
A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PROTAGONIST'S FAMILY LIFE IN NADINE GORDIMER'S POLITICAL NOVEL BURGER'S DAUGHTER

D.Gururaj¹

Research Scholar

Assistant Professor of English

C Kandaswamy Naidu College, Anna Nagar

Dr.K. Thiyagarajan²

Research Supervisor

Associate Professor, and

Head Department of English

Sir Theagaraya College

Paper Received on 13-05-2023, Accepted on 14-06-2023,

Published on 15-06-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.165

Abstract:

Nadine Gordimer, the South African Female writer, has written several novels focusing on the impact of the apartheid system in different dimensions. Moreover, this novel, Burger's Daughter, is one of its kind. In this novel, the political issues and anti-apartheid effects on society, as well as individuals, have been portrayed by the author. The protagonist and her Father are concretely fighting for the Black's rights in their land. The protagonist, her Father, and other family members suffered greatly during their protest against the Whites. Moreover, the protest paved the way for some killings of natives. Some people migrated to other places and returned to fight because of their affinity to their native land. So, in this paper, the nature of violence and how it affected the everyday life of the protagonist and her entire family are also described elaborately. Further, the plight of migrated people and the cause and effect of killing the protesters have also been narrated neatly.

Keywords: Politics, Anti-apartheid, Black's Rights, Suffering, Killings and Impact of Protest.

The theme of Burger's Daughter is mainly the consciousness of the Black, which became the most popular in South African society. The Black has made a principle among themselves of being conscious of the difference in society and happenings against them (Nadine Gordimer 77). This consciousness of Black brought a drastic change in their attitude towards the White that is predicted in the novel. Bassie and Rosa are childhood friends, and Rosa considers Bassie to be her brother. When Burger dies, both of them get separated. Bassie goes to London, and Rosa joins the French apartheid movement, where she also makes friends with another exile. Rosa meets Bassie at the exile party. However, Rosa feels sad about Bassie's behavior towards her. He refuses his identity with Rosa. Bassie makes his identity with a new name; shocked by his attitude, Rosa is quite depressed. From the behavior of Bassie, Gordimer predicts that Black has their consciousness in society, and they raise their voice against White. The Black people have the quality of leadership in the novel. In this

novel, Bassie rejects false brotherhood and also betrays Burger.

Nadine Gordimer in Burger's *Daughter* illustrates how the White revolutionaries were involved in the fight against Black freedom in Burger's world. The background of the novel, as per Gordimer's prediction, happened from the events of the Sharpeville, Soweto, and the Black Consciousness movement. The riot that happened in Soweto remembers the men, women, and children (Lazerson 44). The Soweto riot occurred in 1976 when thousands of Black schoolchildren protested against Afrikaans as the language in a Black school. The protest was initially polite and became fierce when two children were shot dead. Hundreds of children, men, and women were killed in the violence.

The violence showed their anger towards the government about the suffering of their elders with White. In order to have a brief discussion of the event to point out, the shift of power by Black towards the White is evident in Burger's *Daughter*. The actual White liberal explains to the other White to accept the culture of the future majority rule. The Black should join together along with the White liberals to fight against the inequality prevailing in South Africa.

The novel *Burger's Daughter* evaluates the revolution of the White liberals towards the ease of Black people. The Black had a different opinion on the Sharpeville

incident. The situation was a worse incident, which gave them less hope for their liberalization from the White. From the Sharpeville incident, the Black in the novel predicts that the White liberals could not do anything for them. The calendar of the year for the revolt was given to the Sharpeville incident, which was so brutal. Sharpeville is the main background for the birth of the novel *Burger's Daughter*. Besides, the Soweto incident pictures the children's revolt against their parents. Its motive is the same as that of Rosa towards her Father.

The main challenge undergone in the novel is the Black consciousness that starts with the students rejecting class at Fats Mange protest against class discrimination in South Africa. The speaker Duma Dhladhla dismisses the boy saying, "This and this should happen and cannot happen because of that and that. These theories do not fit us. We are not interested. You have been talking this shit before I was born." (Gordimer 55)

The boy, Bassie, rejects the relationship with White and says his Father also died in prison, the same way as a burger; but nobody knew him. He is also a liberal, indeed. As a result, the White is always given identity and not the Black (Head 17). The Black can only know what the Black wants. Dominic Head says the insistence by Zewlinzima (Baasie) on his identity seems to be the comical aspect of a vitriolic attack that finally pushes Rosa to consolidate the redefinition of her own identity.

The identity of Bassie was so hurtful to Rosa in an instant, so she consolidated and identified herself. The novel reveals the liberalism of the Black from the White domination. The story is about the activist against apartheid, Lionel Burger, the communist, and the Father of a young girl. In her story, the author portrays the life of a revolutionary, Bram Fischer, who matches the Lionel Burger character. Bram Fischer is a White revolutionary who fought for the liberalization of the Black and disappeared from the country facing charges of treason in 1965, and Later he was found underground; Nadine Gordimer was an admirer of Bram Fischer, and she wrote her novel during this incident, and her novels evidence the addition of Bram in any of her novel.

Lionel Burger and his associates realized the Sharpeville incident, which made them White liberals fight against the violence of the apartheid system in South African Society. Their main goal was to give the Black a better future (Ettin 17). A Burger is an Afrikaner by birth and staunch nationalist but later gives up his people by becoming a communist in South Africa in late 1920. He has done much for his party by joining more operations with his communist party. At the time of the suppression in the party, he remained essential in the committee. During this suppression, he was arrested and later killed in prison. In her novel, Gordimer describes the character of Lionel Burger as a representative of the revolutionary society.

Here, *Burger's Daughter* is mainly concerned about the historical movement of the South African revolution. The commitment to politics is a more challenging part performed by Rosa Burger. When the White girl is rejected by her childhood friend Bassie, she considers her brother in the root development of her political interest. She likes to engage in the political movement like her Father did. The revolution began in 1970. The Soweto revolt made the Black conscious of the present situation. Rosa was a young girl when the Sharpeville incident occurred, as she could not differentiate the incidents in the Burgers' house.

Rosa, the leading character in the novel, mainly talks about Black consciousness. Rosa and Bassie are considered the most historical people in the novel as a historical event separates them. They also meet through history. They were separated because of the Black consciousness of the past. The commitment of the Black consciousness is towards reconciliation and revolution to analyze the situation of the Black. Rosa's direct challenge was reassessing her Father's ideology, and she returned to her homeland, South Africa, to fight as an extreme liberal. *Burger's Daughter* is a response to the historical events of Sharpeville and Soweto. The main destiny of this historical event is to give Black people a bright future.

The relationship between Father, mother, stepmother, brother, and sister is explained pleasantly. Rosa is the Daughter

of the White Afrikaner communist. In the novel, Rosa is the leading character. The entire novel is a question of Rosa's dilemma (Clingman 77). Rosa can only rely on other liberals like her. Burger's fight for the political domination of one over the other is discussed in the entire novel. Rosa is a faithful daughter to her Father. Rosa looks like her mother in the household when she supports her Father in all aspects. In Burger House, children are given full support to help their parents in their personal and official life. Rosa is an excellent support from her mother to her Father. Rosa's parents believe she is in love with the novel, which is unsuitable for their imagination. Throughout the novel, Rosa moves from prison to prison. The novel starts with Rosa, a little girl 14 years old, and later in the novel, Flora says, "She looked like a little girl... About fourteen (BD 360). In the eyes of the faithful, Rosa has not changed at all. She is still her Father's Daughter and is living out the historical destiny prepared for her by him. Throughout her life, she has been identified as Lionel Burger's Daughter, "I have no passport because I am my father's daughter." (Gordimer 66)

The above quote describes Rosa as a child even at the novel's end because she follows her Father's ideology. She is the Daughter of a father whose destiny is designed for her after him. Throughout the novel, she is identified as the Burger's Daughter. She says she has no passport because she is a Burger's Daughter.

In the middle, Rosa decides to move from her Father's political ideology and goes to Europe. Later she returns and takes up her Father's wish. Stefan Clingman States, "Literally Rosa ends up in solitary confinement, but she is solitary in a different way as well. Burger's Daughter reconnects with the tradition of her father" (88). One striking motif speaking literally in the novel, Rosa leads a lonely life, but later, she returns to her Father's political ideology as well. A similar incident happens in Rosa's life as in the children's revolt against their parents in Soweto. Besides, she is falsely betrothed with a prisoner to send messages from prison to outside. Rosa defects from her and goes to London to lead a personal life but later returns to renew her Father's love; Rosa demonstrates the primary motive of the improvement.

When the novel's second part comes into the picture, Rosa goes to France to live with her stepmother, Kayat. With the help of her stepmother, Rosa enters a new world free from political responsibility. She is freed from South Africa; she beautifully enjoys her own emotions. She is in a dream world in South France where she enjoys her life in the personal way she wants. Rosa has a beautiful life in France, pampered by her stepmother. The relationship between Conrad and her is also a temporary one for Rosa. Conrad's visit is on Noel's farm, and the house is used when their parents are in jail; Conrad is not affiliated with the political relationship but relies on the physiological aspects. The relationship between Rosa and Conrad comes to an end.

The relationship of a virtual brother Bassie is brought into the Burger's house because of his Father's arrest in politics. They both grow up together like brother and sister in the Burger House. Later they are taken apart after the death of the Burger. After years, Rosa meets Bassie at the party and identifies him. However, Bassie ignores her and tells her that his name is not Bassie; instead, he says he is no longer Rosa's Bassie. He regrets the false parental and brotherhood he had with Rosa's family (Clingman 77). They were separated for some Black consciousness in the country. The relationship one can see here is the hate that is between the two siblings. This hate makes Rosa a White reassessment in the Black conscious revolution. Rosa, after denial of her identity, comes to South Africa to continue her Father's journey to set the Blacks free (Gordimer 66).

The novel Burger's Daughter pictures the lead character as a sufferer due to her parent's ideology. She is raised in a family with the most common political atmosphere in the house. The characters in the novel perform political activities. The young also indulges in political activity right from her childhood without knowing the problem to be faced in the future (Jacques 11). At 18, upon her parents' request upon getting news from prison, she is engaged to Noel, the associate of her Father. She meets him in prison to exchange news from outside. She could not understand the importance until her Father's death because her Father brought her. Being the Daughter of the Burger, she is imprisoned and denied

her identity in the country. Right from 14, she has been under surveillance by her Father's ideology.

The novel ends with Rosa being the sufferer because of her parent's ideology. The sufferings undergone as a young girl are a lot, and she is refused to grant permission to work in Transkei, a Black homeland, because she is the Daughter of Lionel Burger. The bitter experience is her residency, where she moves from flat to another because of her Father's diplomacy and career associates.

The girl's stay in the country is a question of "the Blacks, do they know, are they grateful to Whites who endanger their lives for them" (BD 18).

The above sentence was the question to Rosa that the Blacks are ungrateful to the Whites who give their lives for them. She acknowledges the photographer Old Geer as "I do not know how I look when I am being used, an object of inquiry, regarded respectfully, a notebook in hand" (BD 100). The above sentence is an acknowledgment by Rosa, and she says in the novel Burger's Daughter that she does not know how she looks when used by the people as an object of inquiry in regards to the respect which she has kept a notebook in hand. The South African government inhibits her from leading life frequently. The young girl's academic is also read out by the former force, where she is denied pursuing her college degree in law. Rosa says that she likes to be an instrument of her, that is, to

lead a life of her own without any restriction from other men's forces; instead, she wants to be herself.

Meanwhile, she also says that she has to be considered a subject instead of an object because she needs to know the reason for her denials. The causes should be based on her consequences and not on her outside. This shows Rosa's suffering because of her denial and because of her Father, an anti-apartheid communist. His ideology in setting the Black free makes the life of his Daughter more critical in enjoying privileges, but instead, the girl wants to be her Father's Daughter.

The first turning point in the girl's life is her Father's death, which awakens her to distance the relationship, "distancing her private enclosures of being" (BD 51). All the pressures and tensions have gone. She decides to go out of the country to lead a peaceful life. This shows how she suffered psychological pain as a young girl because they were White liberals. Rosa, with the help of Brand, gets out of South Africa to the most pleasant land, France, where her identity will be different, and her Father's political ideology will be thrown out. Rosa identifies her youthfulness once she enters France. She identifies Kayat, her Father's first wife, and stays with her. In France, she leads her own life, where no politics haunt the life of others. She says, "Nobody expects you to be more than you are" (BD 250). Rosa feels free from restrictions for the first time; she is happy to be in France, where she meets Mr. Bagnali. She indulges in a friendly

relationship with him, goes to the party, and enjoys her young youthful life how she needs to live.

Moreover, Rosa's next aim is to go to London, where she accidentally meets the rebels at a party. She meets the Black childhood sibling Bassie at the party for the first time after years, but Bassie betrays her. For the first time, Rosa explains her Father's identity and how he has suffered for the freedom of Black as she says, "everyone in the world must be told what a great hero he [Mr. Burger] was and how much he suffered for the Blacks." (Gordimer 320).

Rosa's aspiration changes by Bassie's words as she understands the agony of suffering by the Black. Hence, she returns to her homeland for the liberalization of the Black and to fight against apartheid. Rosa decides to end the apartheid by indulging in her Father's ideology to free the Black from the White apartheid system (Asma 5). The lead character identifies herself when she returns from England, making an end.

The heroine of the story comes to South Africa, which coincides with the Soweto incident, where she makes her identity as Burger's Daughter. Both Rosa and Burger's Daughter are inseparable. Her task as an activist is to come out of the past and live in the present to liberate the Black from the hands of the White. The main motive of Rosa is to end the suffering of the Black. To sum up, Nadine Gordimer narrates the violence and how that changed the living condition of the protagonist and her entire

family. Here, the novelist describes every incident in detail to echo the real inner feelings of Black people to live in their land peacefully.

References:

- Asma, Asma. *Private Life versus Political Clutches in Nadine Gordimer's Burger's Daughter*. Academia.edu, 7 Mar. 2015.
- Clingman, Stephen. *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1986.
- Ettin, Andrew Vogel. *Betrayals of the Body Politic: The Literary Commitments of Nadine*, University Press of Virginia, 1980.
- Gordimer, Nadine. *Burger's Daughter*. Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Head, Dominic. *Nadine Gordimer*. Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Katie Jacques. *Who Is Rosa? South African Literature*, Cambridge, UP, 2001.
- Lazerson, Joshua L. *Against the Tide: Whites in the Struggle Against Apartheid*. West View Press, 1994.

How to cite this article?

D.Gururaj,Dr.K. Thiyagarajan“ A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PROTAGONIST’S FAMILY LIFE IN NADINE GORDIMER’S POLITICAL NOVEL BURGER’S DAUGHTER”
Research Journal Of English (RJOE)8(2), PP:159-165-2023, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.2.165