



**BIGOTRY BEYOND RACE: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS IN
ZAKESMDA'S *WAYS OF DYING* AND BESSIE HEAD'S *WHEN RAIN
CLOUDS GATHER***



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ABSTRACT

This article examines bigotry beyond the confines of race in the context of South Africa. It seeks to prove that race is not the only factor that informs bigotry in the South African society as evident in the selected works of ZakesMda and Bessie Head. Beside race, bigotry is evident in the areas of ethnicity, gender, class, politics, family and communality. The incidences in the works of Mda and Head are in dialogue with the realities of their society and so, calls for a New Historicist approach in the analysis

in this article. Despite the fact that both authors wrote at different historical moments of South Africa, their sense of ensuring a better society is evident. As authors with different sexual orientations, their approach to some issues differs at some levels. Both authors view bigotry as a pervasive human attribute with severe consequences and call for harmony across gender, ethnicity, class, family and communality.

KEYWORDS : *bigotry, class, ethnicity, gender, communality*

INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a long history of racism owing to her colonial past. Colonialism laid the groundwork for racial bigotry in South Africa followed by apartheid, introduced by the Dutch settlers. However, some areas where bigotry was and is evident were over-shadowed by preoccupations with racial antagonism, which was the major nuance that handicapped the South African society, with black people as perpetual victims. Bessie Head and Zakes Mda are noted for their struggle against all forms of bigotry ranging from racial, ethnic, gender to communal and political. To this effect, this article seeks to show that race is not the only factor that informs injustices in the South African society as evident in the selected works of Head and Mda. More than anything else, bigotry constitutes an impediment to socio-economic and political progress as it promotes domination, exploitation, intolerance, resentment, abrasiveness, suspicion, greed and above all insecurity. Our inability to fashion political, social and economic goals could also be traced to bigotry. When we refuse to listen to other voices of wisdom or create avenues for dialogue, it is bigotry that is manifesting in us. Therefore, despite their preoccupations with racial conflicts, ZakesMda and Bessie Head were not eluded by the prevalence of bigotry in other areas with alarming socio-economic consequences. Beside race, bigotry is evident in the areas of politics, class, ethnicity, communality, gender, family and even at the individual level, implicating mostly young people in criminal acts such as rape, drug trafficking, robbery and other forms of violence with serious consequences on individuals and families.

Bigotry which is derived from the adjective ‘bigot’ is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as “The condition of a bigot; obstinate and unenlightened attachment to a particular creed, opinion, system or party” (185). This definition reveals that bigots believe only in themselves and what they stand for. They do not consider any ideas outside their own. This definition is corroborated by the *Collins English Dictionary*, which defines bigotry as “The attitudes, behavior or way of a bigot, prejudice and intolerance” (153). The foregoing definitions show that bigotry is a negative attitude manifested by people with the spirit of intolerance and pride. Although bigotry can manifest itself in the absence of power, power proves to be the major spoke in the wheel that strengthens bigotry, facilitating its successful manifestation in various parts of the world from history to present. For instance, the transformation of bigotry in recent South Africa shows that it has been working at the rhythm of power. During the period of white

administration, bigotry was visible and perpetrated by the whites sustained by apartheid. In postapartheid, the blacks have become born again perpetrators of bigotry even against their own brothers/sisters and against whites as a form of vengeance. As indicated in the introduction, this article focuses on bigotry beyond race, implying that in the South African society, bigotry is evident in other areas that equally call for attention such as; class, politics, ethnicity, communality and family. The works of Head and Mda that shall be analysed in this article are *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *Ways of Dying* respectively.

First and foremost, the existence of class bigotry in both Head's and Mda's works show evidence of an unhealthy socio-political atmosphere. Particularly in Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, class bigotry is grossly responsible for the social and economic problems evident in different forms in the society. The status qua is made up of people of the royal family who discriminate and alienate the rest of the population, constraining them from participating in the running of political affairs. Head portrays royalty as a sensitive social entity that encourages human disparity. As evident in her *When Rain Clouds Gather*, class distinction is perpetrated by the people of the royal family. Chief Matenge is a political bigot, who uses his position as the leader to harass his subjects. It is revealed that: "Matenge never called them [the villagers] unless it was to destroy an inhabitant of GolemaMmidi. He had never done one act of kindness towards the villagers" (174). Chief Matenge is not only drunk with powers, but abuses his position as the people's leader. He is a cruel and sadistic character used in this novel to represent evil in its entirety. He symbolizes those leaders with sadistic attitude who lose popularity among their people and only attract their hatred and indignation towards them. Matenge's behaviour calls to mind the behaviour of some African leaders in our contemporary society who think that their ceremonial position is a gate way to committing crimes with impunity.

Moreover, the royal class promotes class distinction owing to the satisfaction they derive from having a good life at the expense of the commoners. Socio-economic disparity is apparent in terms of accommodation, where the people from the royal family live in mansions, while the rest of the villagers including slaves live in mud huts:

The mansion, the slaves, and a huge cream Chevrolet, which he parked under a tree in the yard, were the only things that gave Matenge the only feeling of security in the village. At least this part of it was in order. The chiefs had always lived in the mansions while the people had lived in the huts. His world had always known two strict classes: royalty and commoners. GolemaMmidi was a village of commoners. Not one could even claim distant relationship to royalty and dispute his authority (44).

This shows evidence of a hopeless society, where evil is perpetrated by the royal class, which is supposed to ensure peace and progress leaving the less privileged hopeless and helpless.

The existence of slaves is clear indication of a stratified society. Their status is perpetrated in such a way that they would remain only as slaves for as long as the status qua remains unchanged. That is why the sons of slaves have decided to engage in politics to make their voices heard, but the hostility of the ruling class is not making things easy for them. The contemptuous attitude of members of the royal family towards the sons of slaves who engage in politics based on their linguistic limitations, is proof of bigotry perpetrated by the ruling class. It is clearly stated that: "It was one of the most pathetic of elections. The sons of chiefs who had had all the advantages of education pounced on the spelling errors of the sons of slaves, who had little or no education" (63). The slaves are not given the opportunity to acquire proper education and for this reason they form the massive illiterates of the society. However, the fact that the slaves are also involved in politics shows their commitment to bring change in a society, where the rich have in abundance while the poor remain empty. The decision of the slaves to engage in politics as a distinct and marginalised group shows their determination to reclaim their rights and challenge the existing oppressive structures.

Certainly, in apartheid South Africa, class bigotry was evident on the part of the whites and non-whites, but in postapartheid, some blacks have eventually found their way up the ladder and could excitedly distinguish themselves from their brothers who are not privileged to form part of the political setup or have relatives in power. Looking at the geographical and social situation of South Africa today, one notices the contribution of history in fostering class system in the society. The shanty township of South Africa which Mda and Head describe in their works can be visualised in today's South Africa. The Shanty Township is notorious for its

comprehensive squatter camps which developed as a result of a long-lasting housing shortage for poor people in the 1970s and the 1980s. Most of these improvised dwellings lack basic amenities, such as running water, sanitation and electricity. In Mda's *Ways of Dying*, he documents these present realities by creating the setting occupied by the destitute of the society called the settlement. In this squatter, we find characters like Noria, Toloki, Shadrack and others who form the lower class of the society. Coming back to the present situation of the society, one can juxtapose the shanty squatter camps with a city like Johannesburg. This city was founded in 1886 as a mining town with vast newly discovered gold deposits and it soon grew rapidly into a city built by hard work from miners (by black people). Most of the structures were built since the 1950s with the help of the blacks who laboured in the mines for gold that never benefitted them.

Hence, in postapartheid, the whites are the ones living in big mansions of Johannesburg while many blacks squat in the townships. However, with the advent of democracy some blacks are opportune to find themselves in high positions and instead of thinking of their people's conditions, they are busy enjoying themselves and discriminating against others. Mda represents this in *Ways of Dying*, where we witness a funeral procession that collides with a wedding procession which according to custom, the wedding procession is supposed to give way for the funeral procession to pass. Instead, the wedding procession refuses to give way claiming that "We are a procession of beautiful people and many posh cars and buses while yours is an old skorokoro of a van. And hundreds of ragged souls on foot" (11). This is an indication that the stratified society is also characterised by ill-manners, which add to the trauma of the less fortunate. The well-to-do are full of prejudices, evident in their attitude towards the destitute, confirming the fact that wealth sometimes can be a generator of prejudice and human alienation. The disregard for custom witnessed in the behaviour of the rich, is an indication that wealth also promotes arrogance and disrespect for tradition. Here, we are presented with the custom and the global in which distinction is apparent and "power and prestige" are juxtaposed with the "marginal and destitute" (*Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* 156).

Besides, ethnic bigotry, driven by ethnic superiority complex constitutes one of the social areas, where Bessie Head and Zakes Mda focus their attention in order to expose and ridicule the perpetrators of such vices. According to Christian Karner in *Ethnicity and Everyday Life*,

ethnicity implies “the exercise of power on ethnic groups by various means of social classification, control and exclusion: [...] the continuous *sic* negotiation of [ethnic] identities in the contexts of multiple structures of power and inequality” (127). The structures put in place as indicated in the works of Head and Mda, are envisioned to sustain ethnic exclusiveness. Ethnicity has come to define political activities, where leaders belonging to particular ethnic group tend to dominate, marginalise, alienate and even brutalise those outside the mainstream ethnic group. Privileged ethnic groups see the unprivileged groups as inconsequential beings worth dominating and exploiting to their advantage, thus, bringing about a relationship between class and ethnicity.

Accordingly, Boeschoten Van Riki, in his article entitled “When difference Matters: Socio-political Dimensions of Ethnicity in the district of Florina” in *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference*, affirms that: “The highest correlation between class and ethnicity can be found in those sectors of society where the two overlap, for example, when factory owners belong to one ethnic group and workers to another” (34). In societies where ethnicity is problematic and constitute a source of misery, the victims are mostly labourers labouring for the benefit of the dominant ethnic group. To this effect, Makhayain Head’s *When Rain Clouds Gather*, questions the capitalist nature of the society: “Why so many people could be persecuted by a few and why so many starved why a few had more than they could eat?” (81). There is evidence that the majority is being victimised by a merciless minority who pose as sadists as they enjoy while their brothers and sisters suffer. The political situation in this setting is a microcosm of the larger political network, where the people of the high class think that they are the chosen ones to pilot the affairs of the nation, thus, excluding those outside their class or ethnic affiliations. In the postcolonial context, many leaders use ethnicity to promote antagonism, which they see as an easy way to consolidate power.

So, in Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, a power hungry chief promotes ethnic hostility and human alienation by taking advantage of existing ethnic differences to extend his political influence. It is confirmed that: “*The tribal chief who has formed them(city dwellers) into armies that harass innocent residents merely uses ethnicity as an excuse for his own hunger for power*” (55). He uses the already embittered city dwellers to execute his mischievous plans as evident in the following:

You know long before the tribal chief contrived to use hostel dwellers from our ethnic group to do the dirty work for him, we, the township residents alienated ourselves from these brothers. We despised them, and said they were country bumpkins. We said they were uncivilized and unused to the ways of the city, and we did not want to associate with them. It was easy for the tribal chief to use them against us, for they were already bitter about the scorn that we were showing them (56).

The township dwellers are bigots who discriminate and alienate the hostel dwellers on the flimsy basis that they came to the city before them and were lucky to secure places in the township. To them, they are better than the hostel dwellers and for that reason belong to a different class. They have to pay for this derisive attitude towards the city dwellers with their lives as the tribal chief has succeeded to use these alienated brothers against them. Noria confirms the fact that the hostel dwellers were always being harassed by the township dwellers: “It was not unusual for a hostel inmate to go for a drink in the township, or to see a girlfriend, only to come back with a stabbed wound, or as a corpse, for the sole reason that he was a country bumpkin” (56). With such hostile attitude driven by bigotry, the hostel dwellers are left with no option than to retaliate. However, all this fighting whether due to human alienation or vengeance have only helped to ruin the society and add to the confusion that reins in the transformation period.

Concurrently, John Rex attributes the inadequacies of postapartheid socio-political dispensation to ethnic connections. He upholds in “Race, Ethnicity and Class in Political and Intellectual Conjectures” that:

The African National Congress, which had led the liberation movement, defined its own position in universalist terms. It saw all workers, black and white, as belonging to a single class and within the black group it refused to recognize ethnic or tribal differences. As time went on however, distinction among blacks, most notably that between Zulus and other groups, were recognized and these distinctions, which were clearly not based upon color or race, were described as ethnic. (33).

Blacks were more united when they were fighting for democracy, yet after achieving their goals, greed and discrimination which were a characteristic of the apartheid regime began to define the new democratic society. This is to show that beside racial domination, ethnic domination and intolerance are also responsible for human alienation, oppression, discrimination and exploitation. This brings about divisions in the society where “members of the first group have created stereotypical beliefs about those in the second group. These stereotypes having no basis in reality, begin to assume real status only because members of the prejudiced group insist that the stereotypes are true” (*Race and Racism in Literature* xi). The ability to make others think that stereotypical notions are true is often facilitated by power and manipulations. Rex, like many other critics, confirms that ethnicity is problematic and its existence in modern era needs urgent attention.

Also, in *When Rain Clouds Gather*, an old woman “turned her head and spat on the ground” (when she hears that Makhaya is from Baralong village) (13). This condescending attitude can only lead one to the conclusion that there is lack of ethnic consideration talk less of ethnic cooperation. The old woman’s behaviour confirms what an old man had earlier told Makhaya about the neighbouring tribes: “You are running away from tribalism. But just ahead of you is the worst tribal country in the world. We Baralongs are neighbours of the Batswanas but we cannot get along with them. They are a thick-headed lot who think no further than this door. Tribalism is meat and drink to them” (10). The metaphoric use of meat and drink to describe the nature of tribalism practised in this area is an indication that tribalism is a normal and daily experience in the lives of the people. Makhaya’s experience with the old woman who spits after hearing that he comes from some other tribe is reminiscent of what Stephen Morton describes in his article entitled “Marginality: Representations of Subalternity, Aboriginality and Race” in *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*, where he contends that:

When I went home for holidays, if there was a Naicker woman sitting next to me in the bus, she would immediately ask me which place I was going to, what street. As soon as I said the Cheri, she’d get up and move up off to another seat. Or she’d tell me to move elsewhere. As if I’d go I’d settle into my seat even more firmly. They’d prefer then to get up and stand all the way rather than sit next to me or to any other woman from the Cheri. They’d be polluted apparently (18).

The consideration of other human beings as animals or insignificant reinforces ignorance, especially as the perpetrators sometimes take ludicrous and self-implicating decisions guided by tribal prejudice. It is clear that the perpetrator of this caste disparity is controlled by stereotypical ideologies that have been fabricated to define the people from the Cheri. This is the same thing that happens in Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, where one tribe refuses to feed on certain plants because another tribe which they consider to be inferior feeds on those plants.

Furthermore, Chief Matenge in *When Rain Clouds Gather* is also an ardent ethnic bigot, whose tribal affiliations would not permit him collaborate with people visiting the land to bring development. That explains why he addresses Makhaya thus:

I'll tell you something about Gilbert. He knows nothing about agriculture. He ought to be in England where he received his training in agriculture. The only man who knows how to do things here is a Botswana man. Most of the trouble here is caused by people from outside and we don't want you. We want you to get out. When are you going?"(65).

Chief Matenge is an ethnic bigot whose constant suspicion blinds his ability to appreciate what the foreigners are doing to develop his kingdom. He judges people not based on what they do but rather on ethnic connections. The irony about the above speech lies in the fact that Chief Matenge is the trouble maker who has rendered his subjects' lives very miserable.

Head handles communal conflicts from a different perspective as she relates it to human greed for wealth. In her *When Rain Clouds Gather*, communal conflict is evident between the monopolists and the cooperatives. This conflict is caused by economic greed and stems from the fact that with the cooperatives in existence, the monopolist will no longer enrich themselves with the cattle business. It is reported that: "In the meantime, a fierce battle raged and cooperative was the dirtiest word you could use to the monopolist" (46). The businessmen have been enriching themselves at the expense of the people and feel threatened by the presence of the cooperatives. The attitude of the monopolists contributes in promoting economic disparity as cattle owners are always cheated in the business. However, with the coming of the cooperatives such injustices have become things of the past.

Apart from greed for wealth, Head also depicts the manifestation of bigotry through unfounded belief in witchcraft which perpetrates conflict in the community. This nature of bigotry also has serious consequences as innocent people are oppressed in the community and

children lose their lives because instead of taking their sick children to the hospital, the people decide to accuse others for being responsible for the children's predicaments. In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, a case of witchcraft is presented in Chief Sokoto's court, where a woman who performs traditional healing is accused of killing children through witchcraft. In court, the doctor proves that the children are dying of pneumonia, which is a diagnostic and treatable disease that can also be prevented. However, the people's belief in witchcraft has caused them to oppress the innocent woman for which reason Chief Sokoto gets irritated and addresses the people:

Your children die of pneumonia [...] and to shield yourselves from blame you accused a poor old woman of having bewitched them into death. Not only that you falsely accuse her of a most serious crime which carries the death sentence. How long have you planned the death of the poor old woman deranged people of Bodibeng? How long have you caused her to live in utter misery, suspicion and fear? I say can dogs bark forever? Oh no people of Bodibeng today you will make payment for the legs of the old woman who have fled before your barking. I say: The fault is all with you, and because of this I fine each household of Bodibeng one beast. From the money that arises out of the sale of these beasts, each household is to purchase warm clothing for the children so that they may no longer die of pneumonia (53).

The false accusations and threats are testimonies of the manifestation of bigotry, which also depicts ignorance. This brings to light some of the consequences of bigotry which are fear, misery and discomfort. Victims of human intolerance go through such horrible experiences which make life unbearable for them. Nevertheless, Chief Sokoto is out for justice and the protection of his subjects' rights and well-being, especially as he provides the solution to the serious health hazard caused by pneumonia. From new historical and postcolonial perspectives, we can say that the belief in witchcraft is an issue that has existed in the African society for a long time. It is also a concept that has brought about false accusations and conflicts among people, especially as witchcraft is a spiritual problem. In the postcolonial society, witchcraft is still a concept that many people believe in and some equally discard its existence on grounds that it lacks scientific credence. However, apart from putting the lives of many accused people in danger, it has brought disunity among people and communities. With a leader like Chief Sokoto, the postcolonial

society would move progressively. We need leaders who take the interest of their subjects at heart and handle matters objectively.

Apart from ethnicity, bigotry is also evident in the area of gender, wheresome issues, particularly women's specific problems were not given ample attention during apartheid due to the atrocious experiences brought about by the racist regime. Bell Hooks also collocates this view in *AIN'T I A Woman?*, when she states that:

Contemporary black women could not join together to fight for women's right because we did not see "womanhood" as an important aspect of our identity. Racist, sexist, socialization had conditioned us to devalue our femaleness and regard race as the only relevant label of identification. We were just asked to deny a part of ourselves and we did. We cling to the hope that liberation from oppression would be all that was necessary for us to be free (1).

In apartheid South Africa, women suffered immensely in the hands of white men who did not respect womanhood but saw a woman as an object of amusement and sexual gratification. Certainly, the society is witnessing serious setback due to unacceptable attitude not only as a result of class nor ethnic difference but due to the way people are being oppressed because of their sexuality. The friction that exists between men and women is a major concern of critics of postcolonial society given that one sex has been dominated for a long time by the other. Both men and women constituting the feminist thoughts, struggle to save the image of women in the postcolonial society. Writers and critics use the medium of writing to conscientise people about gender equality and opportunities for all irrespective of sex. Head and Mda have proven to be writers with feminist thoughts by showing in their works that women are undergoing specific forms of oppression as a result of their sexuality. To reinforce feminist engagement, Rosaline Delmar in *What is Feminism?*, makes it clear that: "... a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change in the social, economic and political order" (Rosaline Delmar 1986 quoted in *Political Ideologies* (182). The problems faced by women in the society on account of their nature need to be addressed so that the society can move forward given that in most societies, women have been neglected. In this light, Catherine R. Stimpson says in *Feminism and Feminist Criticism* that:

“We cannot understand history, society or culture unless we graph the causes and effects of sex/gender systems. Such systems proliferate, foliate and vary, but they have usually pushed down women” (272-273).

Evidently, women are weakened by the way history and society represent them. Sometimes we notice that women’s efforts to bring change are being stifled by patriarchal domination mechanisms. Wilford Rich and Miller Robert in *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism* posit that: “The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our movement, and equally because of traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women” (77). Women need to know their rights in order to be able to defend them so that the problem of submission without questioning could be resolved. Moreover, gender prejudice is a severe problem all over the world. Barbara Crow confirms this when she quotes a manifesto issued by the New York group, Redstockings which reads:

Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total...sic We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the most basic form of discrimination....sic All men receive economic, sexual and psychological benefits from male supremacy. All men have oppressed women...sic we will always take the side of women against their oppressors. We will not ask what is revolutionary or reformist, only what is good for women (quoted in Political ideologies 203).

In the light of the above quotation, Head and Mda use their works to depict the oppression of women by men who see women as a weaker sex and derive pleasure in oppressing them.

Similarly, many scholars among which are Rosaline Delmar and Nancy Holmstrom have sprung up in various parts of the globe to interrogate the position and role that women play in the society because patriarchal notions about women still continue to cause great suffering to women around the globe. This problem has been promoted by general conception that women are in their nature different from men and are also limited by their nature to take part in certain aspects of societal life. Nancy Holmstrom in “A Marxist Theory of Women’s Nature” posits that: “Conservative claim that there is a distinct women’s nature that puts limits on the extent to which the traditional sexual/social roles can and should be altered. Feminists usually reject the idea correctly pointing out that it has been used to justify women’s oppression for thousands of years”

(456). Contrary to popular assumption, we feel that sexual and social roles can be altered because they are socially and historically constructed. Another critic who is of the opinion that gender roles are accounted for by social constructions and not biological component is Nana Wilson Tagoe who in an article “The African Novel and the Feminine Condition” posits that:

Our notion of femine should in addition encompass all those yearnings and desires of women that are never specifically named because communities do not acknowledge them in their understanding of the feminine. How all these situations are experienced, resisted and transformed through time, should be part of our conception of the feminine condition (177).

Tagoe’s cry for the reconsideration of women’s desires is timely, especially as silenced voices are beginning to be heard from various regions of the world regarding women and their specific crisis. We have reached a time in human history, where women’s specific problems need to be given adequate attention, we do not have any options but to listen to women and those who advocate women’s welfare and dignity. Seeking to understand the condition of women and how they transform with time has been a major preoccupation of postcolonial writers and critics alike. The implications of the way women’s lives are conditioned, interrogated and reinvented have informed the works of most postcolonial writers among which are those of Head and Mda.

Still within the context of oppression of women, we notice in Mda’s *Ways of Dying* that Toloki’s father is used by Mdato depict the subjugation of black women’s voices as seen in his redundant behaviour towards his wife. He demonstrates his chauvinistic attitude by constantly telling Toloki’s mother that he does not argue with women. When he refuses that Toloki would not go to the city despite the fact that Noria, who is younger than Toloki is allowed to go, his wife’s insistence provokes the following exasperating remarks: “You know I don’t argue with women, Mother of Toloki. If you want to be the man of the house, take these pants and wear them. Can’t you see that this child of yours is so stupid that he will get lost in the city?” (42). In this regard, his decision is final and his wife has no say in family matters. This shows that the woman’s speaking position is marginalised and undermined indicating that her femaleness is an obstacle that prevents her voice from being heard.

On the other hand, Head handles gender oppression but differs in her approach from that adopted by Mda. She uses forced marriage and its consequences to show how women suffer in the society. In her *When Rain Clouds Gather*, we are introduced to Mma Millipede, a dignified character who becomes a victim of men's unacceptable behaviour. As a young girl she has been forced to marry a violent and drunken son of a chief called Ramogodi. The man she had really loved was Dinorego but she could not get married to him because of a patriarchal dominated society that forces women to get married against their wish. However, the arranged marriage could not last because of physical and emotional pains she had to undergo in the hands of her husband. She is forced to divorce after long period of abandonment by her husband who happened to fall in love with his younger brother's wife. However, much blame is to be laid on the patriarchal society for ignoring the role of love in relationships and adopting a system of forced marriage, which is not only void of love but is also accompanied by stressed and unhappiness.

Discrimination against women is witnessed at the colonial and cultural levels, proving that women have been oppressed from history till present. It is in this light that GayatriSpivak contends in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* that:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the "third world" woman caught between tradition and modernization, culturalism and development (304).

Spivak's critical concern is in line with what Head presents in her novel, where the character Makhaya, in Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, leaves South Africa fleeing from both patriarchal and colonial aggressiveness. A combination of racial and tribal pressures push him to leave his home for Botswana. He thinks that his family, represented by his mother, is clinging too much to certain tribal customs that he doesn't appreciate. He wants to promote equality by altering the customs that bring inequality in the domain of gender by demanding exaggerated respect for men by women. His mother wants to maintain custom by asking Makhaya's sisters to treat him with respect now that their father is dead by calling him "Buti" which means elder brother (15-16). Women are already suffering from racial domination and the social roles

ascribed to them are not helping matters. Makhaya is conscious of women's double implication in domination and engages in a fight against it. However, his attempts to change this custom bring him into conflict with his mother which finally leads to his migrating to Botswana.

However, men are not the only origin of dispute and violence in our contemporary society. To some extent, women are also dominating and oppressing their husbands and bringing insecurity to men as well. In Mda's *Ways of Dying* Noria's mother constantly dominates and oppresses her husband. When Napu insists that Noria's son would bear his late father's name, Noria's mother who is against this decision tells her husband not to give his opinion about the matter. She bursts out: "And who asked for your opinion, father of Noria?" (84). To complement this, Noria's mother once addressed her husband as "the product of a botched abortion" (73). She is insulting and oppresses her husband even in public. The community is aware and hates her for this unacceptable behaviour towards her husband. There is sharp contrast between the family of Noria and that of Toloki. While Toloki's father dominates and oppresses Toloki's mother, Noria's mother dominates and oppresses Noria's father. Perhaps this is Mda's intention of creating a balance in the gender crisis of the current society.

Most importantly, bigotry continues in the social areas particularly at the level of the family, creating tension between parents and children and between brothers. The shedding of responsibilities by parents also accounts for the social complications we witness in the society. In *Ways of Dying*, we come across children who are abandoned by their families to languish on their own in the streets. The condition of these children attracts the attention of Madimbhaza, a philanthropic woman who takes care of abandoned children despite the fact that she is not a rich woman (167). These children do not experience parental love and passion because they are alienated from their families. It is clear that what is behind this parental irresponsibility is oppression and poverty. It is amazing that it is not the government that takes care of these children but an old woman. It is corroborated that:

Toloki learns that for the past fifteen years Madimbhaza has been taking care of abandoned children. She has often tried to find their biological parents, but usually without success. ...Others were crippled by polio or other diseases at a later age, and their parents, unable to cope, also abandon them at the dumping ground. The twilight mum, as Madimbhaza is called in the settlement and the nearby townships, is very proud of all her children (167).

The twilight metaphor is an indication of people's appreciation of her actions. The abandoned children no longer feel lonely because they have found a family with Madimbhaza. This action by a poor woman shows that love and concern for humanity can break all obstacles that impede a smooth functioning of human relationship. The issue of street children is becoming a crucial problem in our modern society due to the fact that some parents shy away from the responsibility of taking care of their children. Some can't tolerate their handicapped children and abandon them to suffer in the streets. This is an aspect of bigotry that needs to be redressed with urgency. However, Madimbhaza's action teaches one to understand that we can still contribute to the well-being of the society in our own little way without necessarily waiting for the government to react.

Again, parent/child relationship is shaky due to self-interest and inexplicable animosity. Jwara, Toloki's father shows unfathomable hatred towards his son as we notice from his attitude. He claims that Toloki is very ugly and for this reason, every attempt made by Toloki to please his father ends in futility. In his school days, Toloki's ability to draw made him featured in the school calendar and when he took it to his father, his remark was: "Don't you see, you poor boy that you are too ugly for that? How can beautiful things come from you?" (*Ways of Dying* 68). This inexplicable hatred towards Toloki made the poor boy to cry each time he wants to impress his father. Jwara's violent and oppressive attitude towards his son causes Toloki to escape to the city on foot. Thus, Toloki's migration to the city is caused by a push and not a pull factor. Unlike others who are attracted to the riches and city life, he leaves for the city just because he wants to be secured away from home. This is ironical because Toloki knows no one in the city but feels that he would be better off there. While in the city, Toloki's life captures the experience of urban migrants in South Africa. He joins the rest of his ghetto guys to squat in the street and eventually in the settlement where he marries Noria, his village girl and childhood friend. The settlement is

portrayed as a normal backward area, where people perform their day-to-day chores and try to make the best out of the situation in which they find themselves. We are informed that: “*They are cooking. They are sewing. They are outside scolding the children....Or they are fighting with their neighbours about children who have beaten up their children. They are preparing to go to the taxi rank to catch a taxi to the city to work in the kitchens of their madams. (175)*”. The advent of democracy is accompanied by free and inspiring life style. Although such catalogue of daily life justifies to an extent the enthusiastic arguments put forth by some critics on the romantic and aesthetic nature of postapartheid society, it also re-enacts the social irregularities that characterise the society.

It is important to note that children are also responsible for family crisis as they oppress their parents for various reasons. In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, Mma Millipede’s son is banished to a distant land for attempting to kill his father. His father has put his mother through severe torture which causes him to nurse the desire for vengeance by trying to kill him. This has also put his mother through pain as she has to live without her son and husband with whom they have divorced. Those familiar with modern drama may look at the behaviour of Mma Milipede’s son as connected to the oedipal complex, where the son’s unconscious desire for the mother causes him to nurse hatred which may result in the desire to commit patricide. However, we can see that seeing one’s mother go through certain stress can provoke a child to go mad and do things that are not acceptable in the society.

Also, in Head’s *When Rain Clouds Gather*, the tension between Chief Sokoto and his brother Chief Matenge is exacerbated by Chief Sokoto’s vengeful attitude. Chief Matenge has been a nuisance to his brother in particular and family in general. He has tried to kill his brother and that explains why his brother has decided to revenge on him by accepting Gilbert’s project on farming, knowing fully well that his brother who is driven by ethnic bigotry would not get along with a stranger. Chief Sokoto, who has also made his brother chief of Mmidi village, wants Gilbert to destroy his brother. He believes that Gilbert’s project will not be welcomed by his brother and in the course of a conflict both Gilbert and his brother could be destroyed (*When Rain Clouds Gather*24). This also shows that Chief Sokoto is not out for development. He is rather interested in vengeance and destruction, which is a manifestation of bigotry.

Still at the family level, Ramogodi, a son of a chief caused his brother’s death because of his lustful nature and appetite for young girls. Driven by lust, he divorces his wife and falls in love

with his brother's young and beautiful wife, whom he eventually marries after his brother's death. It is revealed that:

The youngest brother of Ramogodi acquired a very beautiful wife, and Ramogodi took it into his head that he also desired the same woman. Things came to such a pass that Ramogodi's brother committed suicide by hanging himself. He left a note saying: 'I cannot stand the way my brother is carrying on with my wife'" (69).

This depicts not only an act of infidelity but wickedness on the part of Ramogodi. The society proves to be void of morally conscious men, reflecting a Sodom and Gomorrah-like setting, especially as it is said that women decide to be promiscuous because of men's behaviour towards them. Thus, women prefer to have several relationships at the same time than to invest in one and end up with broken hearts (98).

Still within the manifestation of bigotry at the family level, economic hardship pushes some parents to ignorantly use their children to make money. Thus, child trafficking turns out to be a daily experience adversely affecting the lives of children. In Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, villagers of Botswana exploit their own children ignorantly by sending them to stay in the bush herding cattle. One of these villagers who happen to be called Paulina thinks that in the absence of her husband, she could use her son to accomplish her economic aims. Makhaya, who is aware of the social abuse implied in Paulina's actions, advises her to sell her cattle and send her child to school but she claims that a Botswana person never stays without cattle. This is an indication that cattle rearing has become part and parcel of the people's life. However, due to poor weather and lack of proper care, the poor boy falls ill and eventually dies in the bush. Although before dying he has been coughing out blood, the doctor performs a post-mortem and concludes that the boy has died of malnutrition. Makhaya is very much affected by the boy's death, especially as he discovers some wooden spoons and other objects designed by the boy. In a regrettable disposition, he anticipates that "he and Paulina would never create a child who would be expected to carry burdens beyond his age." (163). This is evident of the fact that the villagers practise child trafficking without taking cognisance of the implications of their actions.

In the same way, Napu in Mda's *Ways of Dying* uses his son Vutha to beg from passers-by, yet spends all the money on alcohol. Vutha finally dies of hunger because his drunken father

forgets to give him food. Using children to achieve socio-economic interests is a contemporary problem that has attracted the attention of most people and even the governments. Child trafficking has also given rise to the number of street children who go through horrible experiences in the process of either selling or doing some work to earn money for the people who use them to work. The postcolonial society is faced with challenges regarding children's rights and such challenges need to be given adequate attention because the devastating consequences.

Consequently, bigotry promotes poverty, which makes people forget about the moral values of the society and instead promote certain social vices like prostitution. Here, the rights of children are completely violated as elderly people expose children to prostitution in order to satisfy their economic needs. In *When Rain Clouds Gather*, it is reported that in Botswana, Makhaya is sexually harassed by a little girl who enters the hut in which he is sleeping and shamelessly says: "My grandmother won't mind as long as you pay me" (15). This shows that the grandmother uses the child to make money by persuading her to seduce men. Poverty is the reason behind this attitude where an elderly person encourages a child to indulge in prostitution in order to make a living. This means that poverty also contributes to the prevalence of social vices in the society. What is striking here is that it is a girl harassing a boy. The general impression has been that girls are at risk because of their sexuality as boys often harass them sexually. This calls for critical reflections, especially in the feminist field, where many see only the girl child to be at risk when it comes to notions of sexuality. The fact that it is her grandmother, encouraging such unacceptable deeds shows that women contribute to the problem of sexuality against their own children just to earn a living. However, the fact that Makhaya resists the sexual advances but gives the girl ten shillings means that he is against the perpetration of such vices. Although Head handled this problem of child trafficking a long time ago, it has become an emerging global problem affecting the entire world. The political setup of our society is also contributing to the ugly situations of people engaging in immoral acts through corruption and unemployment.

The concept of criminality is also captured in Mda's work, which is perpetrated by mostly young people. The driving force behind such immoral attitude is poverty, which makes many to adopt cunning means of survival evident through stealing, corruption and drug trafficking. From

every indication, the economic situation is so degradable that people are pushed to engage in tricky and undignified activities to earn a living. We observe in *Ways of Dying* that Nefolovhodge employs Toloki to guard the cemetery to track down thieves who engage in digging graves to remove coffins and sell them to other people who need them to bury their dead relatives. Black guys are mostly associated with such illicit acts because in the South African society, only black people live in the townships and these places are mostly deprived neighbourhood. These unappealing situations of black guys involving in different forms of illegal activities also depict the way apartheid impacted upon the black community. Selling dagga is an illicit business forbidden by the law, because it causes health hazards and also contributes in promoting juvenile delinquency as many youths engage in smoking it to have courage to practise violence and theft. In *Mda's Ways of Dying*, boys spend their time “sniffing glue and smoking dagga” (45). These vices mostly take place in the city, where there is a huge population of young people from different backgrounds. However, the selling and consuming of dagga continues since the police help to promote the business by collecting bribes instead of arresting the perpetrators. This depicts the negative role the police play in contemporary postcolonial society. Instead of exposing the traffickers so that they can be punished accordingly, the police prefer to collect money in the form of bribe and allow the law breakers to continue with their work uninterrupted. Idleness like it is more or less said, is the devil’s workshop. Beside stealing and drug trafficking, youngsters indulge in hideous criminal attitude such as rape:

Three gangsters walked into the carriage and demanded that the woman give her baby to her husband and follow them....The children we gave birth to who have now turned against the community, and have established careers of rape and robbery....They insisted that the woman come with them....The next day, she was found dead in the veld. The gangsters had taken turns raping her, and had then slit her throat. (*Ways of Dying* 98).

This high level of crime wave perpetrated by blacks depicts them as promoters of insecurity in the new dispensation. The situation helps to validate the view that black people are the ones causing the greatest problems in the society probably because of the desire for vengeance or attempt to improve their precarious economic conditions. The situation has become so terrifying that people sit and watch others being molested without mounting the courage to fight back. Commenting about this awful situation, Noria laments that: “Death lives with us

everyday. Indeed our ways of dying are our ways of living” (*Ways of Dying* 98). Although this remark echoes the title of the text which shows how apt the title is, it also brings us to rediscover the insecurity that reigns in the black community and by so doing indicates the paradox of freedom. They might be free from legalised racial injustices but their own children are not making their freedom a reality.

Self-pride which is a manifestation of bigotry is epitomised by some individuals in Mda’s *Ways of Dying*, where the protagonist Toloki, is sceptical about attending funerals of his own village people because when they become rich, they pretend not to recognise their village boys and girls who are poor. This mind set is an implication of urban life on citizens, whose social mobility is a source of pride and human alienation. An example is Nefolovhodiwe, who due to high mortality rate, has become rich because of high demand for coffins and thinks that his poor relations are no longer worthy of his attention (16). He is able to attain this social level because of the advent of democracy, which provides opportunity for hardworking blacks to showcase their talents. However, his behaviour tells that democracy has helped to reveal the real attitude of some blacks who are not different from the whites whom they criticised during apartheid. Nefolovhodiwe has been a good friend and a good father to his children but when he comes to town and begins to acquire wealth, he rejects his friends and family, despite his promises to Jwarawhen he heeds a friend’s advice to move to the city:

“This put some ideas in Nefolovhodiwe’s head. He discussed the matter with Jwara, who encouraged him to go. But he warned him to be careful not to get lost in the city. Nefolovhodiwe promised that he would always have the village in his heart. After all, he was leaving his two best friends behind and his wife and nine children (125).

However, Nefolovhodiwe has not respected his promise as the riches in the city have caused him to forget not only his friends but also his wife. It is because of this casual behaviour that Tolokidecides that he would not associate with his village people who have had the opportunity to acquire riches in the city.

Besides, Nefolovhodiwe justifies his actions by arguing that:

[...] And of course I am married to my wife. I married her in church before a minister. Unlike the old hag in the village for whom I only paid cattle and was deemed to have married by custom. I am a civilized man, my poor ragged children I do things in a civilized manner. I am refined, and I am cultured (205).

His self-pride causes him to alienate his family. He is also a religious bigot, who thinks that because he has gotten married in church, his wife and children no longer form part of his so-called civilised world. He happens to be among the few who have emerged successfully in the city after a long struggle to earn a living, as evident in the following:

In the city, Nefolovhodiwe soon established himself as the best coffin maker. Like everyone else, when he first arrived, he lived in one of the squatter camps. Unlike the village, death was plentiful in the city. Every day there was a line of people wanting to buy his coffins. Then he moved to a township house....The township house soon became too small for his needs, and for his expanding frame. He bought a house in one of the very up-market suburbs. People of his complexion were not allowed to buy houses in the suburbs in those days. He used a white man, whom he had employed as his marketing manager, to buy the house on his behalf (125).

Although the issue of deaths is a sad situation, it helps to make Nefolovhodiwe acquire much wealth as a coffin maker. He represents the young people who work hard to acquire wealth and stands in sharp contrast to those who commit delinquent acts in order to get rich, with the only regrettable thing being his self-pride.

The complicated nature of city life is indicated by the high death rate which stands in sharp contrast to village life, where such deaths are not recorded. The fact that these deaths are caused by violence shows the ugly side of the new dispensation. In *Ways of Dying*, due to differences in opinions over customs and traditions, children beat their father to death because he has violated the customs by permitting the children of his mistress to shave their hair before them. The nurse who stands to explain how the old man met his death tells the crowd that the late old man's son who had died a week ago died an abnormal death because he just fell ill and died.

The nurse describes the young man's death as being abnormal because the rampant deaths in the society have been caused by violence. We are informed that:

The son has died a natural death, perhaps I should say an unnatural death, because he died of natural illness in his sleep. Normal deaths are those deaths that we have become accustomed to, deaths that happens everyday. They are deaths of the gun, and the knife, and torture and gore. We don't normally see people who die of illness or of old age (157).

This quotation summarises the high level of insecurity that is reigning in the land. Although they are in a funeral, the nurse's speech creates humour in the midst of desolation. It is ironical to describe deaths caused by violence as normal deaths. However, this is to emphasise that violence is responsible for the rampant deaths that have crippled the community. This also paints a tragic but true picture of the period of transition in the history of South Africa. There was confusion at the time and the rate of insecurity was very high.

From the above analyses, it is evident that beside race, bigotry is noticeable in other areas such as; class, ethnicity, gender, communality and family implicating communities, families and individuals. What Head handled during apartheid still receives adequate attention in Mda's post apartheid works showing that the society is not yet free from bigotry. The South African society has witnessed high level of insecurity from past to present. Many have hoped that with the attainment of democracy, she would experience peace but this dream is farfetched as human greed and desire to be in control have handicapped the society even after the attainment of democracy. Thus, there is need for harmony not only cross racial boundaries as many critics have suggested but most importantly across class, ethnicity, gender, communality and families.

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