

REFLECTIONS OF APARTHEID IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *JUMP AND OTHER STORIES*

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Abstract

Reflection of Apartheid in Nadine Gordimer's Jump and Other Stories is an attempt to portray reflections of apartheid on the routine life of the inhabitants of the nation. Gordimer's human concern reinforces her to think about a mankind on humanitarian grounds in the racially segregated South Africa. Especially her short fiction elaborates a single element of daily routine life in a very powerful and subtle way. Jump and other Stories (1991) is a collection of short stories that depict very disturbing state of affairs on her own country and the neighbouring countries. All the sixteen stories reveal human nature and psyche of the children of different age groups. The paper tries to analyze these stories in psycho-social aspect and its tragic consequences on growing children from the selected stories.

Key Terms: *Apartheid, Oppression, suppression, consequences, discrimination, destabilized, fractured etc.*

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South African literature in English offers a distinct set of experience because of the distinct nature of South African situation. The white minority has tried to perpetuate its position of supremacy over the black majority in the country through the invention of the socio-political myth of apartheid. South Africa's political history has been the history of mutual distrust between the whites and the blacks due to white oppression and repression. Roland Smith points out that white English-speaking writers deal openly with the brutality of their existence in white-ruled world. Whereas Athol Fugard, another white liberal writer from South Africa, confesses that the experience of becoming outcasts' in one's own country and states further that it 'is almost impossible to imagine a situation on this earth where it is harder to survive than here and now in South Africa.

Nadine Gordimer, the white woman novelist, occupies a problematic position in South Africa. In spite of her colonial inheritance of power and privilege as a member of the white community, her opposition to the system of white oppression and exploitation isolates her from her own community. Being born as a white, the black society sees her as the symbol of white oppressors, and of the perpetrators of repressive violence. Writing, hence, offers the exclusive means for her creative imagination to come to terms with the political and the existence tension of her situation. Her primary concern as a radical white liberal has been to explore the possibility of a creative role for the whites in building a new future for integrated South Africa, founded on the mutual trust between the blacks and the whites. Her fiction is a creative interstice between her commitment to the sense of belonging to her country, and her revolt against the white hereditary of colonialism.

The South African novelist Nadine Gordimer's fiction offers a set of experiences of racial discrimination in a country like South Africa. She was born in a Jew family in a

small mining town of Springs, near Johannesburg. After completing her education she got married to Gavron in 1949 and in 1954, to Reinhold Cassier, a business executive. She and her husband live in Johannesburg with their son, her husband's daughter from his previous marriage and her daughter from her previous marriage. She has proved herself as versatile, by being a speaker at conferences, as a reviewer and a visiting lecturer at several universities like Princeton and Harvard. Although she has traveled all over the world she never left her native country. She won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1991 for her contribution to literature. A brief survey of Apartheid policy will help to understand and analyze the stories in psycho-social point of view.

South Africa was ruled by the white till the last decade of the 20th century. The unjust laws of 'apartheid' made the white colonizers the supreme authority. On the other hand the native blacks were marginalized and almost dehumanized due to denial of their independence. Daniel E. Malan's National Party introduced the policy of apartheid in 1948. The policy was designed to ensure racial discrimination. The 'Population Registration Act' was introduced to remove the blacks from the white area and to send them to their 'homeland', decided by white rulers. Extension of 'University Education Act' in 1959 was formed to bring segregation policies in the field of education. 'The Publications and Entertainment Act' in 1963 introduced 'Censorship' to the creative writers. The policy was opposed not only by the native parties like African National Congress (ANC) or the Pan African Congress (PAC) but also by the other world organizations.

The anti-apartheid movement carried out by the native organizations, received great support from the entire world. The Commonwealth of Nations banned South Africa from the Union. The opposition to the policy within the country was shown by the Sharpeville massacre near Vereeniging in 1960. The students' organizations like 'South African students Organization' (SASO) and Black Peoples Contention (BPC) worked actively against it. In 1976, riots broke out in Soweto and other townships that were popular due to students' involvement. 'United Democratic Front', started a mass movement that brought out positive results of withdrawing the policy. The

thirty-year ban on the ANC was removed on February 2nd* and Nelson Mandela was released on February 11 1994. South Africa thus got freedom in 1994 with Nelson Mandela as its first president. Though the policy was given a former closure, it did not get abolished from the minds of the former colonizers and the colonized. The literature of the nation reflects the wounds of racism in the minds of its people. As Nadine Gordimer, white by race, expresses her views about destabilized society like South Africa:

"For myself, I have created black characters in my fiction: - whether I have done so successfully or not is for the readers to decide. What's certain is that there is no representation of our social reality without that strange area of our lives in which we have knowledge of one-another." (Clingman (ed.) 1989:279)

Nadine Gordimer's *Jump and Other Stories* (1991) is a collection of sixteen stories that can be best described as microcosm of the life in Africa. Being a humanist her prominent concern lies in psycho-social study of the people from all walks of life. Being a member of fractured society she cannot stop herself from describing bloodshed and horror but her spiritual self always sees a ray of hope for 'the emergence of a new man' in 21st century. Her depiction of characters starts with a shipwreck but most of the time they turn their lot of life by becoming salvagers. The closure of all the stories is striking, strange and shocking with the spell of pleasant or unpleasant surprise. The present paper deals prominently with the stories based on children prominently. She is a great humanist who initiates her characters to spiritual values such as the life furthering survival and positive acceptance of life in spite of adversities that marks the salvaging phase. Her stories portray the transition from the psychological state of the shipwreck to the stage of salvage through the attainment of calmness of mind. All the stories reveal human nature and psyche of the children of different age groups. The collection is divided in two groups. The first group includes the stories which treat child of a major character. The second group includes the stories in which childhood becomes a vital term of reference in the delineation of characters.

Once Upon A Time is a tragedy of a white family who loses their little son in the attempt to ensure security of the house against the black intruders through installation of

increasing effective devices. The story is told in the style of folklore without giving proper names to the characters due to which it appears to be an every man's story from South Africa. The story starts with a feeling of a happy and contented white family that includes a husband, a wife, a son and a grandmother nicknamed as 'that wise old witch' and a trustworthy black housemaid and itinerant gardener along with pets- a cat and a dog as playmates of the boy. The family lives with materialistic comforts like 'a car and caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in the drown'. The contentment of the family is often described by the author as 'were living happily ever after'. The society where they are living 'inscribed in medical benefit with the licensed pet dog, the home insured against fire, flood damage and theft but not against the riots'. The gate of the house is lettered 'YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED' for a would-be intruder that is subscribed with the local neighbourhood watch which supplies with a plaque.

The author describes the disparity between the two races by mentioning the marginalized race as 'people of another colour' living outside the city as per the separate inhabitation law of apartheid. The husband tells his wife not to worry about the intruders as nobody is entertained except trusted maids and gardeners from 'that' race. He assures her that they are safe with 'the police and soldiers and tear-gas and guns'. To safeguard the family from 'buses burned, cars stoned, and school children shot by the police' he fits electronically controlled gates and the receiver that the son uses as his 'walkie-talkie'. The labourers of 'another colour' are deliberately allowed in the suburb for selfish purposes. The family installs the burglar bars attached to doors and windows and an alarm system immediately on the demand of the maid. The family enjoys beautiful scenery of the nature 'the trees and sky through bars' like a caged bird. The alarm system rings with the movements of the pets and it becomes nuisance to the family. The family strictly follows the old witch's advice of not 'taking on anyone off the street.' The old witch pays the bill as her Christmas present. She gives a gift to her grandson of 'Space Man outfit' and a book of 'fairy tales'. The life goes on with the dinner parties with a certain couple at night along with robbery cases discussion that confirms a fussy life of the elite class.

The man, the wife, the little boy and the dog go for walk to the neighbouring street where they come across a house with the aesthetics of prison architecture with the Spanish Villa style that they decide to install a security system of 'a continuous coil of stiff and shining metal serrated into jagged blades' to their wall. The aim behind it is that the one who dares to go near it will be getting 'bloodier and bloodier, a deeper and sharper hooking and tearing of flesh'. The board is fixed to the wall that asks 'consult DRAGON'S TEETH- the People for Total Security'. The wife is worried about the cat's safety on which the husband says that the cat always looks before he leaps. The maid and the gardener along with his parents try to save him but they could see the bleeding mass. The story ends with the tragic death of an innocent boy in the manmade trap. The nature's law proves supreme and man's law gets defeated like 'man proposes and God disposes'. The boy is completely out of everybody's mind, gets caught in the net woven by his own parents for his own security. The fairy tales' book gifted by the old witch for entertainment purpose becomes life stealer.

The Ultimate Safari, the second selected story can be best described as a travelogue that explores the 'journey for survival' through a nine year old child-narrator girl. It is a story of a black family about the aftermaths of the prolonged war in Mozambique. The story is narrated in the first person by a nine year old small girl from a village from Mozambique. The family before the war consists of parents and the elder son, the middle girl and the younger son. The father dies in the fight with the terrorists whom the narrator calls the bandits. The mother is missing during the attack of bandits. The village has become a ruined place without having signs of normal life with school, church etc. The girl describes monotony of life as people in the village have to struggle hard for their daily bread and butter rather than remembering the days of week like Mondays and Sundays. The children become orphans but the grandmother and the grandfather come to their help. The story ends with a positive note that the stagnated and meaningless existence of the natives slowly come in the flow with a new beginning in altogether new refugee identity.

In the beginning of the story the girl tells us that her mother and father go out of the house and do not return. It is told in such coldness that it shows that it has become a

routine for all the people from Mozambique. The war, the girl is talking about, has started between the terrorists and the government. She describes the life under terror of the bandits who chase the innocent people, 'like chickens chased by dogs'. The family is living in dire poverty without proper food and shelter. It so happens with the mother that she goes to get some oil for cooking that is supposed to be distributed in charity. At one end children start visualizing sumptuous food for the day that they have not tasted for a long time and at the other end the mother becomes the victim of terrorists. She tells that the bandits attack the village twice and looted everything and third time there is nothing to take away 'no oil, no food'. They burned the thatch and roof of the house fell down. The house is made again by children with 'some pieces of tin'. Third time the children face the bandits hiding themselves under the tin house without roof. The elder one holds a piece of wood in his hand to hit the bandits. The younger one clings to his sister like 'a baby monkey to its mother'. The girl tells us that their grandmother who is stronger than the grandfather comes to their rescue. She takes them to her home under the constant threat of the attack of the bandits on the way. They are without proper food for a month. The whole village decides to leave the native land immediately and to take shelter in the neighbouring country.

The way to the chosen place goes from Kruger Park. The journey begins without the fear of bandits but under the danger of the attack of wild animals. Many people from the villages on their foot join them. The girl says that they are shifting from the man-made world to the kingdom of animals. She observes that the blacks are the security guards in the park and the whites enjoy wild life in their protection. Since the folk is moving illegally they take care of not to get caught in the security check. The girl with the mixed feelings of thrill, excitement and fear remembers some incidents in which villagers had lost their body parts in the attack of the wild. The park is fenced with electric current for safety reasons whereas the light the girl has seen 'on poles that give electric light in our towns'. The most awaiting moment for the children is to see the lion. The girl shuts her eyes and preys that the lion should spare her. The leader starts beating the tree with a dead branch and starts shouting. The lions go away. The grandmother's feet start bleeding while crossing the river. The grandfather cannot match with the speed of the others. Moving from

the elephant grass the insects start singing in the ears and biting. The grandfather cannot cope up with the ghastly situation and gets lost in the tall grass. The search goes on throughout the night but he is not found. The girl sees the vultures start moving on their heads. The grandmother without uttering a single word determines to move without the grandfather. She looks at the three grandchildren and decides to move on for them.

At last the folk reach in the area where many people have taken shelter. The girl without knowing word 'refugee' starts describing her life in a tent. She remembers that she has seen those tents when she accompanies her mother in search of her father in the tents under police observation. She comes to know from the nurse that there are nearly two hundred adults coming from the villages from the neighbouring country. She describes the tent as mountain-shaped inside which we live. The grandmother according to the girl is strong who once again starts life with a hope of better future for her grandchildren. The life crawls slowly with the punching cards to get milk, food, clothes and medicines and old clothes from the church. The children have enough food to eat and clothes to wear.

The white people come to make a documentary on their lives. The grandmother tells the lady that they are living in the tent for two years and a month. She has no dreams for herself but at the same time she wants her grandchildren should become educated and get jobs. The white woman asks her that whether she wants to go back to her country. She denies as there is no home left, she says. The girl doesn't like the answer because she thinks that after the war there would be her mother waiting for her and her grandfather would be on his way to home. She is hopeful about the gathering of the family members without knowing the reality.

If we compare both the stories that belong to same region in the first story the parents are over-protective and the child is naïve whereas, in the second story the parents are missing and the children try to cope up with the circumstances. The son in the first story is living like a king in the fort whereas; the girl in the second story is in search of home. The parents in the first story lose everything except comforts and luxuries but on the other hand the grandmother in the second story is victorious as she survives her grandchildren in extreme conditions. The socio-cultural disparity between both the

families is so extensive that can never lead to take one another's place in near future. The parents instead of concentrating on their parenting they are worried about their survival. The woman that feeds the younger son without bothering about his religion and race proves her civilized in real sense of terms. The efforts of the neighbouring country in providing shelter are a step towards egalitarian approach. Forgetting the issues and focusing on the welfare can be taken as a step towards salvage. Neither the colonizer nor the colonized are taking complete breathe in the polluted atmosphere. Humanistic theorists have tried to find out the answer to social-political and cultural diversities. Franz Fanon has explained true liberation of mankind as:

"That imperialism which today is fighting against a true liberation of mankind leaves in its wake here and there tinctures of decay which we must search out and mercilessly expel from our land and our spirits". (Fanon 1963:200)

A Journey is a story of the process of growth of a twelve year old white boy from childhood to adolescence or early adulthood triggered off by the peculiar situation of a growing son in each and every family. Gordimer is a very powerful psychoanalyst who handles delicate and complicated awaking of erotic and physio-psychological changes of a young adult. She maps the ambiguous yet difficult process of evolution of a child into an adult with extraordinary psychological insight. The story is in first person narrated by three personas. It deals with a delicate relationship between a mother and a young son with an arrival of a new baby in the family. The son observes physical and psychological changes during the pregnancy as the head of the family in the absence of his father. The father is working in a nearby country and remains absent in the family. The son sees the change in the behaviour of his parents. The sexual connotations called by him as 'cat language' is stopped. His mother's silence makes him aware of his father's extra marital affair. He starts imaging himself as the head of the family and considers his mother as his responsibility. He accompanies his mother like that of her companion. His feelings are similar to King Oedipus as most of the young boys get attracted to their mothers in their teen age. He also tries to protect the new born child because he thinks that he has to

shoulder family responsibilities in the absence of his father. Thus *A Journey* operates on two levels of childhood – the infancy and transitional phase between childhood and adolescence within the framework of the family.

Jump is a story of a white youth who gets involved in the terrorist activities of the white secret organization. The boy along with his family came in search of better job opportunities in the former colony. He unfortunately gets trapped as a secret spy of the white government and is tortured badly. His natural reaction to injustice is to get involved in terrorism in support of apartheid as a white supremacy policy. He gets involved in many terrorist activities in various African countries. He becomes the main culprit of the black government. Finally he decides to surrender and confesses all illegal activities of the white organization. The title 'Jump' refers to the boy's jump with the parachute. It also represents his shift from the world of a child to that of a man.

Some are Born to Sweet Delight portrays seventeen year old innocent girl who is mercilessly killed by her terrorist boyfriend in an unending racial war of South Africa. Vera, the protagonist, falls in love with a lodger called Rad who targets her as the carrier of a bomb to accomplish explosion of the aeroplane. Rad's choice of Vera with her baby in the womb confirms the ruthless dedication of him to his purpose of destruction. As the story ends, 'Vera had taken them all, taken the baby inside her; down, along with her happiness'.

Home is a story of a dark girl who is torn between maternal family and her white husband. Her mother and brother are imprisoned under unproven charges by the white government. Her husband, being the race of the colonizer, doesn't offer strong emotional support. She wants to save her maternal family and wants to protect her own married life too. The story is a fine example of interracial marriages and its consequences.

Amnesty is a story of a family of a comrade who is divided into family duties and organization duties. The man has a family of a smart small daughter and a loving wife. The father and the husband remain away from his family due to his duty. The wife longs for his company and love and the daughter too expects her father's quality time. The head of the

family returns after a long gap and finds that both the girls in his life deny accepting him as their earlier companion. The story highlights the disturbed family life of comrades who sacrifice their joys for the cause of revolution.

Comrades is a story narrated in a humanitarian point of view of a white social worker who happens to meet a few black comrades in a conference. She gives a lift to those boys and invites them at her place for some snack. She tries to understand their psyche that works for the black liberation movement. The boys are involved in difficult activities like digging holes for mines and such other works. The white boys of their age are busy in schools and colleges, pursuing their careers but on the contrary these boys of marginalized race surrender themselves to circumstances.

All the stories highlight strenuous relationship between two prominent races from South Africa. Nadine Gordimer ends most of her stories with poetic justice 'virtue is rewarded and evil is punished'. Being a humanitarian she supports Desmond Tutu's vision of rainbow nation and expects that interracial marriages can bring harmony in the nation when every African family would consist of children of all colours.

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