

David Ration Lekoba: *The Chronicles of a Broken Heart*

Gaborone: Show Casting Talents, 2020, 134 pages, ISBN: 978-99968-2-095-3

The Chronicles of a Broken Heart, by the upcoming writer and educator, David R. Lekoba, is a deeply and touching written novel, which tells the story of a poor village boy transitioning into a young man amidst trials and utmost tribulations of life. To discover and realise who one is and what one's purpose is in life has not been an easy task for an African child Kago, the main character who is raised in an extended family. Poverty, disease and family disintegration can build or break strong childhood foundation that forms the very fabrics of early human life. This school of thought is beautifully woven into the story through the battles of family feuds, different forms of abuse, HIV/AIDS in the family and favouritism that Kago endures growing up. The unconditional love experienced and enjoyed from his maternal grandmother help mould him to be a morally grounded child. It is this good behaviour, his intelligent mind in school and his impoverished background that win him affection and care from a foreign family, a Zimbabwean couple who are teachers in Tonota, Botswana. The 'disappearance' of his mother and the ultimate death of his dear grandmother are critical to his rather confused teenage development, making possible the transition of good moral standing to self-destruction.

The process of this deadly transformation is experienced through concepts of memory, identity, culture, community and language. *The Chronicles of a Broken Heart* addresses the notion of home and identity through preserved memories. Kago relies greatly on the personal memories of his relationship with his grandmother such that he identifies home with her presence all the time. He comes to recognise his own experiences in the other, in this case his grandmother, therefore, shares an understanding of each other's values. Hence, one can conclude that this mnemonic trigger evokes past times related to Tonota, the place where he spent his childhood. At another level, it situates him in what can be referred to as community of identity.

However, the shift from being a well-grounded young man to being a hopeless drug runner is rather rushed by the author when juxtaposed with the elaborate and detailed transition from childhood to teenage hood. Perhaps having maintained the linear style of elaborate writing could have done justice to expose Kago's life as practicing cultural hybridity explicitly attaching it to his shattered ending. Throughout his compelling narrative, Lekoba seeks to understand issues of love and hate through the eyes of people around him which takes into account the social and cultural contexts of the different places he calls home. Apart from that, amendments on the editorial work could help as the reader experiences consistent spelling and typing errors throughout the read.

How indeed, can one succinctly capture all these rather diverse and explosive concepts in less than 150 pages? Lekoba's aim as I observed is to interrogate rather than explain the links and overbearing forces that can otherwise make or break a young human mind. He emphasises the critical role relationships play in helping establish the conditions under which struggles occur, by sustaining, directing and redirecting the forces arrayed against growing up in each place lived. The novel makes a distinctive overview in the way it provides an extensive understanding of female headed homesteads complexities in the rural Botswana. It is an attempt to provide a general overview of rural upbringing in the Southern African region. That said, it is an interesting book that comments on human interactions and the geographical spaces.

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