Some notes about the essay we discussed about Chief Matenge by Samiksha.S

When we talk about a Chief, much is expected about his personality and character in terms of his leadership skills and his approach to the people that he governs. A good leader will provide his people with fair reasoning, appropriate forms of advice and the necessary support to lead his country progressively. A good leader looks at the interests of his country in terms of advocating necessary changes to further develop the economy and find ways of helping the people he rules through their struggle in supporting positive developments.

This description is far from the description of Sub Chief Matenge....

Chief Matenge was the Sub Chief of Chief Sekoto. Matenge was an African example of evil personified. He was appointed Sub- Chief over Golema Mmidi by his brother Chief Sekoto to rid himself of the greedy and contentious person that his brother was.

Matenge was greatly disliked by the people of Golema Mmidi because he was evil and stood as an obstruction to progress. He was trained in the old school of masters and slaves, oppressor and oppressed and he regarded the development of the country as a disheartening development. Matenge’s was an antagonist and his views were selfish and ruthless, placing the people of Golema Mmidi under constant displeasure.

The people of Golema Mmidi see Matenge as a tyrant. He played by laws of colonialism and tribalism of which many people were unhappy including Makhaya who fled from South Africa because he despised the colonial laws of the White Man and Gilbert Balfour who left the Middle Class lifestyle in England to settle in Botswana, where his intentions were to carry out agricultural developments. This angered Matenge.

Matenge was an egotistical unkind human who inherited unpaid servants and land, feels superior for something he didn’t even have to work hard for or earn. His crude, evil personality is what led him to fight with or despise anyone who threatened his position.

Matenge being the antagonist he is saw the kind hearted protagonist (Makhaya) as a threat and resented his arrival in Golema Mmidi. Matenge disliked the idea of refugees coming to Golema Mmidi.

Matenge ruled Golema Mmidi in the same way South Africa was being ruled and which caused Makhaya to flee from S.A. This cruel Sub chief treats his servants as slaves and he even treats his friend Joas Tsepe like a dog. Matenge wants to be the only one in power. He comes across to people as more of an evil person rather than someone they can look up to and count on.
At one point in the novel when Makhaya had just arrived in Golema Mmidi, Matenge summoned George Appleby Smith, a policeman to investigate the arrival of Makhaya with intentions to try and banish him back to where he came from.

The relationship the two brothers, Chief Sekoto and Matenge share is one of estrangement. Mantenge is jealous of his brother’s power and the respect and support that he gets from the people of Golema Mmidi. Matenge lacks the attention from his brother who always tends to push him in the corner. Chief Sekoto never sides with Matenge on his inhumane decisions and plots.

As we proceed further into the novel, we discover that Matenge’s questioning about Paulina, who has a sense of good leadership skills over the women folk and is able to gain their attention and help in assisting Makhaya and Gilbert on the Tobacco project. His coward character summons her for a hearing in which she (Paulina) is accompanied by the people of Golema Mmidi in her support to see Matenge.

On arrival to the mansion, Matenge’s servants flee in fear of what they thought was going to be violent encounter as they witness the arrival of Paulina and the rest of the community. Matenge loses himself in his own selfish and coward thoughts and also fails to understand the reason of his summoning of Paulina.

His inherited power caused him to believe that there was no one better than him and when his servants abandon him, he felt threatened and overpowered and then realizes what a monster he has become.

He was instantly consumed by depression and due to its aggravated increase he commits a coward act of committing suicide by hanging himself.

**MAIN POINTS OF MATENGES CHARACTER:**

1. Sekoto despises his brother and always sides with the other party in a debate involving his brother because he is aware of Matenge’s cruel intentions.
2. Matenge never offered any help or assistance and support or advice to the people of Golema Mmidi during the severe drought and death of the cattle.
3. Matenge has an unyielding attachment to tradition- which leads him into self-destruction and taking of his own life.
4. Chief Sekoto’s friendship with Gilbert Balfour and his knowing of Makhaya’s residence in Botswana is that of acceptance and goodwill yet this was despised by Matenge who always criticized Gilbert’s efforts to help the people of Botswana.