

WHEN RAIN CLOUDS GATHER- REALIZATION IDENTITY IN BESSIE HEAD'S

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ABSTARCT: The search for identity is an internal search motivated by a scenario in which a person's true being is called into doubt. Identity shapes self-perception, spatial configuration, and the politics of interpersonal relationships. This dissertation tries to investigate the perceived complex relationship between constructed identity, discrimination, and violence as represented in Bessie Head's work from multiple perspectives, including postcoloniality, materialist feminism, and liminality. Read *When Rain Clouds Gather*, to understand Bessie Head's ideals on forming and realizing one's identity. The study reveals that Head's vision of identity realization is realized as women play major roles in the success of the agricultural initiative established by Gilbert and Makhaya Maseko. Usually, the bond between Paulina Sobeso and Makhaya the magnanimity of characters like Mma-Millipede are used to convey the ideas of love and fraternity. The female authors are independent-minded, strong-willed women who strive for equality in their marriages. Therefore, this study concludes that Head employs these motifs to support ideas about reconstructing broken lives similar to her own.

KEYWORDS: Identity, Discrimination, Feminism, Postcoloniality, Head's vision

I. INTRODUCTION

Born to a black father and a white mother, Bessie Amelia Emery, Bessie Amelia Head, on July 6, 1937, in the small village of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, Bessie Head's early life was deeply affected by the complexities of her biracial identity. The apartheid system in South Africa strictly enforced racial segregation, and individuals of mixed-race faced particular challenges in defining their identities and finding their place within society [1]. Bessie Head was marginalized and experienced discrimination as a child because of her mixed-race heritage. Her understanding of race, identity, and

belonging was significantly impacted by her early experiences with racism and prejudice. Throughout her life, she grappled with questions of self-identity and the need to reconcile her dual heritage, which would later find expression in her writings [2].

In her early adulthood, Bessie Head pursued a career as a teacher and journalist in South Africa. However, her growing dissatisfaction with the oppressive apartheid regime and her personal struggles led her to leave the country in 1964. She sought refuge in neighbouring Botswana, where she was granted asylum [3]. In Botswana, Bessie Head found a safe haven and a sense of belonging that had eluded her in her birth country. She settled in the village of Serowe and embraced her identity as an African woman writer. It was in this new setting that she began her literary career, finding inspiration in the rich cultural tapestry and the everyday lives of the people she encountered [4].

Botswana offered Head the freedom to express herself creatively, and she soon gained recognition as a talented writer with a unique voice. Her experiences as an expatriate and her immersion in Botswana's culture and traditions shaped her literary endeavors, giving rise to narratives that celebrated the resilience and strength of African women [5].

II. Identity Realisation in When Rain Clouds Gather

The main focus of Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* is Makhaya's search for a positive identity. To achieve this, there need to be efforts towards survival which involves advancing entrepreneurship strategies by acknowledging the significance of agricultural practices, imbibing love and brotherly trust, having faith in others, and ensuring equality and respect for human dignity. Below is an explication of these themes.

Identity Realisation as a Quest for Survival .

The significance of Head's title *When Rain Clouds Gather* practically depicts identity pursuit and realization of people from different backgrounds gathered in a place suitable for their personality realizations. When rain drops on arid land, there is elation, and the perception that pervades the surroundings where rain has fallen is that of „good things to come“. In the novel, The image of rain clouds represents a group of helpful individuals that have come together for Golema Mmidi's benefit. Individuals such as Makhaya Maseko, Paulina Sobeso, and Gilbert Balfour have relocated to Golema Mmidi in search of dependable environments and gathering places where they may connect with other people who want to realize their goals. Makhaya Maseko departs from South Africa, after experiencing trauma from oppression and the harsh reality of the apartheid regime there. His goal is to "... step on free ground," and he considers that by living in a free country, the Makhaya that have twisted his life will acquire the identity that he desires[6].

In a bid to survive the traumatic South African apartheid atmosphere of racism and revive his lost and traumatised personality, Makhaya has chosen a path – to leave an environment that was adversely or positively affecting the discovery of his inner and emotional potentials. Head describes Makhaya's reasons for leaving South Africa, including a lack of civilization that prevented his search of personal rebirth and awareness. In South Africa, black men were referred to as "boys," "dogs," and "kaffirs" and were not allowed to marry or have children. On his way out of South Africa to the station, Makhaya discovers that the atmosphere outside of the part of Africa where he had left friendly and accommodating; the little footpath leading to the dirt road where he gets a vehicle to the station is bewitchingly beautiful“. He could not help but say “I might like it here”. This means that the surroundings of his conscience conform to his utmost desire at that time and ensure that his stay in the place he is heading to guarantees his survival.

The Significance of Agriculture to Identity Realization in When Rain Clouds Gather

Golema Mmidi – the name of the village where Makhaya leaves South Africa to stay means “to grow crops”. Agricultural practices are seen to be a social and unifying factor in the novel. Basically, the aim of Gilbert's agricultural innovations in Golema Mmidi is to prepare a better atmosphere where life will be better perceived than how it seems. In overall, Golema Mmidi

was a cruel and terrible place to live. The vast stretches of arid land completely stunned the mind, and every little green shoot that you planted in the barren earth simply stood there, single, frail, and shuddering, and not even soil knowledge, seed germinating ability, or modern machinery could help you defeat this vast ocean of desert.

Despite these ecological hindrances, Gilbert still has a restoration perception (through agriculture) that there can still be a flow of milk and honey in Golema Mmidi. This is to be realized not based on abstract ideas but through personality and identity restorations of the individuals inhabiting Golema Mmidi.

His hopes were that... all the men would return to the village one day, and the cattle would be grazing close by behind communally owned, enclosed areas. During the summer, the cattle were feeding on grass that was three feet tall and dripping with dew. At that point, some of the women have become so experienced in the tobacco industry that they might like to help, or they might be a little rich and swanky by then and worry about the ladder in their new stockings or discuss their children's diseases over dainty cups of tea. Some of the men might like to engage themselves entirely to the business of producing high-grade beef, while others might like to make Golema Mmidi one of the country's top tobacco-producing locations. Although this is Head's creative conception, it is also Gilbert's belief about the people that live within the environment in Golema Mmidi and what his perception about them reveals to him. He then begins to trust into their choices of concentration for his proposed agricultural restoration programme. He mostly believes in the ability of the women so much so that even Makhaya begins to buy into the idea of creating an opportunity through agriculture for the women to develop expertise in creating lucrative subsistence out of nothing from their immediate ecological surrounding. This, Gilbert does with a sense of serious unanimity, with Makhaya Maseko and the women of Golema Mmidi.

Brotherhood, Love and Trust for Identity Realisation

There is a spirit of brotherliness that breeds in Golema Mmidi as Makhaya Maseko arrives the village. To understand this notion of brotherhood and how it aids identity realisation in the novel, the nature of the village must be recognized. It's a special location. "Golema Mmidi was made up of people who had fled in order to avoid life's tragedies. Its name also differentiated it from other villages, which were named after important chiefs or events.... It was also one of the few places in the country where people lived permanently on land. The people who live there are fugitives from life's tragedies who come together with their different social experiences and backgrounds.

They are united not just by their shared suffering and experiences but also by their ideas and visions for a better future. Thus, their attitude of love and brotherliness fosters trust amongst them and encourages a firm inter-relationship which helps to rebuilds their lost identities. The residents of Golema Mmidi have created an identity for themselves by creating brotherly bonds based on a common goal: sharing property and doing subsistence responsibilities for survival. Here, these connections are called "brotherhoods." But according to Head, "brotherhood" has to be understood widely to mean that there are no boundaries or limitations,

like gender roles. Such a brotherhood ultimately develops into a community of people living together in one location and having common interests, allowing them to rebuild their lost identities and personalities.

These brotherly connections that the villagers have established are enriching and unique. The residents of Golema Mmidi, who differ in terms of color, age, gender, and political beliefs, share a common identity. Makhaya is fascinated and finds this setting to be really stimulating. At first, for example, he finds it hard to understand how a white man could live in Golema Mmidi. To his surprise, he finds that a shift in perspective and attitude makes it simple to relate to Gilbert, who then starts to think of Makhaya as his brother. When Dinorego, an elderly community member, says, "I have no words to describe Gilbert, son...", he introduces him to the wisdom of communal living.[j] Gilbert is a white man, and although some have been here for a long time, we in Botswana do not know any white people. Therefore, just as I take you as my own son, so do I take Gilbert as my own son. I changed my viewpoint for a number of reasons.

By these proclamations, Dinorego singularly outlines his trust for a man who does not share any lineage with the people of Golema Mmidi. Head uses characters like Gilbert and Dinorego as role models for brotherhood in the direction of stability and self-recovery. Dinorego reveals that, unlike the society Makhaya is fleeing, race and colour have not been major issues in Botswana. Therefore, "I might like it here" is the first step in identifying the sense of belonging that Makhaya expresses through her announcement. One concept that develops from this brotherliness is love. Makhaya's bond with Paulina Sobeso serves as an example of how human relationships need to go beyond differences like colour, gender, or age.

She challenges gender roles and racial discrimination from the perspectives of Paulina and Makhaya. Head presents the concepts of gender equality and egalitarian marriage through Paulina and Makhaya. Paulina and Makhaya are opposite each other. The two's relationship begins with Paulina developing a private love interest in Makhaya, whose life has previously been in turmoil. Makhaya had only learned how to hate and reject people due to the continuous disappointments he had faced in his life in South Africa. Now, Paulina has taught him to open up and realise "...that only people are capable of offering love and happiness. Paulina is noticed by a personal goal to stand out as a leader among women in the public and get Makhaya's attention.

Faith

Throughout the novel, the characters display their potentials as people of faith and determination. They have faith in others and believe that goodness exists not only in abstraction but also in the people they find themselves with. Evidently, in her inter-relationship with the other characters we see this coming to play as the plot unfolds. They also believe in the fact that every human has value imbued in them which can transcend to others in any relationship engaged in. By this, they intuitively frown at people who have little regard for human dignity. Mma-Milipede's observation that "people who err against human life... are more blind than others to the mystery of life" is an example of her discernment, it means that

her disposition toward life generally encourages a peaceful coordination between the people she meets not minding their race or gender.

Equality and respect for Human Dignity

Head's representation of male and female characters highlights their interrelationships. This allows her to define them by promoting individuality in every area and social structures. In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, the female characters, Paulina and Maria, desire for equality in their marriages. These are strong-willed, independent women who do not want marriage to compromise their uniqueness. The male protagonists, on the other hand, are positioned by Head to comprehend all too well the evil that comes with oppression and discrimination.

In this context, the partnerships between Paulina and Makhaya, Maria and Gilbert, and Mma-Millipede and Dinorego are perfect since they aim to promote equality and human dignity. Head criticizes women who allow themselves to be controlled and ruled by males, stating that "despite their educational advantage over men, few of the women developed a new personality". They remained docile and inferior, just like their previous tribal selves. The imbalances and inconsistencies that arise in even the most egalitarian relationships qualify this critique.

Head's humanistic vision has recognised her endorsement of human equality and goodness. This has to do with Maria and Gilbert's relationship. Their shared humanity makes them equal despite their differences in color, family beliefs, and goals. As a result, Head enables us to see that race, gender, or social status concerns shouldn't prevent people from being decent people. Minor conflicts in the Maria-Gilbert connection should not be interpreted as undermining the plan for universal love and the need for human dignity, but rather as an attempt to strengthen it. The similar idea may be seen in an incident involving Paulina and Makhaya: "I want some tea," he stated in an attempt to clarify. "But I'll make it and light the fire." "Goodness!" she said, alarm. Stay away from the fire. It's a work for women. "Goodness!" he said, imitating her words. It's time you realized that guys also occupy the earth. I will make tea if I feel like it and sweep the floor if I feel like it.

Makhaya campaigns for equality in roles and household responsibilities as well. Instead of asking Paulina to get him tea, he chooses to do it on his own. Makhaya aspires to be free and participate in activities that are usually reserved for women. Paulina is shocked by this sudden assumption of her responsibilities, saying, "It's a woman's work." However, the belief that "men have always had their way" needs to be balanced with what today's free women desire, which is equal opportunity with men. Makhaya therefore looks for a comparable opportunity in what is seen as women's work. Head furthermore asks for the understanding that human relationships ought to be balanced and shouldn't thrive when they are detrimental to other people.

She develops a conversation that illustrates Paulina's perception of Makhaya's ability to make fire: With a keen eye, Paulina observed the fire-making and realized, for the first time, why earlier generations had established some duties for men and certain jobs for women. Mentally,

men and women differentiated. Observe how this man constructed a fire! He moved his hands slowly, stopping frequently, setting the firewood at precisely calculated angles, treating each stick as if it were a unique living thing. This fire was started with the specific intention of boiling water for tea and bum beautifully, without smoke. A woman has an unique style of work. She held a lot of sticks in her hand, although fire could be used for a thousand other things besides just tea.

Head offers Paulina and Makhaya as two different approaches for carrying out similar tasks. Makhaya adopts an aesthetic approach, approaching tasks with a calculated and creative manner. He creates a perfect, beautiful, and smokeless fire. Makhaya produces the ideal fire one that is "smokeless and bright" rather than just starting one. Paulina, on the other hand, is incapable of such accuracy. She is practical. Rather than doing things for design, she does them for functionality. Paulina plays several roles as a woman, therefore she doesn't see why she should spend time on aesthetics when there are hungry people. She believes that the fire should do more for her than just boil water nicely for tea. She needs to be able to cook, heat water, warm the house, and iron clothes all with the same fire. Her perspective on fire is utilitarian; it should be used a purpose rather than bedecorative.

Head therefore identifies with the oppressed and identityless. She claims to enjoy the ordinary and simplicity of people. Stated differently, Head clarifies her preference towards not finding an identity model among people of power or within structures of power. She is a believer in humanity, humanitarianism, and humaneness. She claims that the identity of the poor is derived from her uncertain origins, and Botswanans provide role models in this regard. Her writing shows the slow process of her identification and sharing with the Botswana, where Head's identity quest is realized.

III. CONCLUSION

A large portion of Head's identification in *When Rain Clouds Gather* is a total commitment to the meaning and value of life and how it always and can change human existential components. The theme of survival, that of the importance of agriculture, the theme of brotherhood, all go to intensify Head's concern for the value and pursuit for a positive identity. Head uses the theme of love to also strengthen our thoughts on the power that love has in reshaping our fragmented lives. The love between Maria and Gilbert has been able to build trust which was not developed by the people of Golema Mmidi on a foreigner. Makhaya's love affair with Paulina has changed Makhaya from viciousness to an open person who relates well and accepts people the way they are and work with them. He is emotionally forced out of his dead conscience to a positive thinker.

The experiences of both Makhaya Maseko and Gilbert Balfour carefully put together by Head demonstrate that personal identity restoration draws a great deal from the brotherliness and togetherness in activities like agriculture. Just as Simon Estok establishes the importance of „place“ in his analysis of *As for Me and My House*, Any type of examination of *When Rain Clouds Gather* makes clear that Golema Mmidi was a location for personality restoration,

identity, vision mission and of total rehabilitation for a whole new, strange but overwhelming actualisation and accomplishment of one's dreams in life.

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