BEGC-114

ASSIGNMENT: Postcolonial Literatures

Programme: BAEGH/2026-2027
Course Code: BEGC-114
Max. Marks: 100

Answer all questions. All questions carry equal marks.

(20 x 5 = 100)

1. Discuss the representation of community, history, and struggle in South African postcolonial texts prescribed in your course.
2. Critically examine the theme of memory and belonging in Derek Walcott's poetry.
3. Write a critical note on any one short story from the course, analyzing its theme and narrative technique in relation to postcolonial concerns.
4. Write a critical note on David Malouf as a postcolonial poet
5. Analyse the role of song, dance, music, and mime in Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal.*

1. Discuss the representation of community, history, and struggle in South African postcolonial texts prescribed in your course.

Answer

South African postcolonial writing examines how people attempt to live together in a society shaped by racial domination, unequal access to land and work, and the long struggle for political freedom. Community in these texts is never simply a harmonious group of neighbours. It is formed through power, language, kinship and shared hardship, but can also exclude people along racial, class and gender lines. Nadine Gordimer's July's People and Bessie Head's The Collector of Treasures are particularly useful for exploring these questions. Their different settings and techniques show that political change must be understood through everyday relationships as well as public events.

History and the reversal of power Gordimer's July's People imagines a revolutionary crisis in which the apartheid social order appears to be collapsing. The liberal white Smales family, previously protected by urban comfort and by July's domestic labour, must flee Johannesburg and seek shelter in the rural village of the man they had employed. Gordimer does not narrate a complete history of liberation. Instead, by placing the family inside an uncertain transition, she makes the historical inequalities of apartheid visible in ordinary encounters. The novel asks whether decent intentions alone can undo the habits and assumptions produced by generations of privilege.

July's village provides the Smales family with practical safety, but it is not a romantic refuge. Its people have their own domestic arrangements, scarce resources, obligations and fears. July's wife and mother must deal with guests whose presence changes the household without giving them an equal voice in the decision. Maureen and Bamford Smales gradually discover that their previous access to privacy, objects and services depended on an unequal system. The village therefore represents a community with a real social life, rather than merely a background against which the white family learns lessons.

The struggle over Bamford's vehicle is especially revealing. July controls or uses the bakkie and its keys, while the Smales family expects continuing rights over what it calls its property. Their disagreements turn an apparently practical question into a debate about ownership, authority and freedom of movement. July's old role as a servant no longer describes his position, but Maureen often speaks to him as if he should justify himself to her. The novel exposes how a hierarchical past survives in gestures and speech even when material circumstances have changed. Dependence has been reversed, yet genuine mutual understanding remains difficult.