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"Your speech is simple, my Master, but not theirs who talk of you," the poet Rabindranath Tagore said of Mahatma Gandhi. Today is Gandhi's 110th birthday anniversary.

# After a cold night on the Maritzburg railway station...

By Iain MacDonald

"Look at the sparrows, they do not know what they will do the next moment, so let us live from moment to moment in God's good hands," Mahatma Gandhi wrote to a disciple shortly before his death.

In his "living from moment to moment in God's good hands," the shy Indian "saint" who was born 110 years ago today, had an effect unparalleled in the history of India.

He was brought to the point of "moment by moment living" through the inadvertent action of a South African Railway policeman putting apartheid into practice.

## Shivering

On a biting cold winter's night in Maritzburg, he was flung off a train because a passenger had objected to having a coloured fellow passenger.

Gandhi spent the rest of the night shivering on the station and resumed his journey the next day.

But that night, in the cold and humiliation and pain of rejection, a most effective means of protest was launched on the world as the Mahatma decided to resist the forces of evil passively but earnestly, even if it cost him his life.

## Chronicled

"Gandhi is not dead — he is living within us, and someday people will ask as they do now of Christ or Buddha whether this man really walked the earth," a follower of Gandhi has said.

Gandhi's life is chronicled in a thousand books and articles and in millions of human hearts in India and throughout the world.

In Johannesburg, where he lived and worked for a time, monuments are being built to him and relics are being preserved as they are worldwide.

The Indian community is building a Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Centre in Lenasia; Tolstoy Farm which he founded is being restored; and there are plans for a Radhe-Krishna Temple to be erected in his honour here soon.

## The truth

On Sunday there will be a memorial lecture at the Ramakrishna Hall on "The Relevance of the Mahatma for us today," by Natal attorney Mr Ismail Meer.

"I prefer to say Truth is God rather than God is Truth," Gandhi said.

"Truth needs no publicity other than itself. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect."

His truth stood quietly, humbly, hungry face to face with British bayonets, South African prejudice, Indian revolts and every form of human deceit, selfishness and trickery.

His truth was the one ready to starve and give his body for the right of others to be free — and to be totally free.

"I do not want to merely rid India of the yoke of the British, but to free her of any yoke whatsoever," he said.

He talked, he spun cloth, he made sandals, he spent years in prison — where he said he was more free

than ever — and somehow found time to practise law, read and write, discuss major international problems and be a good father and husband.

When he died with three assassin's bullets in his chest and breathing the name of God, India finally mourned him as a free nation.

Gandhi's friend the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, had written before Gandhi's death that "perhaps he will fail as the Buddha failed, as the Christ failed, to wean men from their iniquities."

"But he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come," he said.

Einstein, too, paid tribute to Gandhi's towering spirit by saying that "generations to come will scarce believe such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

It was that towering spirit, sparked by a cold night on a Maritzburg station which made him a formidable exponent of all forms of liberation.

