandela was 46 when he was taken to the draconian Robben Island prison where routine of the prisoners were ruthless. Adapting himself to the new situation and surroundings, Mandela became meticulous about being polite that put those shouting at him or humiliating him, on the defensive. Mandela inside the prison became more powerful than Mandela who was outside. A clamour "release Mandela" spread like an ocean wave all over the world.



Eventually the apartheid administrators realized that Mandela was the key for their own peaceful living in South Africa. After F.W.deKlerk became the South African President in 1989, Mandela was released from prison. That was in February 1990. He was 71 then, and was coming out of jail after 27 years. His sense of reconciliation was beyond what the white rulers had expected. After prolonged negotiations and a free election on universal franchise that was held in 1994, Mandela was elected as the President of South Africa.

With conviction that the cause has won, President Mandela delivered his inaugural address in the following words: “Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another.”

The ‘Mahatma’ in Mandela

After he became the President of the South Africa, Mandela invited Percy Yutar, the prosecutor who had argued vehemently to get Mandela hanged at the Rivonia trial, and gave him an official lunch. He made one of his old jailers, Jannie Roux, the former Prison Commissioner, as Ambassador to Austria.

The guide to peaceful transition Mandela took up the Presidential responsibility rather to show his followers and the future generation how true politicians should be in a democratic society. He made it a point that he will be the President only for one term unlike modern politicians who clamour to hold on to the seats of power.

A.V.



The Last Journey of Nelson Mandela