



MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY

(University with Potential for Excellence)

Madurai 625021, Tamilnadu, India



Prof. Dr. S. Chelliah, M.A, Ph.D., D.Litt.,

Editor & Convener

**Two Day International Virtual Conference on
Individual, Social and Gender Conflicts as
highlighted in Modern Literature**

**Organized By
Department of English &
Comparative Literature**

on

**22nd & 23rd December
2020**

Greetings from the Vice-Chancellor: Prof. Dr. M. Krishnan, M.Sc., Ph.D.

Greetings from the Registrar i/c: Prof. Dr.V.S.Vasantha,

Editor's Note: Prof. Dr. S. Chelliah, M.A., Ph.D., D.Lit.



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25.	Repercussions of Gendered Conflicts in Bessie Head's <i>Maru</i> Dr.G.Priya	134
26.	Exploitation, Humiliation, Racial and Gender Discrimination in Toni Morrison's <i>Beloved</i> Dr. Ghansham Dnyaneshwar Jadhav	140
27.	Tradition and Modernity as Explicit ideologies in the essays of Dr. Radhakrishnan Dr. S. Fathima Syeda	146
28.	Articulating for the Inarticulate: A Study of Dina Mehta's Select Plays Dr. N. Gnanaselvi	151
29.	Calamity after Marriage in Vijay Tendulkar's play <i>Kanyadaan</i> Gowsika Sree. G	156
30.	Nehru as a writer par excellence successfully wedding history to Literature for Picturizing Social Reality and Humanitistic Vision in Life: A Brief Appraisal Dr. N.Muthuraju	160
31.	Mahesh Dattani's plays as depiction of love for humanity and commitment to societal and domestic issues: A Brief Note C.Krishnakumar	166
32.	Kamala Das as an adept in exploring the nature of true love and causes for personal frustration & despair in love - making: An Appraisal T.Saravanapriya	170
33.	Why It Hurts to Be on the Margins? R. Hanna Roshini	176
34.	Revolution of Gender Equalization in Henrik Ibsen's <i>A Doll House</i> S.Janani	181
35.	Human Relationships in Virginia Woolf's <i>To the Light House</i> ¹J. Jayasurya & ²Dr. C. Govindaraj	184
36.	"Gender as a Social Construct: Understanding Gender and Individuality through the Select Novels of Paulo Coelho" Mrs.V.Jesintthal Mary Dr.P.Premalatha Dr.R.Jeya Sundara Raj	185

Repercussions of Gendered Conflicts in Bessie Head's *Maru*

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Though African women novelists remained neglected until 1970s, they have been successful in making a significant contribution to the literature of Africa. Besides Bessie Head, eminent writers from Africa include Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua Sutherland, Mariama Bâ, Buchi Emicheta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Aminatta Forna, Olive Schreiner and NoViolet Bulawayo have woven narratives of African culture, race and gender into the lives of their women protagonists. This new array of African women writers bisect colonial and gender issues as pivotal themes in their writings. Their works are infused with a spirit of protest against oppression, patriarchy and colonialism. As Toni Cade Bambara points out, writing is more important to "free the colonized mind, to unravel centuries of lies and discover the essential black collective self." Bessie head's novel *Maru* (1971) traces the story of a young Masarwa, Margaret Cadmore, throws light upon the racial and sexual prejudices and the gendered conflicts that coil her existence. Born from a white mother and a black father, Bessie Head grew up in the early stages of Apartheid South Africa. In *Maru*, she reflects upon her own experiences of love, loneliness and prejudice. The plot of *Maru* revolves around the cruel treatment meted out to Margaret, who has been raised by a white missionary. The tussle between the two community leaders, Maru and Moleka to win Margaret's love and the conflicts that she faces as a female is delineated as the novel traverses Margaret's journey.

Bessie Head displays tribal prejudice through, "the expressions of disgust on the faces of the Batswana nurses as they wash the dead woman's body for burial" (9-10). The nurses are reluctant to wash the dead woman's body because she was Masarwa. Masarwas are considered as, "a low and filthy nation" (8), because they have decided to sustain their ancestral ways of life and customs. They have thus been pushed to the margin of society, "owned as slaves" (19), by the authoritative and affluent chiefs of the community. Moleka's love for Margaret is suppressed because he does not want himself to be isolated and neglected by his society, and perhaps his status overrules his love for Margaret.

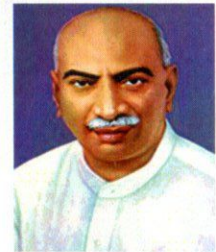
By, "[sharing] his plate of food and fork with one" (51), he wishes to show the community that Masarwa are equal to Batswana and eradicate the belief that they are non-human. Moleka attempts to terminate prejudice immediately. He does not understand that, "prejudice is like the skin of a snake. It has to be removed bit by bit" (48). Moleka considers this plate sharing a symbol for the emancipation of the Masarwas and qualifies Margaret to be his equal.



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Dr/ Prof/ Mr/Ms DR. G. PRIYA, ASST. PROF OF ENGLISH
FATIMA COLLEGE, MADURAI has served as Resource Person/Guest
Speaker/Participated/Attended/Presented paper in person or in absentia on the topic entitled
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at the Two Days International Virtual Conference on Individual, Social and Gender Conflicts as highlighted in
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Hon'ble Vice- Chancellor