

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction:

Racial conflicts are inevitable when contact occurs among different races. It arises when injustice or discrimination occurs based on racial factors among certain races. In fact, this is a reality of today's society. In literature, the White and the Black South African authors represent their sole points of view on the challenges they face in the prejudiced Southern African environment. It acts and works as a megaphone for authors to make their voices heard and to convince members of Southern Africa. The universal society observes their world from distinct liberal outlook. The White authors justify their actions and provide evidence of their superiority and power through literature. During the ages the White authors paint a dehumanizing picture of the Blacks in order to control their access to power and supremacy in South African society.

South African writers prefer Novel form of literature to depict their plight. So, the African novel occupies a central position in the criticism of colonial portrayal of the African continent and their people. It is used as a weapon to redress the immoral done with them in South Africa. The negative image about the Black South African writers is portrayed by the whites. But, it is reversed by the Blacks. Erhard Reckwitz comments in article, "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary", in the Journal, *Alternation* as following:

For as long as the black majority in South Africa was oppressed and was not in possession of institutionalized political power, literature as a kind of Ersatz medium was called upon to serve an important socio-political function. It was produced and read because it was an indispensable way of voicing the black's discontent with the state of affairs

prevailing at the time. It was thus a form of political opposition. (159)

Thus, the Writing became a primary tool in hands of the White and the Black South Africans. It is the representation of their unique standpoint on the challenges they face in the biased Southern Africa. In *Still Beating the Drum: Critical Perspective on Lewis Nkosi*, Stiebel and Gunner comments about the intention of writing fictions in South Africa as:

In the absence of a single national identity, South African's "house of fiction," has so far served merely as a "war room" in which stories that are folded within offer, as someone has put it," a vision of nations thriving on conflict and an antagonistic conception of inter-ethnic relationships. (315)

Authors have the challenge to create a single, non-discriminatory, non-racial system through literature. It offers the same standards of education to all people. The writers like Doris Lessing, Lewis Nkosi, Ngugi Wa Thiango and Ezekiel Mphahlele tried to represent effects of racism and apartheid policy through their works. Initially, novels and short-stories are used to delineate it.

Doris Lessing's analysis of racism is found in the political and moral content of her short stories. She always tried to show racism and its effects on ordinary natives in South Africa. She delineated the picture of the black servant and white wealthy farmer through her novels and short stories. She states in *Collected African Stories: Vol. I* as:

African in their turn develops a hostile attitude towards Europeans. They grow to expect blame whether deservedly or not, and often assume an attitude of defensive aggressiveness towards the European, lying and cheating

being their only weapons against the superior authority and power of the European. (14)

Such, authors published their articles, essays in the famous South African Drum Magazine. It gives a way and right path to the South African authors. Through the literature South African people were awoken from sleep of slavery and laws of apartheid. Subsequently, such laws were abolished.

### **A) Life and Works of Lewis Nkosi**

Lewis Nkosi is recognized for his scholarly studies of contemporary aspects of South African society. His reputation is based on his acute and unflattering analysis of South African cultural production. Alf Wannenburgh comments in the review on the *Underground People* that, 'Lewis Nkosi is the youngest surviving of the writers who cut their literary teeth on Drum magazine in the late Sophia town culture of more than 40 years ago' (11).

He was born on December 5, 1936 in the Durban township of Chesterville at Natal province in South Africa. He, the only child of Samson and Christine, became orphaned at the age of 10 years. Therefore, he was brought up by his grandmother, Esther. He attended a boarding school run by religious missionaries in Zululand. It is a region of Natal province which is ancestral home of the Zulu people. He was a bright student in the school. His English teacher read out his compositions to the class as the standard to which other students should aspire. He got school-leaving matriculation certificate and success in his labouring job. At the age of 18, he joined the Zulu-language Durban newspaper *Ilanga Lase Natal*. He then enrolled in the M. L. Sultan

Technical College in Durban. His first job was as a journalist with a Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*.

Nkosi, in his early twenties, came to Johannesburg and joined as a reporter. He worked continuously for many years in Durban for the *Drum* magazine, which was established in 1950. *Drum* magazine is considered as the major vehicle for the Black writing in South Africa. It is famous for its daring exposition of apartheid conditions and presentation of colourful depictions of everyday life in Sophia town and other Black townships. It is the reflection of dynamic changes that were taking place among the new urban Black South African, Indian and coloured communities. This magazine is a very important platform for writers and photographers of new generation in South Africa. They wanted to change the way of Black's representation in the society and literature.

Nkosi wanted to become an author. But, meanwhile, he had to move to Johannesburg to become a trainee photographer for *Drum* magazine. This handsome and intelligent youngster from Durban joined the newsroom. He tried to expose the injustices of apartheid, often in the language of American writers and films.

Meanwhile, in 1960, Nkosi received a Neiman Fellowship to study at Harvard. When Nkosi was working for *Drum* and *Golden City Post* in Johannesburg, he met Nat Nakasa, an American who was the head of the Newman Foundation. Nat took Nkosi to Mr. White, who was the head of the institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg.

They met Mr. White and discussed with some African professors. Mr. White was impressed by Nkosi and Nat Nakasa also. In fact, he wanted to come to the townships with them, but he went back to the United States. He was acquainted with the people who were running the Newman Foundation. Mr. White told Nkosi to apply to the Foundation. Therefore, Nkosi had sent some specimens of his writing to the Newman

Foundation. After accepting these specimen copies, they invited Nkosi to Harvard. Therefore, he applied for permission to go to United States. He got exit permission and was told not to return to South Africa. Meanwhile, apartheid policy was ruling in South Africa. Being a Black, the South African Government refused to give him a passport. He became upset though he got a noteworthy chance. But, his friend Harold Wolpe helped him in such critical condition.

After rejection of giving the passport to Nkosi, Harold became very angry. Nkosi got heartless treatment from South African Government. Except the racism, there was no any strong reason behind the rejection of the passport. Harold threatened South African Government to register the case against them at the Supreme Court. Many blacks were refused to give passports but subsequently new bill was passed in parliament with helped to get the passport. Nkosi got permission to leave South Africa, for in receipt of new opportunities in foreign countries.

After completing his studies at Harvard, Nkosi went to London. He got a job in the British Broadcasting Corporation in London. He produced radio series 'Africa Abroad' from 1962 to 1965. He worked as an interviewer of major South African writers for the television programme. He worked as an editor of 'The New African Magazine' from 1965 to 1968 in London. He taught African, South African, and African-American literature at the University of Wyoming. As a writer, scholar, and citizen of the world, he offered the wealth of insight to Wyoming university students. He returned to South Africa in 2001.

Lewis Nkosi and his wife Bronwen have twin daughters, Joy and Louis. But they separated in 1973. Later than that he was living in Basel, Switzerland, with his partner, Astrid Starck, Professor of German and Yiddish language at the university de Haute Alsace Mulhouse Astrid has daughters and four grandchildren.

Nkosi was injured in a car crash in 2009. He slowly recovered from the wounds and spent most of his last movement on the bed. In his last days, his friends and fans collected the charity fund to pay his last medical bills. In the last movement, Astrid and his twin daughters were with him. He died in 2010.

Nkosi's talent has been recognized soon after the death. He was given a posthumous honorary Doctor of Technology Degree in Arts and Design by the Durban University of Technology. It is the recognition of his significant contributions as a prolific and profound South African writer and essayist. This award was accepted by his partner Prof. Astrid Starck.

A major theme of his works is an opposition to apartheid policy in South Africa. His work is an exploration of politics, relationships and sexuality in South Africa. He received less recognition as compare with his deftness and greatness of literary works than he deserved. In the post-apartheid era, his works gained critical attention across the Third world. Nkosi claims that the Black writers have given more attention to political commitment than to aesthetical commitment in their fiction.

Nkosi wrote critical essays, plays, novels and short stories on many contemporary issues like politics, history, economics, social evils, African culture and civilization. No other critic touches upon such diversified themes. His collection of essays include, *Home and Exile* (1965), *Home and exile and other selections* (1983), *The Transplanted Heart: Essays on South Africa* (1975) etc. His notable plays are *The Rhythm of Violence* (1964), *The Black Psychiatrist* (2001). *The Hold Up* is his famous collection of short stories. And his most famous and notable novels are *Mating Birds* (1986), *Underground People* (2002), and *Mandela's Ego* (2006).

Nkosi attempts to deal with the private and the public life in his novels. His first novel, *Mating Birds* (1986), tells the story of Sibiya, who spots the White woman across a fence on a segregated beach in Durban, South Africa. Sibiya is the Black boy and Veronica is the White girl. Consequently, apartheid rules keep them away from speaking to each other. But they begin a wordless flirtation across the fence. Soon, Sibiya becomes obsessed with the woman and follows her everywhere. He learns that she is a stripper at the local nightclub. One day, Sibiya follows at her bungalow. After seeing him, she undresses in front of the open door. She lies down on the bed. Sibiya enters her bedroom and has sex with her. Shortly after, they are discovered in naked condition. Veronica accuses a charge of raping on Sibiya. He is beaten, arrested, and sentenced to death. This is a cruel punishment to the Blacks for seducing the Whites one. But, soon after, the Black raises their voice against it. Thus, the novelist focuses hypocrisy of the superior class, it becomes the fine example of racism and simultaneously he comments on South Africa's contemporary system of apartheid.

Nkosi's second novel, *Underground People* (2002), shows the picture of the effects of apartheid policy on the South African people. The hero of a novel is the Black Tabanyane. His father, Cornelius Molapo, was a school teacher. He lives most of his life in Johannesburg. He fights against the apartheid government. He tries to live native's life and understood what is to be a native. The jitterbug dancer sheds all traces of his city flesh and his timorousness. He takes on the hardened life of a guerrilla fighter. He prepares to fight and is ready to die than give up on his people. The writer's intension is to show the real situation of contemporary South Africa. This is a great depiction of Lewis Noksi's ability to present satire on South Africa's apartheid system. It shows the

real picture of contemporary South African society. It is an attempt of presentation racism and racial conflict among South African peoples.

In the third novel, *Mandela's Ego* (2006), a young Zulu boy named Dumisani Gumede grows up in awe of the legendary of Nelson Mandela. He always thinks about his hero, Mandela. He is not only a great leader of the oppressed but also as a great seducer of women. He is a worshipper of Mandela. In this aspect he decides to emulate Mandela. He pursues a woman for a long time. He yields to his advances the day, the Black Pimpernel is captured. But, Mandela's imprisonment renders Dumisani into impotent for nearly 27 years. After many years, he got nerve power back with Mandela's release. Therefore, the Black hero fought against race and racism in South Africa like his real hero Nelson Mandela.

These above novels reveal the race, racial conflict and its effects on an ordinary people in South Africa. He is conscious about the fact, as black South African depicts through literature. There are certain pressures on the personal life of the people.

## **B) Influences on the Author**

Lewis Nkosi expressed views on virtually every aspect of African Literature. His opinions have often provoked considerable discussion and controversy. Nkosi spent his childhood in Durban Beachfront, which influenced him much. He was inspired by Dhloma brothers when he worked as a junior reporter in newspaper of Ilange Lase Natal. Again, he was influenced by the personality of Cyperian Ekwensi who was Pharmacist, writer and cultural Activist. In 1962, he attended first African conference, in Makerere, Uganda. There was discussion on the style of African literature for the coming decades. He was influenced by the atmosphere of Uganda. During that time, he found himself in the company of the continent's eminent persons like Chinua Achebe, Wole



Soyinka, Ngugiwa Thiong'o and his Drum colleague, Ezekiel Maphahlele etc. These are also nominated post-colonial, anti-apartheid writers and critics, too. Therefore, he was much influenced by their thoughts and views against racism and colonialism. He got inspiration from his wife Bronwen Ollerenshaw who helped him in his financial crisis.

Lewis Nkosi lived the most part of the life in the exile. Similarly, his life was influenced by the different movements, friends, places, books and relatives. Nkosi lived abroad in many countries. Consequently, he was influenced and inspired by the atmosphere where he went. The life and works of Mahatma Gandhi, Fatima Meer, Imraan Coovadia and Nelson Mandela inspired and influenced him much. These writers focused on racial conflict in South Africa. Stiebel and Gunner make further comments in the essay, "Introduction Lewis Nkosi-Inscriptions" as, 'Nkosi's love affair with the work of Faulkner, Kafka, Joyce and high modernism meant that he was able to some extent to withstand the crippling pressures of the consciousness 'of the otherness'' (xvii).

Nkosi was a writer and a professor of literature. His aim was to encourage and teach young students to write. He considered that students were a source of inspiration for his own writing. Therefore, he got an idea of his last novel, *Mandela's Ego* from his interaction with a group of students.

Nkosi was much influenced and impressed by the protagonist of the novel *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. Nkosi's career took off with his degree from Sussex University. African poetry specialist Gerald Moore was his inspiration there. With interviewer Zoe Molver, Nkosi reveals about his inspiration in an essay, "Interview with Lewis Nkosi.25 Oct.2002, Durban, South Africa" as:

Peter Abrahams, who was a colored South African, so it would appear to most people the most natural writer to have

influenced a young man. Yet, when I look back to my school days, I was a voracious reader and I was consuming writers like Alexandre Dumas. I remember that our school had most of his novels and I read everything about the, 'Three Musketeers', until there was nothing else to read, and there was the son of the Three Musketeers or something like that. And the power those talks about Europe, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dickens and so on. All of these excreted their own force were European writers creating stories like that, why not us, where are our writers who are able to do an equivalent performance?...He graduated to Henry James, Conrad and his real ancestor, William Faulkner. Because William Faulkner was writing about the South and he was so entangled in the relationship between black slaves and the white citizens of the South of the United States. (221-222)

Thus, he is influenced by Dhloma brothers, Cyperian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugiwa Thiong'o, his Drum colleagues, Ezekiel Maphahlele, Bronwen Ollerenshaw Faulkner, Kafka, Joyce, Dickens, Danial Dfoe and William Faulkner etc.

### **Review of the Relevant Literature**

Lewis Nkosi is an outstanding twentieth century South African writer. Many reviews, articles and books have discussed about Lewis Nkos is fictional world. South African Sunday Times says that he was "sharp and gifted writer with an irreverent take on life." Henry Louis Gates, Jr. says, "Nkosi is a voice that needs to be heard." There are other issues much discussed apart from racial conflict regarding the work of Lewis Nkosi.

Writer Denis Herstein comments in the newspaper, *The Guardian* that Nkosi was described by the Drums young writers as “the new Africans cut adrift from the tribal reserve---urbanized eager, fast talking and brash.” According to Neil Lazarus, the description fitted Nkosi as well. “Nkosi’s whole bearing as a writer.” He wrote, “Nkosi was decisively shaped by the years in Johannesburg working for the magazine.” Again Sherman W. Smith lauded: “Lewis Nkosi certainly must be one of the best writers out of Africa in our time.” Exiled after leaving South Africa to study at Harvard University, Lewis Nkosi has written short stories, plays, and criticism from his adopted home in England. Much of his work, however, deals with African literature and social concerns. “As a playwright and short-story writer, he is also the most subtly experimental of the black South African writers, many of whom are caught in the immediacy of the struggle against apartheid,” comments Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in the New York Times Book Review. According to Alistair Niven in British Book News Nkosi is “one of the architects of the contemporary black consciousness in South Africa.” <[http://www.biography.yourdictionary.com/lewis\\_Nkosi](http://www.biography.yourdictionary.com/lewis_Nkosi)>

Writer Oliphant claims, “Tossed about by the demonic irony of the world they find themselves in”. There is no stable order of meaning, only “the shifting verbal play of ideology, theories, fantasies and deceptions.” Raffaella Vaccini’s essay provides useful details on the genesis of the novel, on how it was sketched in rough while Nkosi was studying at the University of Sussex in 1978, and outlines the tussles and contradictors between the nationalist and can be said to feed into the ironic treatment of ideology in the fictional world of the novel. Stiebel and Gunner concludes Raffaella in *Still Beating the Drum: Critical Perspective on Lewis Nkosi*, “She directs us, too, to the hidden and intimate views of character that are

to be found in the folds of the irony, its layered observations of people caught in situations beyond their control.” (xxx)

Again Further comment in *Still Beating the Drum: Critical Perspective on Lewis Nkosi* as, “Nkosi has attracted some of the sharpest criticism [...] for what a few critics have called his sexism, even racial sexism.” (Stiebel and Gunner xxxii). Writer Denis Herbstein comments in the, *The Guardian* as, ‘Nkosi’s publisher, Annari van der Merwe, said that he was quite naughty, but endearingly so. For all his bravado, he was sensitive in a way that few men truly are. There was a real empathy with people-he had a very broad perspective from having lived in a different cultural environment for so many years.’

## **Research Design**

- **Hypothesis of the study**

The select novels of Lewis Nkosi’s *Underground People* (2002) and *Mandela’s Ego* (2006) are marked by the racial conflict.

- **Objectives of the study**

The present study in its various facets is subjected to,

- 1) To discuss the problems of racism in South Africa.
- 2) To analyze the racial conflict in the selected novels of Lewis Nkosi’s *Underground People* (2002), and *Mandela’s Ego* (2006).
- 3) To assess Lewis’s contribution to African literature.

- **Scope and Limitation of the study**

The aspect of racial conflict can be found in novels, short stories, articles, plays and films of Lewis Nkosi. However, it is not possible to study all forms of literature as it will widen the scope of the study. Therefore, the present study is limited only two selected novels *Underground People* and *Mandela’s Ego* written by Lewis Nkosi.

- **Research Methodology**

The focus of the study is laid on the close reading of the collected primary and secondary data available on the racial conflict in the select novels by Lewis Nkosi. Analytical and interpretative methods are used for the present research work. The novels are analyzed and interpreted in order to focus the racial conflict in Nkosi's novels, *Underground People* (2002) and *Mandela's Ego* (2006).

- **Significance of the study**

Lewis Nkosi wrote during the apartheid era in South Africa. He frankly depicts the issues about racism, racial segregation and racial conflict between Blacks and Whites in South African countries. He tries to go beyond color bar. These issues are reflected in his selected novels *Underground People* and *Mandela's Ego*. He fought and raised voice against apartheid policy in South Africa. For some period, his literature was banned in South Africa. His works represents pictorial reality of contemporary society in South Africa. His literature is a powerful tool of resistance for those oppressed by racist.

Thus, the study of South African Literature in general and Lewis Nkosi in particular is significant because it points out the difference between how White authors depict Black characters and Black authors depict white one.

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