

**A descriptive study on the enforcement of apartheid system and its impact
on black race in Nadine Gordimer's *July's people***

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Abstract

The South African writer Nadine Gordimer is adamant in bringing a socio-cultural change in South African's life through her writings. In this novel, *July's People* the narrator talks about the practice of apartheid system. In South Africa, though the population of the Black is high, the apartheid system in the country exploited and humiliated the Black people. Nadine Gordimer predicts the end of apartheid in her novel, *July's People*. Actually, she is a White liberal writer who cares about human suffering, especially the Blacks who suffer politically, socially and economically because of the prevailing apartheid system. She insists that being a prolific writer, "It is beyond dispute that no character in fiction, even if conceived as an ape, a beetle, a phantom, is without connection with real persons experienced by the writer within contact of sight, sound and touch, or second-hand through experience recorded by others in one medium or another, and whether or not the writer is always aware of this." (Gordimer 4). So, the author in her novels portrays the real person's experience or the experience gained by others which predicts the story. Nadine Gordimer is a White liberal; it is clear from her novels that she is a humanity liberal more than a writer. She clearly states that the Black people will make a revolution against the White if the apartheid system continues to over dominate them. Hence, this paper concentrates on how through this novel *July's People*, Gordimer uses the voice of the Black servant as a repellent against apartheid rule and its effects in the society.

Keywords: Apartheid System, Humiliation, Sufferings, Exploitation, Revolution and Liberation.

In this novel, the narrator talks about the issues between White and Black people. The action takes place in a village where the Blacks live. July is a faithful servant from black race for the Smales, the White. The apartheid system is strongly followed in Johannesburg. It is

evident that the novel is about the revolutionary development of July towards the Smales, the White people. When the population is considered in South Africa, the Black is the highest, but the apartheid system in the country exploited and humiliated the Black people. Nadine Gordimer predicts the end of the apartheid system in the novel, *July's People*. She is a White liberal writer who cares about human suffering, especially the Blacks who suffer politically and socially because of the apartheid system.

Through this novel, she clearly states that the Black people will definitely make a revolution one day against the White if the apartheid system continues to over dominate them. Though the first part of the story highlights the exercise of apartheid system by the Whites, the later part narrates how gradually the Black race took up upper hand over the Whites. In this context, the political situation makes the Smales family to become a refugee to their servant's village to escape from the dangers of Black rebels. So, here the servant (Black) becomes master and the Master (Smales-White) become servant. This reversal action is the impact of the imposing apartheid system. For example, the story highlights the discomfort felt by the Smales in the village life when Maureen washes her menstrual clothes in the river to escape the infections. Besides, Maureen says that her children cough like the Blacks, and she proves the Whiteness in all situations. She is worried as her children look dirtier than the village children. The fingers, nails, and appearance all depict the typical Black primitive people. The family fears that they would lose their Whiteness very soon, and they would also become a villager as they get adapted to the village atmosphere.

The racial discrimination comes to an end when the Black come to power, and the White depends on the Black for everything. Nadine Gordimer explains that the racial hierarchy is felt in the novel, where the power of the White is inevitable through the emptiness felt in the story. The place where the White people existed is depicted to be full of violence. The propinquity exists between the close living where Maureen and Bam's relationship has some controversies where they happen to become as strange partners and siblings. This inequality leads to psychological problems, and this makes them surge each other. This reversal atmosphere affects the behavior of Maureen, Bam, and July.

The Whites are opportunist and move towards the side of the anti-apartheid. That is why, July, their servant, saves the life of the Smales family, the White people. They become totally reliable on him for their existence. The intimacy, the ideology, and the new relationship have become a challenge in the White culture. Whenever the White turn on the radio about White liberal's victory, no such things happen in the society of the White. The narrator questions the master and the servant. The story portrays the master depending on the servant to save their lives in their own country. Many of the rural Blacks dress up as European culture. As viewed by the Chief, he could not tolerate the look. The Chief questions Smales about the present government situation, which is the reason for the rise of the government against White and how he could blow up his people. The White loses control over the land; the rebels dominate the land. It leads the rebels to take away the lands from the Whites.

Initially, Bamford, the lead character in the novel *July's People* could not believe that the chief shot his people and the Blacks are prevented from killing. The chief has no idea of us taking the gun against Black. A separate Black nation does not exist and Bamford also imagines a Black nation that does not exist. A Black revolt against the Whites will exist and be a replication of the Black against Black. In this story, Maureen and Bamford have to meet the Blacks, eventually, meet the Blacks at an unequal level.

In 1970, Nadine Gordimer presented a prediction of the Black rebel towards White as the transition in the White society. The rebel between White and the Black people and the prediction of the transition never gave any solution, but it inevitably overthrew the apartheid system in South Africa. In her novel *July's People*, Nadine predicts the future revolution of South Africa. The novel *July's People* depicts the revolution for the apartheid as it was obtained from the neighboring countries, and the same was expected in the South African country also. Nadine Gordimer explains her imagination that if such a revolution occurs, when Blacks dominate the rebels, how it would have its impact on the liberal White family like Smales (Gordimer 23). All the changes in society are depicted in the story. The children getting adapted to new villages in South Africa leads to the formation of the new South African society.

The novel *July's People* depicts the lives of the South African White family, a liberal privileged people in the apartheid society. The Smales family is forced to shift to the nearby native village along with their Black servant, July. The novel was written fictionally when the civil war broke out in the apartheid society where the violence prevailed and the Black people started dominating the White. The civil war overturned the apartheid system in South Africa, where the Black violently reacted to the apartheid system. The Smales had to escape from the violence and so they plead the help of their Black servant to save their life. The Smales vacate their place along with their Black servant and go along with him to live in his village.

The entire White family, along with their Black servant, travel for nearly three days to reach the village. The Black servant named July brings tea to his master Smales Bamford and Maureen. He also feeds their children, Gina, Royce, and Victor. After a long travel from their town, the Smales' wife enquires her husband about their bike called *bakkie*. Smales tells his wife that July has hidden it to save them.

In this village, July's mother and his wife Martha enquire about the Smales family and their stay along with them. July also explains about the violence taking place in the country between Black and White. In order to save themselves, they have come along to stay here. "Smales was other than listening to the news on the radio about the violence they decided to build a water tank in the village. Maureen also begins to read a novel as July is going to work as he will not let her work" (Moylan 57).

While reading the novel, Maureen recollects her childhood days when she used to walk along the roadways to her house. She remembers her Black servant carrying her suitcase on her head and walking along with her chatting and playing till they reach home. Maureen remembers a photograph with her Black servant Lydia carrying her bookcase (Brighton 4).

On one rainy night, Maureen and Smales see that their vehicle Bakkie is being taken by July. The White couple becomes sad as their vehicle is not with them. The couples argue of the present situation and about the violence prevailing in the country. The next day when July comes to their hut, the greeting was different by the Smales. July ignores the greeting. July explains that he went shopping for a supply of goods and so had taken the bakkie. Smales, though wants to ask the key, does not do so. July also says if the vehicle is caught, he would say that it is his own.

Maureen studies the behavior of July, and she also returns the key to July stating that their previous relationship of the master and servant has ended now; July can live on his own. July, however, asks her, his salary for the month. Maureen is shocked by his attitude and July says that his family needs him. July returns the key to Maureen which makes her regret. Bamford Smales goes for hunting in the village where he kills two baby wat hogs. He offers his companion to shoot in gun, and he has a small one and offers the large one to the Black hunter. They two enjoy hunting and leave for home. When they return home, everyone enjoys the feast of the meat. This is the first time when the White experience the love and friendly attitude in their journey. When July feasts with his family, July's wife Martha says to her husband that the White might cause a problem in the village. Generally, the Black women experience loneliness without their husbands and lived alone in their village. Similarly, every woman of the Black husband has suffered from these feelings. The White child Gina plays with friends and along with the kittens. Maureen scolds them for doing so. Later, when Smales hears the news on the radio, he allows the children to play with the kittens. Later, Maureen goes to the field to work along with the other women. Maureen approaches July and questions him about the present situation to which July replies that the present condition will change. Then Maureen is asked by July about ploughing the field. She says that she goes for time pass, but July hinders her. Maureen says that she would not reveal the relationship with Ellen to anyone. July realizes that her dignity as a White will let her down, and she frightens him about Ellen.

Further, July tells Maureen that the chief wants them to meet the next day. Even though July has authority over the village, the chief is the decision-maker and nobody can stay in the village without his permission. The next day Maureen and Smales go to the chief. He asks them about the situation in Johannesburg and also asks what made them come to the village. The chief doubts that the Whites are running away from Black rebels, and the Black rebels are not far from the village in which they live. The chief says that he cannot shoot the Black rebels as the White has to teach them to shoot with a gun. The Smales confirms whether the chief wants to shoot the Black rebels indeed, and he teaches him to shoot with the gun.

As the chief grants permission to stay in July's house, the White family stays there. But they are not satisfied with the answer given by the chief. Because, why does the chief not to shoot other Blacks and the way in July speaks criticizes them. They say that July boasts himself by putting the family's lives at risk. Along with other ladies, Martha also cuts grass for a hut. Martha gets irritated as the grass is kept in front of her house, where the children

come and their playmaking meshes out of the cut grass. Then he criticizes Martha for doing so. The Smales criticizes July and tells July that they would take July's family also to the city once the fight ends. But Martha replies that they would stay in the village and July would not go to the city; instead, he would work in the village by starting his own shop.

After long years, the village has an entertainment when a man buys an amplifier for the village. The villagers drink, but the Smales do not drink. After some time, they find that the gun is missing. The Smales is shocked and they find that Daniel is also missing. They immediately guess that Daniel would have taken the gun. The Smales asks for the help of the police. July complains that the Smales always trouble them as Maureen asks him to get the gun from Daniel. July becomes angry but Maureen understands his condition. July says that Daniel had taken the gun and joined the revolution.

And then, Gina and Royce play with Nyiko. Smales goes for fishing and then a helicopter arrives. It rounds the village after which Maureen runs without knowing whether it is a savior or murderer, but she runs after the helicopter which becomes the end of the story. To sum up, the cultural crash between White and Black can be considered as the central theme of the novel as a shipwreck is a concern in Robinson's story. This is the way the apartheid system in South Africa changed the life style of Whites upside down. This impact of apartheid system has been beautifully narrated by Gordimer through the creation of Smales and the servant July in the novel July's People.

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