

## Cultural Affects of South African Society in Nadine Gordimer's *A Sport of Nature*

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### **Abstract:-**

*In an African society, every African has to make a run even for their basic amenities. These basic amenities fall into the control of the Whites, especially in South Africa. It will not be made available to them because of the control that the Whites have imposed on the Africans. Though the scenario has slightly changed in the Twenty First century, situation is that the phenomenon is still prevalent. And the reason seems to be that the lives of the African slaves which were totally occupied by the Whites in the colonial period continued its effects on them and their plight was that of an animal. This leads to the fact that an African pays no regard to any value or people in the society even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most of the Africans are not out of the shackles and hence lead a life lower than that of the animals and the White people show little regard to a fellow human's life. The basic survival instinct makes him/her a selfish being. Hence there is an immediate requirement for a change to be created among the African people so that they are taught to take care of themselves. Education is a dire need of the African people, if their status has to be increased in par with other countries of the world. A literary work written, in this case in English, about an African society would definitely discuss about their way of living and the degraded status which their life bears. Nadine Gordimer is one such writer. She has*

*lifted the mirror up to nature in trying to portray the life of people in African society.*

### **Introduction:-**

The vast culture and language diversities South Africa are popular. South Africa has 11 official languages according to the constitution and English is also an official language which is the trade language of South Africa. But English ranks only 5<sup>th</sup> among the languages which are spoken by the inhabitants. South Africa is filled with Indian, African and Europeans races. Yet 79.5% of the South Africa population is occupied by the Blacks. Among these, the groups are diversified into various categories which speak different dialects of the Pandu language and also belong to various after communist. Among these dialects 9 have acquired language status. One forth of the population are unemployed and earn only 1.25 dollars per day and manage to live with that income. While considering Africa as a whole, the Africans who are the majority seldom enjoy wealth, education, and good housing infrastructure when compared with the Whites. Who are the minority in Africa? On May 31 1961, by a common decision taken in Commonwealth franchise was introduced for the first time to all the citizens in the place of monarchy. The status of the Governor and Governor Office were dissolved and instead a president was

reinstated. The national party government, Africans National Congress, together with other parties took their first step against discrimination. After which the government eradicated the racist laws.

## **Culture**

South Africans due to the European influence do not have a culture of its own. Their culture has turned out to be that of the Europeans. Because of these there have been many bigger changes in their life. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the culture, religion, habits and language of the African did not change much from that of the Europeans. After a while there were noticeable changes in the habit of the African people. They started feeling what life was, yet they couldn't come up in life. This was because racial discrimination was prevalent among the Whites and did not let the African country to develop. The lives of the Blacks have been the same for centuries and only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century their life started to have positive changes. Nelson Mandela was a significant person in the history of Africa who spent 25 years in jail for protesting against racial discrimination. Due to his contributions Africans were able to see a Black president in their government.

The central theme aims at the equality among people devoid of their colour or race. Blacks are not inferior and the Whites are not superior. Everyone in the country is equal before the law and the society. Nadine Gordimer is a writer who thinks in such parallels and she is a social activist. Being born to European parents she was born and brought up in South Africa. Yet looking at the state of the African country, she decided work towards the bitterness of the

country and its people. She proclaimed that people of the country may differ in colour and in race, but they are all equal in terms of humanism. She acknowledges the fact that their dream hasn't come true, but argues that they would fight for it.

Gordimer has been writing about the lives and culture of the people of South Africa. She explains about the life, culture, race, religion, language, education, habits, and society of the people of South Africa which she rewords through her writing. But her primary focus seems to be the social status of the people. Gordimer has been very much influenced by the culture of Black people. Due to the fact that whites have enslaved the blacks, together with them their culture has also been subverted. Most Black people in South Africa used to live in the country side under very poor circumstances. It is among these people that their original culture and tradition thrived most.

## **Awareness**

Westernization and globalization have had its very strong effects on the culture and tradition. South Africans living in urban area will be questioned in English than in their mother tongue. Gordimer tries to shift a reader's focus on to such aspects of a South Africa society. Culture of a country or race or a particular group of people would make the people highly talented and efficient. Because of the humanistic tendency of a group of people are controlled by the culture, talent, intellect and habits. Due to the fact that there are two different cultural groups in South Africa, there arise violence, domination, subversion and conflicts by law because of the indifference. They have between them which are exposed by Gordimer. Since the colonial period,

the culture, language, literature, habits and way of living have been terribly replaced by that of the Whites. After the passage of time, in the post colonial period, the culture of the blacks has changed progressively. The blacks were mostly living in the foot hills and deserted areas as they were stripped off their rights. Due to this, the blacks were less aware of their native culture and traditions. Gordimer insists that the government should take initiatives in trying to find talents among these people and refine them more and more through education.

Saul Dubois *Racial Segregation and Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-1936* (1989) effectively set the stage for these studies by analyzing the power of segregation as an ideology: its strength lay in ambiguity and flexibility, that is, in its power to conceal “the level of oppression which under-wrote it” and its ability to define “the range of feasible political alternatives”. (Diana Whlie, *starving on a full stomach*, 6)

In Africa, people on each side fight with each other in order to attain equality. But Whites consider Blacks as mere objects and not as human beings. In order to enslave them the whites have to keep them away from education so that they would not get better in life. Saul says that this inequality and discrimination which existed during the times of colonization should not prevail. The Whites should start considering the Blacks as their equals. In the present society, Blacks’ culture, tradition, and custom should not be discriminated by the name of race. Their children should be taught to maintain equality; the children of the blacks, right from their birth should be taught about equality and show them their own talents so that they get some kind of motivation. Economy plays a major role in the

formation of the poor people in South Africa and had they been economically sound there would have existed equality in the society. According to Gordimer the present situation of the Blacks is mainly due to the lack of proper education and economic security. In her novel, *A Sport of Nature* she insists the importance of a good relationship between Whites and the Blacks. In the novel are offer a reconsideration of private relationship with public requirement. . Hillela, once a rebellious little White, marries an unscrupulous West African politician who becomes president of an African country.

In all her novels she offers optimistic ideas as to provide the Blacks with a good social status. This would happen only if their culture is given any importance. Gordimer sees to that, through her novels the African culture is appreciated. Hillela, the protagonist in *A Sport of Nature*, is one such character in Gordimer’s creation. The reason Gordimer sees in the White Government to be hypocritical towards Blacks is that they do not treat them to be as human beings and, equate them with animals. Hence ‘Writing and Being’ Gordimer says, “ we know we have to perform what Flaubert called ‘the most difficult and, least glamorous of all tasks: transition.’ This is the really of freedom. This is the great mother.”(20)

Gordimer wanted to create a humanistic and empathetic society. She picturises all inhuman activities in South Africa in all her novels and that proved to be her primary objective of writing. Robert F. Haugh pointed reference, to it in *A Sport of Nature*.

As a responsive and intelligent writer, born and Schooled in South Africa, Gordimer has for all of her creative life been concerned

with South African racial problem [...] Her tone on racial matter in her fiction is soft, although not to South African censors, who have banned many of her writings. The softness lies not in her convictions, however, but in the nature of her art... (32)

She thoroughly believed that an appreciation of each other's culture and treating everyone equally would bring a change in South Africa.

*A Sport of Nature* opens with a girl called Kim discarding her name. On a train coming home from Rhodesia to South Africa, "she threw Kim up to the rack with her school panama and took on Hillela." This is the first stir within the chrysalis of the seemingly ordinary child who will become an African legend, a mythic figure of Nadine Gordimer's *Promised Land*. The names are carefully chosen. Kim is Ms. Gordimer's witty reference to Kipling's famous tale of colonial life. Her family has also called the child Hillela, a name she has never used, a name meant to honor her great grandfather, a Zionist, who came steered to Cape Town fleeing the Cossacks in a forgotten pogrom, but the girl Hillela, with no mind for history, simply wants to be different. The change of name is a beautifully observed adolescent gesture, but it is also the first move in a powerful novel of awakening, emergence, and, in so far as fiction can make it possible, a call for a new order.

Nadine Gordimer began to write in a small mining town in South Africa when she was 9. Declared a sickly child, she was taken out of school and so it began - the long energetic career of a fiercely intelligent writer and a natural one. For though her readers may take special pleasure in her brightness, Ms. Gordimer's true gift for the writing of fiction is what makes us stay the

course. *A Sport of Nature* is fully a novel, grand-scale, rich and demanding, but it is also a thoughtfully documented history of postcolonial African nations and a consoling fantasy of what could, what might emerge out of the prolonged suffering we witness in our time. Never a polemic, the novel is the mature achievement of the once isolated provincial child, the once politically uninvolved writer of accomplished New Yorker stories. We might say the novelist has evolved, adapted, triumphantly come of age, much like her heroine Hillela. Gordimer continues to write from South Africa: it is that tortured country she renders for us so precisely - its people (white, colored, black), its landscape (veld, black townships, suburban swimming pools). In *A Sport of Nature* more than ever before, it would seem that Ms. Gordimer would like to record her clarity of mind, her reasonable discourse, along with her skillful make-believe of plot and character. Quite simply, Hillela begins as a charming waif taken in by her aunts - Olga, uppity and English; Pauline, a hard-working liberal. The problem child ends up as the impressive wife of a heroic African president. To begin with, the novel's structure is episodic, forcefully so, not an advance wherein the heroine (Pamela, Moll Flanders) each time chalks up the losses and gains in matters of morals or worldly knowledge.

### **Conclusion:-**

To conclude, this cultural affects in the common provides new directions offered by Gordimer. It sums up the argumentation to establish the relevance of the thesis. Gordimer's aesthetics are directed against the construct depend upon psychological displace in order to tolerate the individual in real political perspective. Thus the

thesis closely examines the socio cultural urge of Gordimer and points out how she re-creates the wrong images created by the past.

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