

Mapping the subaltern theory in Wole Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel & Nadine Gordimer's July's People

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Abstract: A person having a low status in a society with social, political, or other hierarchies is called a subaltern. It may also refer to someone who has experienced oppression or marginalization. The word subaltern is made up of the Latin words "sub" (meaning "below") and "alternus" (meaning "all others"), which naturally conveys the idea of being obedient to everyone else. An individual or group of people who lack political or economic authority, such as a poor person residing in a dictatorship, are also described by the word. A variety of themes are reflected in subaltern literature, including the oppression of the lower and working classes, marginalization, gender discrimination, oppression, contempt for women, impoverished classes, and racial and class prejudice. Gender inequality is one of these subjects that is heavily emphasized in subaltern literature. Even though women are revered as Kali, Durga, and Shakthi, child marriages, the sati system, and education denial are still prevalent. Even if we talk about women's empowerment and equality in the twenty-first century, gender prejudice still exists today.

Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Subaltern, Women, Inequality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since people have begun to write and communicate their opinions through literature, it has begun to change. Even if not all written expressions are regarded as works of art, literature is defined as a collection of ideas that have been organized and written in a coherent way. Literature grew gradually and took on many different forms, just as human life began to progress from the ordinary to the extraordinary, opening the door for the expansion of human knowledge through writing. A number of classifications, including language, history, national origin, genre, and topic matter, are used to categorize literature. Numerous authors have reflected historical, social, and political events in their works. The lives of people and literature are interwoven and intermingled.

African literature is one such genre that is active and spreading awareness of its existence. As a result of independence, numerous Africans began to develop as authors and use their voices to represent the continent's people. Prolific authors who have made invaluable contributions to English-language African literature include Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Gabriel Okara, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Flora Nwapa, and Buchi Emecheta.

Grace Ogot, Okot P'Bitek, Nruddin Farah, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Nadine Gordimer, Alex LaGuma, Dennis Brutus, Matsemela Manaka, Sipho Sepamla, Thomas Mfolo, and others are well-known writers from East and South Africa.

Wole Soyinka was born in Nigeria's Abeokuta. His father was the head of a school and a clergyman in the Anglican Church. His mother was a prominent member of the women's liberation movement and the owner of a store. His ancestors are Yoruba, whose way of life has impacted Soyinka's writing. Soyinka worked at a theater in London after completing his education in Nigeria and the UK. He now spends most of his time living overseas, particularly in the US, where he has held professorships at many universities.

This is partly due to his sharp criticism of the political regimes in Nigeria. Six kids are raised by Soyinka. Wole Soyinka is most famous for his playwriting. He has worked as an actor and in theaters in Nigeria and Great Britain in addition to his literary profession. Additionally, he has written poetry, novels, and articles. Although Soyinka writes in English, the Yoruba culture of his native Nigeria and its myths, tales, and rituals are deeply ingrained in his writing. His writing also draws inspiration from Western traditions, including modernist play and classical tragedies.

South African novelist and short-story writer Nadine Gordimer's main themes in her works were alienation and exile. In 1991, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Gordimer began writing at the age of nine, and at the age of fifteen, she had her first piece published in a magazine. Her extensive reading exposed her to the world on the other side of apartheid, the government-sanctioned practice of racial segregation in South Africa, and over time, this learning led to a strong political opposition to apartheid. During the 1960s and 1970s, she lectured and taught at a number of American schools in addition to writing. There are books, short tales, and essays written by Nadine Gordimer. The backdrop for Gordimer's later works, written in the 1990s, is the liberated South Africa, whereas her earlier works, written in the 1960s and 1970s, are set against the backdrop of the developing resistance movement against apartheid. Her narratives consistently place the experiences of particular people in connection to constraints and structures from without. Gordimer's literary creations as a whole produce vivid imagery of South Africa's historical evolution.

In the post-colonial era, the field of gender has been of much debate and many seminal works have been based upon it. Different people have treated women as the others, colonized people, deprived people and the fairer sex has time and again suffered the politics of oppression and suppression. The concept of gendered subaltern has been of much consequence which implies that women have been doubly subalternized first on the basis of nationality; the other, on the basis of gender. When we look back in the history we could find the proof for the sufferings of women. Even though women have performed the role of mother, sister, daughter, wife and others, they are treated as slaves. Even if the world change or the political parties, country rules, system change, nobody can deny that women were marginalized in history.

Gender disparity still exists in the world. Being born as women in the world, one has to face gender discrimination in every phase of life. When we look at the household level women stick to their household chores, raising their children and looking after their families and amidst all these, they are never bothered about their education degrees or their job profile. When it comes to work place level, many men do not allow their women to work and it is also observed that the ration of working men is higher than that of girls.

Women get paid less for doing the same work at her place of employment and have fewer access to job prospects. Women are often viewed as an item that carries all the burdens. A gorgeous girl is always viewed as a target by males to be seduced. Men consistently outweigh women in all spheres, including social, political, economic, and emotional ones. These features are reflected in the works of subaltern literature.

Lion and the Jewel:

In the 1960s, Sidi, a young lady living in a remote Nigerian town, must choose a husband. Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* narrates her story. Lakunle, a teacher, and Baroka, the village's Bale, or senior authority figure, are her top two choices. The opening scene, "Morning," occurs outside the school. When Sidi passes by carrying a pail of water on her head, Lakunle runs outside to reprimand her and say that doing so will harm her neck. Lakunle then chastises Sidi for wearing inappropriate clothing. When Lakunle expresses an interest in getting married to Sidi, she responds that she will do it whenever he likes as long as he pays the "bride-price". Lakunle refuses to pay for a wife, claiming that it is insulting to do so.

Sidi is informed that a guy solely known as The Stranger has returned to the village by several of the villagers who enter the stage. The Stranger shot pictures of Sidi during his previous visit to the community, and he has since returned bearing a copy of the magazine that features Sidi's images. The villagers tell Sidi that she appears to be really attractive in the magazine. The villagers band together to perform a mimed/dance performance recounting The Stranger's earlier visit to the community. Baroka briefly interrupts the act, which he subsequently continues after he joins in. After the concert, Sidi pulls Lakunle off to see The Stranger so she may check out her picture in the publication. Baroka contemplates aloud about how long it had been since he last took a wife while alone on stage.

In the second scene, "Noon," a road in Ilujinle is the setting. To Lakunle's dismay, Baroka's eldest wife, Sadiku, approaches Sidi and informs her that he wants to marry her. Sidi declares that she is now too good to marry Lakunle and that she is also too fine to marry Baroka after discovering her photos in the magazine. Lakunle performs a mimed dance as he relates the tale of how Baroka thwarted an effort to construct a railway line close to Ilujinle.

Sadiku returns to the scene at Baroka's palace to inform Baroka that Sidi has rejected his proposal. Baroka admits to Sadiku that he has lost his sexual ability and had hoped that getting married to a young woman would help. Sadiku is forced to swear by Baroka not to inform anyone about his impotence. The news of Baroka's impotence is joyfully celebrated by Sadiku in the last scene, "Night," where she also informs Sidi about it. Sidi makes the decision to go see Baroka so she can mock him internally.

Lakunle is against this plan because he thinks Baroka would attack Sidi if he discovers that she is making fun of him. When Sidi comes in Baroka's palace, Baroka pretends to be unaware that Sadiku has been asking Sidi to marry him. Baroka informs Sidi of his intentions for the hamlet to produce its own stamps and assures her that her image will be used on them, making her face well-known throughout the nation.

Sadiku and Lakunle attend a mimed dance performance in the hamlet as word of Baroka's impotence is circulated. Sidi returns to them sobbing uncontrollably. Sidi tells Sadiku that she is no longer a virgin, and Lakunle thinks that she has been sexually assaulted. Despite this, Lakunle declares that he would wed Sidi, and Sidi flees. After following Sidi, Sadiku goes back to Lakunle. Sidi is getting ready for a wedding, Sadiku informs Lakunle. Lakunle, who believes that things are going too quickly, is shocked by this news. Lakunle is ridiculed by Sidi when he returns for thinking she would wed him. Baroka, who had pretended to be impotent in order to get Sidi to visit him, learns of Sidi's intention to wed him. Sidi sings as she leaves the stage.

July's People:

The Smales family includes Bam, Maureen, Royce, Victor, and Gina. Their male servant is named July. Under July's guidance, the white family fled the battle in their village in the Smales' bakkie. When rioting breaks out in the Smale family's community, they leave their cozy suburban house and turn to their servant, July, who provides them with a path to safety. They travel for three days before arriving in July's hamlet and moving into his mother's hut, much to his mother's chagrin.

The Smales' difficulties adjusting to life in the country and without their former helper. They have to get used to living without even the most basic conveniences found in suburbs, like hot water for a bath. Car seats are being used as beds in place of the master suite they originally had. They fight the heat, fleas, insects, and mice while fervently awaiting word from home. July contends with the threat that this white family's presence poses to his life, his family, and his community. The Smales and July work hard over several weeks to reevaluate their connection. The Smales' understanding of master and servant, which was previously so distinct and well-known, is now hazy and poorly defined. While simultaneously attempting to maintain control over July and his decisions, Maureen concurrently offers to take on more responsibility. July is nearly at his breaking point due to the conflict in his family and the unwelcome attention from the general public. When the village leader learns of their presence, he calls them over to talk.

The nearby mine closes as the violence draws closer to the isolated community. The book is over without having a clear resolution. A plane lands in the community. It's unclear if the plane is an ally or an opponent. It doesn't seem to matter to Maureen. Without giving her husband and three young children a second thought, she rushes for the plane.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher uses *Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka and *July's People* by Nadine Gordimer as the primary source and the entirety of the work is assessed in the light of subaltern theory and how it influences people.

The article "A Study of Wole Soyinka's play *The Lion and the Jewel* in the light of cultures in conflict" by Nadia Maher Ibrahim Moawad examines the conflict between cultures in Nigeria and western society as represented in Wole Soyinka's play *Lion and the Jewel*. The study shows the relationship between different cultures.

"A Study of Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* from the perspectives of New Historicism" by Ashish Negi attempts to see July's people through the lances of new historicist to analyse the testimonial socio cultural structure and mindset of black and white people at that time. The researcher also discourses the different perspectives in the novel along with a parallel study of other social documents.

III. METHODOLOGY

The novel "*July's People*" and the play "*Lion and the Jewel*" is used as a primary source and secondary materials include a few texts on subaltern theory stating that the women in both "*Lion and the Jewel*" and "*July's People*" are submissive to others.

They are subalterned and marginalized. It also says that women stick to the culture and tradition where they are subjugated and are bound to do all the household chores. This research probes into the following questions.

- Do these works fit into subaltern theory?
- Did the main character recognize being subaltern and overcome suppression?
- Does the article address important subaltern themes like oppression, caste, gender discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, class distinction, and racial feelings?

The Concept of Subaltern theory:

The word "subaltern" describes and identifies colonial inhabitants who are socially, politically, and geographically excluded from an imperial colony's power structure as well as from the metropolitan motherland of an empire in postcolonial studies and critical theory. In order to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics, Antonio Gramsci coined the word "subaltern" to describe the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces particular individuals and social groups from the socio-economic structures of society. Through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group of historians, who explored the political-actor roles of the common people who make up the mass population rather than re-exploring the political-actor roles of the social and economic elites in the history of India, the terms subaltern and subaltern studies entered the lexicon of post-colonial studies.

Wole Soyinka's African play "Lion and the Jewel" can be utilized as a model to depict the women as doubly transformed individuals. The Lion and the Jewel is essentially a war of the sexes because it centers on the struggle to gain Sidi's hand in marriage. As a result, the play raises several issues on the nature of either sex's power, including why men or women are powerful, how they acquired that power in the first place, and how they either preserve or lose it.

The men who are fighting for Sidi simply regard her as a prize of great beauty. Sidi is only valued for her beauty and virginity by Baroka and Lakunle. The men in *The Lion and the Jewel*, on the other hand, place value in themselves and in what they are capable of doing or have already accomplished. Lakunle, for instance, places a high value on education and aspires to bring Christianity, modernity, and education to Ilujinle, whereas Baroka places a high value on his duties as the Bale of Ilujinle, which include keeping his people safe and enhancing his reputation by having numerous wives and children.

Sidi is a diamond to both Baroka and Lakunle—a priceless item that may tease and upset the men, but nevertheless an object. Lakunle desires Sidi's marriage in order to better embody modernity by having a modern spouse who dons high heels and lipstick. The same is true for Baroka, who desires Sidi as his wife to complete his harem. Sidi will also be the diamond of Baroka's wives, though it's unknown if he'll honor his word that she'll be his last wife. Therefore, for both men, marrying Sidi represents their rank as well as their strength, virility, and the superiority of their separate lifestyles. Furthermore, the play's conclusion implies that Lakunle doesn't even need Sidi in particular to fulfill his desire for a contemporary wife—a wife who will make him appear more contemporary—as he shifts his focus to the following woman who dances at him. Lakunle suggests that even if Sidi could have been a desirable prize, he can achieve his aim of having a modern wife by getting married to any lady who is capable of carrying out the duties. This reduces women in general to objects who must serve as their husbands' mere props.

But the idea of turning weaker individuals into things also works the other way. Sadiku dances joyfully around a statue of Baroka and cries that women have won the struggle against males when she begins to believe Baroka's claim that his manhood virility is disappeared. She understands that Baroka's status as a leader in the community is dependent on his capacity for sexual activity and childbearing, and she holds the view that when this particular power is lost, all of Baroka's power will follow, leaving his wives, who are still able to engage in sexual activity and give birth, in control. In this instance, Baroka is reduced to being represented by a physical item, the statue, as he appears to have lost what gives him strength. The play contends that there is a significant distinction between Baroka's frailty being symbolized by an object and the actual treatment of women as objects. Remember that Sadiku cannot publicly celebrate her win while she dances around the statue of Baroka. She is allowed to celebrate in secret and make fun of Baroka's likeness, but not the real Baroka. In contrast, throughout the play, Sidi, Sadiku, and other female villagers are tormented, mocked, and demeaned in front of them. They are grabbed, fondled, raped, and made to feel inferior simply because they are female. The male characters don't have to privately mock inanimate items because their culture permits them to treat women like objects and degrade them to such, regardless of how they interact with modernity or tradition.

Another African work, "July's people" by Nadine Gordimer, might be cited to support the idea that women are doubly oppressed as a people. Even with *July's People*, there are a variety of gender roles and disparities that are apparent. Two relationships in the book are utilized to illustrate these prejudices and disparities. The first connection is between Bam and Maureen, his wife. They have a relationship that is characteristic of a patriarchal household.

While the wife is in charge of the home and subservient to the husband, the husband is dominating and in command. The first indication of this is in the stuff they want to bring from home. While Bam brings the radio and the rifle, two generally masculine tools, Maureen provides oranges and toilet paper, which are household items. The majority of machinery is sex-based. Bam operates the bakkie since only men can comprehend it.

Maureen is supposed to tune the radio, but the one time she attempts, she is unable to do it. Guns have long been seen as phallic things, an extension of one's manhood, and as a man's play and tool.

Gordimer establishes the gender roles in the narrative very early on with concepts as basic as the stuff they decided to carry. Bam is in charge of speaking on behalf of his family when they go to the village chief to ask for the approval they need to remain there. Maureen doesn't need to speak and shouldn't at all. Bam approaches this work naturally since he sees it as part of his manly duty.

He acts and thinks in a way that benefits his entire family. Bam assumes the responsibility of providing for the black people because he is a white male and should be able to feel superior to the residents of the inferior village, while Maureen is practically imprisoned in the mud house. He performs a variety of tasks, including fixing broken objects with his tools, building a water collection tank for convenient access, and fishing. When he was able to successfully shoot two warthogs for the town that was the pinnacle of his provider role and the accomplishment in which he took the most delight.

July and his wife represent the second relationship in the book that highlights gender norms and disparities. Black families may have a semi-matriarchal system, or at least one that completely takes into account both points of view, in contrast to the patriarchal system used by white families. According to Andre Brink, black women acquire power in their communities through their gender while white women receive all of their power from being white. Given that black men have been emasculated by labels like "boy" used by white society, it is simpler for a black woman to assert herself in the relationship.

Although there is potential for a more equitable connection between husband and wife, it appears that July is still in command to a large extent. He pays attention to her worries about the Smales but ultimately decides to let them stay on his own. The majority of the job is likewise done by the women in the hamlet. Even under the strongly patriarchal system of the Smales, they perform work that is arguably too demanding for a woman. The males typically spend the most of the year away, thus they must do all the work. The existence of a matriarchal system is made possible by this lack.

When the man is at home, he is in command, but it might be challenging to convince the woman to give up the authority she once held. When July chooses the incorrect chicken to kill, the women are able to correct him. The status of the husband and wife relationship becomes "increasingly precarious" as a result of this.

IV. CONCLUSION

With the help of these references, we were able to see how gender discrimination still exists now, despite the fact that this century speaks of empowering women, how women are double marginalized, oppressed, and oppressors. This approach blatantly highlights the influence of tradition and society, which keeps women in servitude to the will of men.

Additionally, it demonstrates the connections between patriarchy and gender-based violence as well as how women actively support male dominance. While patriarchal regimes can generally rely on the quiet and cooperation of women, some women speak out against this abuse on a personal basis.

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