

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *MARU* WRITTEN BY BESSIE HEAD

Megha Arsh

Research Scholar

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities (English)

Pacific Academy of Higher Education & Research University, Udaipur.

## Abstract

This article endeavors to examine *Maru*, a fiction is written by Bessie Head in setting to status of woman and the third world writer in *Maru*. The critical analysis is directed through self-perusing and investigation of different parts of the novel. The investigation uncovered that as a woman, Bessie Head focused on remaking a positive picture for her female characters. She does this by testing cliché impression of ladies through destroying of male centric structures that recently consigned ladies to subordinate jobs. It is found in the introduction of the female characters as aspiring, confident and autonomous as on account of both Dikeledi and Margaret's non-permanent mother in outlining the encounters of women as women, the author investigates their most close to home feelings in this way exhibiting their view of issues as woman. This is so on account of both Dikeledi and Margaret who quietly nurture their sentiments of adoration towards Moleka. As a Third World author, Bessie Head is focused on social equity and dehumanization coming about because of ethnic bias and superstition. She voices for the voiceless by upholding sex value as a reason for improvement. On the political field, she studies issues that trouble African legislative issues, for example, childish and eager authority, persecution and segregation on premise of race. The content especially harps on the racial biases and class contrast in the general public.

**Key Words:** Literary analysis, woman image, social justice, gender equity, political arena.

## Introduction:

Present day African composition, a writing that reacts to the African individuals' situation, sentiments and desires, has an exceptional pledge to detailing the essential estimations of society and is both a reflection and analysis of those qualities. The subjects emerging out of the contemporary milieu gaze the novelists in the face challenging them to disregard them. On the off chance that they do, they will be insignificant to the human show every day instituted there. On the off chance that they acknowledge the test, they unavoidably arrange their characters inside the day by day preliminaries that encompass the general population's life (Gordimer, 1991)<sup>1</sup>. The author must, consequently, be committed to a course pertinent to his/her general public.

Nyamndi (2006)<sup>2</sup> sees that the convention among the extraordinary lion's share of African scholars to embrace a therapeutic journey into their general public's past has come to be seen as undeniable. That arrival is by all accounts approved by no other explanation than that Africa needs to reclaim its broke past, an agreement

having been achieved that clumsy Europeans harmed the past during the time spent gathering up material and otherworldly riches for themselves in the landmass.

Women's activists have placed that the lady essayist has two noteworthy obligations; first to tell about being a woman; also, to depict the truth from a woman's viewpoint. As indicated by Ogundipe (1987)<sup>3</sup>, the female author ought to be submitted in three different ways: as an author, as a woman and as a third world individual and her natural womanhood is involved in all the three.

This study centers around basic investigation of *Maru* written by Bessie Head. *Maru* gives the fruitful site to mounting a scholarly protection from the mixed-up philosophy which regularly offered ascend to the anguished biography. For, without this crazy philosophy there would not be devastating distance. Without this belief system there would not be enduring and privation. Both the belief system and its accessories spoke to the equivalent sullen state. The present study anyway cross examines the degree to which the author is submitted as a woman with reference to *Maru*. Nkosi, L. (1981)<sup>4</sup> perceived that the layers of intricacy in Bassie Head's books still must be decoded all the more completely from various points of view. Their point was to feature some expanded clarity which might be gotten through thinking about Head's tale from the perspective of Africanism and Feminism.

It is also looked into firmly identified with the present study in that for this situation, premium lay is in whether Bassie Head's chosen works were bona fide instruments of exploring African issues. It additionally analyzed her dedication as an author however the distinction lay in the way that the writings were inspected from the postcolonial viewpoint with spotlight on artistic responsibility and not Feminist perspective. Of significance also was the way that the researchers perceived that few holes of concentrate still existed in progress of Bessie Head.

### **Discussion:**

This section of this article contains discussion on a status of woman in Bessie Head's *Maru*. The woman in Head's *Maru* is displayed at various dimensions as found in the depiction of the different female characters in the content. The hero, Margaret Cadmore is delineated as minimized. She is the 'other', an outsider in the public eye by righteousness of her Masarwa character. Rather than her marriage to Maru boosting her mental self-portrait, it just serves to quiet her further. She weds Maru not of her own through and through freedom but rather because of his skillful control of the circumstance. *Maru* hence controls everything she might do and feeling. Her satisfaction is subject to his state of mind. So that at whatever point he was in an awful mind-set, his foul inclination denied her satisfaction since he would utilize unforgiving words that helped her to remember the dismal past, she had encountered. In spite of such interferences to her bliss, no memory stayed in Margaret's heart of the past enduring she had experienced. As Head watches, regularly Margaret was overpowered with joy and would stroll around for an entire day with a delighted grin all over. The explanation behind this predictable joy was that "*the times of despondency were few and far over adjusted constantly of heavy articulations of adoration*" (*Maru*, p4)<sup>5</sup>.

Margaret's present glad state is along these lines appeared differently in relation to the ceaseless despondent experiences she had preceding this marriage. The man *Maru* consequently turns into her wellspring of delight. Her powerlessness to recollect her past enduring portrays her complete acknowledgment of her current circumstance and her failure to change her predetermination. From the Freudian psychoanalytic point of view, Margaret's concealment of the difficult recollections of her past might be understood as a method for dealing with stress. Strikingly, Moleka who from the earliest starting point had been the object of her veneration is presently consigned to the domain of dreams. Nonetheless, on awakening she has no psychological impression she had always wanted with the exception of those of the room in which she adored Maru. Just her better half Maru has a grip of the entire circumstance however pretends obliviousness about it. Dreams at that point might be translated as appearance of stifled emotions or musings. Much as Maru's marriage to Margaret might be interpreted as an endeavor at miscegenation, it is likewise an endeavor to fulfill his childish wants. He had needed to wed a lady that would be despised by everybody and in Margaret, his desire is figured it out. No respect is given to Margaret's emotions as a lady. Indeed, her purpose behind tolerating this marriage had been the way that she had been left with no option. For her subsequently Maru had been a boon, seeming just at the last possible second to spare her from gloom and a broken heart. Maru delights in this reality, in his view, until the time he wedded Margaret, *'she had lived like the frantic pooch of the town, with tin jars fixing to her tail'* (Maru, p5)<sup>6</sup>.

The depiction of Margaret as having grabbed the eye of both Maru and Moleka, both of whom are eminences nonetheless, uncovers her as adequate, that is, as meriting male consideration. Moleka, regardless of his fascination in Margaret, can't transparently admit his affection to her. Strikingly, his new game-plan, the affirmation of the impression Margaret makes on him, the consequent contention with Maru when he understands that Maru also was keen on a similar lady and even his welcome of his captives to his table all point at his difference in heart. The change that comes over Moleka upon his first experience with Margaret might be seen as Head's endeavor to mock biases leveled against ladies and people all in all. This is uncovered in the way that Margaret being a Masarwa was viewed as a low breed in the general public, the trick of the earth, yet here were two men of imperial status matching for her consideration. Basically accordingly, people ought to be straightforward in their emotions towards others and not be prisoners of unwarranted biases.

Bassie Head's endeavor to devastate cliché images of woman is delineated in her depiction of the white woman, Margaret Cadmore. She is above unimportant biases. Her great feeling of association is uncovered through her propensity for doing things at the same time in order to accelerate the final product. Her identity is differentiated to her better half's who is delineated as normally dull and moronic. These attributes are anyway made light of by the way that he was a cleric and by prudence of his calling, he leniently stayed quiet for a considerable length of time. His appearance as sketched out by the creator does not improve general sentiment of him either. In Bessie's Head's portrayal, *"he 'had a long sad face. His mouth was constantly wet with salivation and he oftentimes flickered his eyes gradually like a cow"* (Maru, p8)<sup>7</sup>.

Given such a scornful depiction, the white man therefore works in the fringe, eclipsed by his significant other. His better half, Margaret Cadmore despite what might be expected is portrayed as having presence of mind in wealth. This uprightness makes her ageless just as she could have a place with any age or time, however dependably on the dynamic side. This positive depiction anyway does not make her flawless. In actuality, it makes her 'harsh of whatever remains of humankind' (Maru,p 8)<sup>8</sup>. In Bassie Head's portrayal, her nervous anxious and vivacious demeanor made her live at the speed of a vessel shooting over the rapids. Her constant maltreatment of whatever is left of humankind which moved at seventy five percent of her pace had in some cases driven her into circumstances where she was in risk of being struck. Thusly Cadmore is painted as anxious and inhumane. In spite of the fact that this depiction may uncover her as a balanced character with shortcomings and qualities, it could likewise be comprehended as Head's method for recognizing Cadmore as the oppressor. As a woman, she is painted as mindful, composed and self-propelled. In any case, as a white she is oppressive and scornful towards the dark race. This gives her a kind of uncertainty. This inner conflict is additionally created in her activities in perspective on the current conditions. Despite the fact that white, she is the special case who is happy to cover the dead Masarwa who had been disregarded by others of her own race. Her minding nature is seen when she selects to embrace the offspring of the Masarwa woman. In her view, the Botswana medical caretakers are obscene individuals, as opposed to washing the lady's body for entombment they had given it a chance to lie on the stone floor unaffected by the way that the free move dress in which despite everything she was, had been grimy from the introduction of the small child. Her expectation for receiving the infant gets the race condition. In her sustaining of the infant despite everything she remains the colonizer, oppressing the youngster, named Margaret Cadmore such as herself, to a sort of childhood that distances her from her underlying foundations. The final product is a tentative person who tries to guarantee her very own space.

The other woman character, Dikeledi, is depicted as very free. She was the girl of a central boss and the first of that group to put great training to valuable reason. Not at all like whatever is left of her social class who only utilized their instruction to embellish their societal position, Dikeledi has a progressively down to earth perspective on the world. This is apparent from the way that she had no need of business yet dissimilar to other people who made riches synonymous with inertness, riches gave her the opportunity to spend significant time in what intrigued her most. She in this manner does not release her Diploma in early childhood education to squander yet takes up a situation as an essential educator at Lessening school. In spite of her special foundation, she is humble and accommodative. She knows that the Masarwa are the underprivileged of the general public yet at the same time stays warm to Margaret. Among her and Margaret, there was no strain, limitation or false hindrances normal for most human connections especially when people trust that they are of a higher economic wellbeing than their partners. This aware frame of mind towards Margaret further raises the situation of Dikeledi. She is entirely worried about the individual worth of an individual as a person. This viewpoint forcefully differentiates Pete, the primary's sentiment of Margaret. His levelheadedness is completely broken after discovering that Margaret is a Masarwa. He fretfully sits tight for the early afternoon ringer and when this is at long last rang, he strolls at the frantic pace to the workplace of the instruction administrator to gripe of trickery. Dikeledi in this manner develops as candidly better than Pete. She can

contain her feelings even in stunning cases as for the situation when she finds that Margaret is a Masarwa and not a shaded as she had before on expected.

Male towards woman is likewise depicted through Pete. To him, Margaret being a woman was an obvious objective to deal with. He says to Seth, *'She can be pushed out. It's simple. She is a woman'*(Maru, p36)<sup>9</sup>. The woman is along these lines compared with shortcoming. She is a feeble recognize that represents no risk to the male inner self in this way would not be a prevention at all since she is anything but difficult to push out. This infers the male centric nature of the general public. The woman, by righteousness of her sexual orientation may have her rights disregarded absent much ado. Margaret is anyway spared from this bind by prudence of her great capabilities. In Seth's appraisal, she couldn't must her present position alone cerebrums. All things considered, somebody was pushing her. To out properly decide out that Margaret couldn't must that situation all alone minds demonstrates the derisive frame of mind society has towards woman. There is by all accounts certain assigned dimensions past which ladies can't go individually. In distress Pete lounge chairs a 14-year-old kid in Margaret's class in order to put Margaret to disgrace. His arrangement is tragically thwarted by Dikeledi who by chance was the main individual who did not comprehend double-crossing. The 14 years old kid was required to make the mortifying inquiry, 'Since when is a Bushy an educator?' whatever remains of the class was to participate in the serenade. *'You are a bushman'* (p41)<sup>10</sup>

Pete was to use this as evidence of Margaret's ineffectiveness as a teacher and thus have her sent out of the school. His calculations had unfortunately excluded Dikeledi who streaks ahead of him into the class and restores calm. Unlike Pete, Dikeledi is depicted as being mature and above petty prejudices, an individual who recognizes the inner value of people. Pete on the contrary is sadistic and malicious. He and his like were only angry when their plans to inflict suffering went haywire. Dikeledi is thus cast in a mould superior to that of Pete, the principal. In this way, the writer paints a positive picture of the woman. Dikeledi emerges as assertive and independent. She is not cowed by Pete. When he warns her not to be running around school during school hours as a way of trying to cover up his embarrassment, she does not hesitate to tell him off. Through Dikeledi and Moleka's relationship, Head explores the intricate emotions of love. The quarrel between the two lies in where Moleka has actually hidden his heart. Dikeledi is unrelenting in her adoration of Moleka. Moleka on the contrary has had several sexual excursions in the village. However, he does not attach any value to these relationships. He is indifferent and insensitive to his partners' opinion. For him these relationships merely provide an outlet for sexual gratification. Whereas Dikeledi truly loves him, he is only attracted to her physically. He finds her dressing provocative. Her tight skirts, construed as elegance by Margaret are for him, an advertisement of her thighs intended to draw male attention. As he puts it

Then why do you advertise your thighs? I'd like you to stop that. You think men don't know what you mean when you walk around swinging your thighs like that? *"They can't take their eyes off you and here you want to pretend all kinds of innocence before me"* (Maru, p78)<sup>11</sup>.

In Moleka's view Dikeledi's mode of dressing is a kind of bait - an open invitation towards intimacy with the opposite sex. The contradictions in Moleka and Margaret's perception of Dikeledi's attire calls to mind the foundational assumption of Reader Response theory that a text does not have a sole inherent meaning but has

as many readings as its readers bring into it. According to Culbertson (1998)<sup>12</sup>, *Social Constructionism and Reader Response theory help us to understand that we read meaning into many things other than the printed page. What we are able to see, value and respond to in a text is socially constructed, and the meaning we draw from whatever we encounter is a priori resident within, generated by ourselves and shaped by the complex interaction of culture, life experience, and individual need.*

Moleka's view of Dikeledi is shaped by his treatment of women as sex objects. To wear revealing skirts that expose the female anatomy, in this case, the thighs, construed as organs of eroticism is to indirectly offer one self for male advances indiscriminately. This assessment finds likeness in what Mulvey (1975) refers to as 'the male gaze'. Mulvey argues that within the classical structure of cinema, men possess the gaze and women are its object. This view is further explained by Schehr (1997: 82-83)<sup>13</sup> who asserts,

*It is the gaze, the defining mode of operation of masculinist discourse, that constructs the 'woman' as textual object, prevents the woman from being herself... from 'being,' from 'Being,' from having a 'self' separate from or prior to the sociovisual construct imposed by the male gaze and its/his discourse.*

Moleka's sentiments may therefore be seen as his attempt to deconstruct Dikeledi's appearance from a masculine angle. It depicts his way of perceiving women as sex objects as inferred from his countless adventures with women and may not necessarily be in tandem with Dikeledi's motives. This is exemplified when it turns out that contrary to Moleka's perception of Dikeledi, Dikeledi only had eyes for Moleka and no other man. She had ignored all his love affairs because in her assessment of herself, she towered above every other woman of her kind in her world, intellectually and morally. Her obsession with Moleka however makes her gullible. She thus becomes an easy target for Moleka's vengeance when he realizes that he has lost Margaret to Maru. Her only fear is the possibility of being encumbered with a fatherless child.

For Moleka's mother life with Moleka was a series of high dramas always ending in paternity cases. There were already eight motherless children living in her yard, their only justification for being there was that they all looked like Moleka having particularly inherited his distinctive thundercloud brow. Through Moleka's mother, Head explores maternal feeling for children as projected by mothers. Moleka's mother has no objection to his reckless behavior. Her life was a continuous harassment of women, fighting for her son. However, she puts up with it all mainly because she herself had only brought forth one child yet she possessed an enormous amount of maternal feeling. Despite this reckless lifestyle Moleka's mother does not condemn him, she coddled and pampered him as if he were a three-year-old boy since after all he was her only child. In this way, Head evokes the woman's protective nature towards the object of her affection. Quite often she is able to tolerate even what may be considered as bothersome. Besides Moleka's many children making up for her own deficiency since she herself had only brought forth one child, it may be viewed as a survival strategy from a Darwinian perspective. According to Charles Darwin's theory of Natural Selection which emphasizes the idea of survival for the fittest, the fittest does not necessarily refer to the strongest, biggest or smartest and most cunning individuals. On the contrary, the fittest are those with the combination of traits that allow them to survive and produce more offspring that in turn survive to reproduce. What makes an individual fit all depends on the environment at the time and the combination of traits that are most suited to flourish in

it (O'Neil, 1998)<sup>14</sup>. From a Darwinian perspective, we may deduce that Moleka's habit of carelessly siring children with different girlfriends was a deliberate strategy for survival. It was a protective mechanism to ensure the survival of his genes through diversity in procreation. His mother tolerates this as an assurance of the continuation of her lineage. Her sole proof and consolation were the physical resemblance between the children and their father. In essence therefore, it is the desire for survival that motivates Moleka's behavior. Over the years, Moleka's mother had put a crease in her forehead to help her pretend anxiety for all the women who fell in love with her son. Ironically when Moleka falls in love with Margaret and begins to stay home each evening, passing many hours in brooding silence, his mother becomes truly alarmed, in fact the crease in her forehead becomes very real. This is a clear confirmation that she did not regret Moleka's recklessness.

### **Conclusion:**

The study uncovered that as a woman, Bessie Head focused on remaking a positive image for her female characters. She does this by testing cliché impression of woman through destroying of male centric structures that recently consigned woman to subordinate jobs. This is found in the introduction of the female characters as driven, decided, emphatic and free as on account of both Dikeledi and Margaret's temporary mother. The main character Margaret Cadmore who at first seems bashful is delineated as very develop in the standpoint; she isn't cowed by her Masarwa personality. She is the turnaround which two conspicuous guys wrangle for consideration. She circumvents unruffled by the biased frame of mind of the general population around her. Furthermore, she gave with a messianic job by her non-permanent mother. Without a doubt, Margaret later turns into the channel through which her clan is freed. In depicting the encounters of ladies as woman, she studies their most close to home feelings in this way exhibiting their view of issues as ladies. This is so on account of both Dikeledi and Margaret who quietly nurture their sentiments of affection towards Moleka.

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