



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCE RESEARCH, IDEAS AND INNOVATIONS IN TECHNOLOGY

ISSN: 2454-132X

Impact factor: 4.295

(Volume 4, Issue 1)

Available online at [www.ijariit.com](http://www.ijariit.com)

## Political, Historical, Social and Psychological Aspects of Nadine Gordimer's Novel **The Lying Days**

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Nadine Gordimer, the Nobel laureate is a white South African prolific writer. Gordimer believes in the humanistic aspect of people and is the spokesperson for her people. She won her Nobel Prize in the year 1991. Her life brings about the racism and of the downtrodden conditions of the people. Gordimer works to bring out the society needs and the societal problems in different dimensions. She feels that born as a white South African has left her in a fatal isolation and her only thing to bring out is the unspeakable cruelty to blacks through her words, as a writer, the words of her works give her the face and place with what she depicts. The intimate background understanding of South Africa makes the writer like Gordimer to convey easily what exactly is the condition of her country and know the real suffering of the black people. Most of the black and white writers of South Africa or of the African continent leave their own native place as exiles or by own willingness to other countries and only a handful of writers remain in their natives and bring out the suffering of their own country. Gordimer is one such writer who stays in her country South Africa and brings out vistas of images about the black people and their actual situation through her words. She does not go into an exile or leaves her country on free will. She faces the challenge of loneliness as a minority white woman in the black consciousness and as a political activist to blacks, which isolates her in the white community. Gordimer is one of the most powerful of the protest fiction writers of South Africa, by traveling through every part of her country; she presents the firsthand realistic experience of the oppression of the natives in all fields like political, social and cultural scenario.

South Africa is a country in which communication itself has promoted to subjugation and a country whose history assembled intentionally to maintain white supremacy. South Africa under apartheid regime was firmly under the control of minority whites. Gordimer is one of the white minorities resented the ill-treatment of whites on blacks. She strongly protested against the violence in her novels. Gordimer is the one, who did not undergo the actual pain of the blacks but she as a writer and human being brought out the authentic suffering of the people and also her own helplessness at the earlier stage through her six decades of writing. In fact, she may be the only writer who is not just sympathetic but completely empathetic as she analysis the traumatic mind of the characters than the physical suffering. Through the characters and her novels, she tries to bring out elucidation to racism. Her novels are with plethora of historical, political and social events that bring out the real atmosphere of her country. The characters tussle in the dichotomous situation, between private and public life, self and the other, the black and the white. This makes the characters universal and more real than fictitious.

Psychoanalytic elucidation of literature can be a cherished exploration of human motivation and behavior. Psychological application into Gordimer's Helen Shaw from her first novel, *The Lying Days* is the main focus of this article. Nadine Gordimer in her novels brings out the individuals than of stereotyped persons. The characters when they come across the violence and witness the suffering of the fellow humans they undergo the trauma and this brings a vital change in their life.

Gordimer's first novel, *The Lying Days*, was completed at a most politically significant period in South African history. Although published in 1953, it was probably written around 1948, the period when the National Party (composed mainly of Afrikaners) came to power and instituted a regime of brutal racial suppression in the name of maintaining racial purity. This was the period of apartheid racial Acts and their entrenchment in South Africa. The Nationalist Party commenced its era of government by passing a series of Parliamentary Acts aimed at firmly constituting an era of political exclusions and brutal suppression. Gordimer's writing is rooted in these realities and relationships and is centered on the politics of the white family. In South Africa, white settlement and colonization were mostly masculine projects and the family reflects the patriarchal situation of settler communities as well as the

wider politics of the country. It examines not only the politics of the family but also its connections with the social and political structures of the wider society.

In the face of this legalization the ANC, the leading African opposition movement, immediately organized itself in opposition to apartheid. It started to fight for the extension of the vote to non-whites through peaceful means and activities. With the National Party and the oppositional African Congress, white liberals found themselves in-between, occupying a middle ground yet without any real power, force or influence on the two fronts. White liberals found themselves in a very critical situation. If they joined the struggle against apartheid, they would lose order, stability, and privileges and be subjected to incrimination, and if they joined the system they would be part of its oppressive forces. The active liberals who opposed apartheid were harassed by the regime and forced either into silence or exile. Liberalism, therefore, was weakened and marginalized in politics and found its force and energy in the works of the English speaking liberal writers like Paton, Coetzee, and Gordimer. It is within the context of this period and its complicated racial and oppositional politics that Gordimer locates her early novels. Gordimer's relationship to the reality of South African life and politics was not simply to record and explore it on a mimetic level, but also to transform the reality through its re-invention in fiction. Gordimer transforms reality through language and imagination. Her fiction depicts the oppressions of apartheid, changes in society and the positions of different kinds of liberals, while at the same time it transcends these realities to a different world with the possibilities of different human relationships. In order to contest the colonial and apartheid ideologies, and structure a new identity for her society, Gordimer situates her works within a wider liberal framework. On the ideological level, this enables her to restructure and activate liberalism to the extent of radicalism to make it function as a powerful creed in the struggle against apartheid and to liberate- the individual and society from its plague. In addition, she presents liberalism as a way of creating a new identity for her protagonists and a new social context for South Africa through the articulation of its components like justice, equality, personal freedom, and rationality. Such liberal ideals are interwoven in the discourses of her novels to deconstruct the identity that has been imposed by colonialism and apartheid on South African society. Through reflecting the 'inclusiveness' of liberalism she makes it able to stand against the 'exclusiveness' of apartheid and African Nationalism. This, in fact, makes liberalism appear as a compromising philosophy that stands in the middle between two extremes: Afrikaner Nationalism and African Nationalism. It functions in Gordimer's texts as a natural solution for the racial conflict in South Africa and as a melting pot for all the ideological and ethnic contradictions in her society. In this sense, Jan Mohamed observes that: While writing and educating herself, Nadine Gordimer experienced a radical psychological rupture, which she calls a 'second birth' - she discovered the 'great South African lie'. The realisation that white society was trying to conceal the simple fact that blacks were people led her to understand that her identity as a South African had to be formed through the resolution of the black/white dichotomy, that the two races had to be unified under a central, definitive experience of black-and-white as people with undifferentiated claims to live, whatever else - skin, language, culture - might distinguish them from one another. Such a revelation is in itself a progressive liberal revelation and is obviously reflected in Gordimer's novels, where the novelist attempts to create a consciousness in her liberal white protagonists that non-whites are people and the system attempts to hide this fact from them to be free to oppress them. She also works on the conscience of her white liberal characters to create a sense of sin and tragedy in them that they are part of the oppressive forces of apartheid and that their ancestors destroyed the culture, land, and people, and caused the tragedy in South Africa. In addition, she makes her liberal protagonists aware that their family politics are part of the apartheid oppressive politics, so they must revolt against them and attempt to connect to South Africa through commitment and the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. Such a revelation also enables her to create a non-racial identity for her protagonists and society. Thus the social and political changes are bought in her first novel *The Lying Days*.

The main historical events of 1950 are recorded in Gordimer's first novel *The Lying Days*. In 1948, South Africa was under the control of the National Party and Apartheid system was introduced which restricted the rights of the black people. In 1949, the voting rights of the Indians and the Coloureds were abolished, and the African National Congress (ANC) adopted the Programme of Action calling for boycotts, strikes and civil disobedience. In the same year, The Mixed Marriages Act prohibited mixed marriages and made sexual relations between consenting adults of different skin colors a criminal offense. In 1950, the Population Registration and Race Classification Act required every citizen to be registered according to his and her racial group. The Group Areas Act in 1950 required segregated residential and business areas for whites, Coloureds, and Asians. In 1951, The Bantu Authorities Act abolished the Natives' Representative Council to establish a basis for ethnic government in the black reserves or homelands. In 1952, the long-established Pass laws were hardened, prohibiting the blacks from moving about the country to sell their labor on a free market, and classified those who were unemployed as vagrants. The Native Laws Amendment Act, in the same year, limited the blacks' rights to live in the urban areas and moved the native owners out of their ancestral lands. The Defiance Campaign on Gandhian principles of civil disobedience, strikes, boycotts, and stay-at-home, was committed to the goals of national freedom and political independence. In 1953, the United Party dissidents formed the Liberal Party, favoring non-racial but qualified franchise for the blacks, and left-wing whites formed the Congress of Democrats in sympathy with the ANC. The Separate Amenities Act was introduced in the same year. The Public Safety Act empowered the government to declare stringent states of emergency. These historical facts are the important chronological events that are reflected in her first novel. Further, Fredrick Jameson in his essay "The Political Unconscious" famously writes in the opening lines as, "Always historicize!," (pp1822)

Gordimer also agrees in an interview that fiction gives more of history than any historian. The history of any country is depicted in the novels than the history books and her novels inevitably bring out more of historical events than any other writer. Fredrick Jameson's idea of three horizons or concentric circles of interpretation; 'the political happenings as a kind of chronicle, the writer puts it in a record of successive happenings in a fictive context, constructed as a plot by some individual voice.' The social as the conflict—or emergence into our awareness of its being a conflict of which Jameson calls "ideologems," which is the way of thinking about the world as expressed by disparate and conflicting classes.

Thus Gordimer novel brings out the historical, social, political and psychological aspects of her novels.

## **REFERENCE BOOKS**

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