

# A thematic study on the implications of social segregation in Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*

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## Abstract

In South Africa, the colonization predominately existed in the mid-twentieth Century and it was the seed for the growth of racism, slave domination of the Europeans, French, and the Dutch. The mid-twentieth century is called the 'History of Colonization' and the most renowned period for the discrimination among social and the physiological effect of the colonization age. The post-colonial era was concerned about the social determination towards racism, slavery, and equal treatment in the post-colonization period. The colonization mainly goes hand in hand to the African literature that primarily focused on discrimination and apartheid system. The literature, fiction, poetry and themes in dramas chiefly portrayed the social effects of African society. The children in the African nation were entertained by oral literature, dramas and songs of achievements of the foster fathers that made the social impact on the community. Many of the African novels speak about the impact of racism and the socio-psychological effect undergone by the children and people in the divided country. So, this paper concentrates of Nadine Gordimer's novel *The House Guns*, that speaks about the results of racial discrimination and injustice.

**Keywords:** Colonization, Slavery, Domination, Racism, Apartheid, Discrimination and socio-Psychological Effects.

Nadine Gordimer's *The House Guns* explains the human relationship, the freedom towards friendship, marriage, love, and togetherness. It also explains the sincerity and ethics towards each profession as a doctor, businessman, lawyer, police, architecture, and human concern towards the day-to-day happenings. Here, the character Duncan is a man, hailing from a good background belonging to a religious family and he is also an architect. So, the novelist makes the reader think about how such a young man of twenty-seven years could commit murder and this question is carried over throughout the novel. To kill a friend of him, there should be the reason, if no other reason how could he indulge in such activities.

Nadine discusses the three parts of the theme in the novel: first is the theme of the human relationship, the second is the punishment for the murder committed and third is the fact of the truth. In a human relationship, the author describes the hypocrisy and belief that one has to get from friendship, love, and care because these two are the main dangers of the relationship. Throughout the novel, one can read that the characters Harald and Claudia feel very guilty for their son's violence towards the life of others. They could not believe what happened on Friday night and how Duncan transcended into such a physiological motive of killing a man. No human has the right to take away the life of the other human. The parents also undergo some psychological disturbance as they face cultural, racial variation with their Black lawyer who is going to investigate their son's case (Gordimer 23). In South Africa, apartheid has

rocked in violence and discrimination and so the gun is used as protective equipment in the house.

In this novel, the personnel issue of Lindgard becomes the political issue at the end of the case. Their main concern is Motsamai who is Black and their belief is very less because he is a Black lawyer. The author wisely predominates society's behavior towards love. It is an issue that rises due to the mental effects of Duncan towards his friend. With the stunning effects of *The House Gun*, it predicts parent's belief, love, friends, and truth behind the legacy. The positive approach to the story is that the novel insists upon affirmation towards reconciling children's approach with regard to men and women.

The novel also depicts the confidence of the parents that their son would not have committed such murder. The parents of Duncan undergo many shortcomings by talking to themselves and they believe that the possibility of Duncan may be due to somebody changes in their case. At the end of the novel, the Black lawyer has no freedom to express his opinion and also clearly states that violence results in assault and it should not continue with the emotions in the human being. It is learnt that their entire privilege has gone and the violence is the result of all associated confusion and it should not be continued. The prestigious issue that their lawyer as they had not gone to the Black house anymore being a doctor Claudia has not handled any Black skins.

The novel concludes with the thought that Duncan's parents hail from the prestigious people in society and they have their own identity. The egoistic behavior makes them to rely on the Black lawyer to take up the case. South Africa never accepts the upcoming of the Black ones. When Duncan's case is heard in the court, the Black lawyer argues for Duncan. Unfortunately, the judge and the people in the court never listen to the Black lawyer's argument. The only thing that prevents them from talking and listening, in this novel is, he belongs to the Black community. In the apartheid period, the Blacks are treated as slaves and they are not allowed to be working in the equal status that of Whites. The Black cannot depend on their Blacks and they are not given privileges. The social effect of apartheid is imposed on Black. The

apartheid will be removed only when the Whites and Black live on the same plane together.

The author's narrative strategies is seen in her *The House Guns* which interprets the apartheid in South African social culture. The author also explains her troubled times in the post-apartheid South Africa, and has faced, along with her countrymen, the violence of the racism, and the sexual difference of feeling guilty to oneself. Her novel, *The House Gun* is an ever-blooming one that images the racist principles followed in South Africa. The novel mainly concentrates on the psychological effect of the apartheid due to racism and homophobia.

*The House Gun* speaks about political violence which prevails in the South African culture and also their human relationship. When one reads the novel, it can clearly be understood that the post-modernization of the apartheid system in the African culture aid in the analysis of the detailed review of the cultural activities existed in South Africa during that period. *The House Gun* is a collection of the postmodern aesthetics and its reflection on the fraught relationship on the transgressive relationship of the youth towards the culture. The allegory digs out the social effect of the apartheid in South Africa, which are a key cause of the socio-economic crisis and the breaking principle of postmodernism.

In this story, the lawyer tries to talk to the young man Duncan, as he has to prepare for his arguments. The lawyer always insists that the person indulged in the murder should feel guilty for what he had done.

The lawyer says that the young man has no hostility towards his parents. The parents never accept this type of argument as they have no privacy to talk to their son. The regulation of the prison depicted in these novel states that the parents have no privacy to talk to their son; for instance, the warder watch them. The lawyer insists that the young man should tell everything to the lawyer so that he could move in his case further. The parents conclude that their son has committed murder just because his girlfriend had an affair with his friend that hurt Duncan. The reason for this murder is due to the betrayal of Duncan's girlfriend having an affair with his friend, Jespersen.

The novel portrays the different aspects of racism found in the society. As the lawyer is a Black man, Duncan never opens up his privacy in front of the lawyer or his parents. The House Gun story is covered with various domains that include the doubtfulness. Harald finally goes to the cottage, where the incident took place. The cottage is locked and he knocks at the door. Khulu opens the door. Harald first goes into the room there searched the grass fern where the Gun was dropped. Harald concludes there is no evidence of Duncan coming out from the cottage. Harald searches only the room and there are journals of architecture and other books. Harald, again with half knee, bends down and notices a notebook lying down. So, he picks it up and scrawl down the pages where he saw a passage written when the boy was the child, he recognized few words. Lindgard faces so many problems because of these events. The newspapers publish the news that Lindgard's son killed a person. The parents could not go out with this guilty feeling that this would be a record in the minutes. In the story of *The House Gun*, the author portrays her idea of the post-modernization where the ideas of the high and low culture are entirely different. The story portrays gay relations and having a girlfriend. However, cultural recognition is very low for high and low people; the high culture is considered for the White and the low culture for the Black. The society is divided into two groups based on their culture. The view of humanity is progressing in society. The movement is towards a broad society in western history where the reason for science and technology has no progress.

Nadine Gordimer, as a fictional philosopher writer, has thrown light on violence and the ridiculousness in the twentieth century era, and resorted to the post-modernized hypothesis of the modern world considering the cause for socio-economic happenings. *The House Gun* narrates the quest for the form of social and cultural norms that insists on the thirst for freedom of speech, work, and expressing opinion.

Hence, this novel can be analysed with the structure of modern aesthetics. However, it explores the theme of the apartheid in South Africa. For instance, Nancy Scheper, in her exploration of *The House Gun*, explains the

analysis of the kind of violence, break of moral values toward gender-based discrimination, the racial differences, and the division of class among the Whites who live in South Africa with the other class living in the same state. The novelist narrates more about her land history from her personnel experience. As said earlier, *The House Gun* is not a fictional story, instead, puzzle-based one. In *The House Gun*, Nadine narrates the caustic look of the post-apartheid age so that she could reflect upon the new coming of the political growth.

In *The House Gun*, the author gives great importance to racial discrimination prevailing in the society. The author develops the theme as the incidence of violence and a new family relationship with well-established truth of the narrative (Gordimer 11). The story vividly narrates the South African society with ill-effects of apartheid, long term goal with frustration, and stemming off the ineffectiveness of the racially discriminated people fighting for the effective achievement towards the goal of being efficient.

One day, Hamilton Motsamai meets the girlfriend of Duncan. The lawyer informs the parents about her asking whether they know her details. Unfortunately, they say that they knew her by name and cannot confirm that she was in a relationship with her son. Duncan never speaks about her too. There is a meeting with the counsel of members along with Natalie, but Harald and Claudia do not intervene the meeting as they are going to give the interview to the lawyer.

In *The House Gun* story, the parents come to know that their son is the murderer. Claudia, married at a young age, and the doctor by profession, is stunned to hear that her son is the accused. The moment, they are revealed about the truth, Claudia feels guilty for giving birth to such a son who could kill.

The lifesaver's son is found to be a killer that makes Lindgard feel bad and to be guilty of the prestigious life in society. The Lindgard is shocked to hear the news and they remain stationary because they could not believe the saying.

Generally, South Africans used to have terrible nightmares during their sleep as their land is the land of violence and racial discrimination. The author not only narrates the story of racism but also the love and affection the parents have towards

their son of being lived in a White society. Nadine Gordimer is a committed writer who is conscious of making peaceful tessellation in the divided society through her works. Like many other White writers, her writing also talks about the difference in the cultural activities between Black and White, the love, affection, and relationship practices of arrogant White society are thumb printed in her writings. To conclude, in most of her literary writings, especially in post-apartheid fictions, Gordimer specifies the real socio-economic problems, sextual exploitation, murder and issues being faced by the divided society in her nation. The socio-psychological issues are more in South

Africa due to the segregated society of the White and non-White.

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