Alan Paton was born in Pietermaritzburgh on January 11, 1903. He was the eldest son of James Paton, a Scot from the Glasgow area, who came to South Africa in 1901 during the Anglo-Boer War. He was educated at Maritzburg College and Natal University. He taught for twelve years in schools till he got the post of Principal at the Diepkloof Reformatory in Johannesburg in 1935. He was there till 1948, during which time he worked tirelessly to turn this prison into a school. His efforts were not always appreciated. At one time it earned him a great deal of criticism from the editor of the Afrikaner newspaper Die Transvaaler, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, who later became the Prime Minister and refashioned South Africa according to the doctrines of race separation. Paton later helped to found
the Liberal Party of South Africa and became its President till 1968 when it was declared illegal. He died in April 1988 at the age of 85 in Botha's Hill, Natal. His campaign for justice in South Africa has earned him recognition and international honours. He has been awarded an Honorary D. Litt from Kenyan College, Rhodes, Harvard, Trent, Williamette, Natal, Michigan and Durban-Westville Universities as well as Honorary L.H.D. from Yale and La Salle Universities. He also received the American Freedom Award in 1960 and the Free Academy of Hamburg Award in 1961.


Paton, however, is not a literary giant even though Cry, The Beloved Country has been till today regarded as a representative novel and Too Late The Phalarope was chosen as 'Book of the month' in the USA, 1953. No doubt he is a forerunner of the South African literature, but Ashoke Sen, writing in The Telegraph of 7th February, 1992, states that "Chronologically, an examination of the South African
literary scene should start with Nadine Gordimer (b 1923) who won the Nobel Prize in 1991. Ms. Gordimer's first novel, *The Lying Days* was written in the same year as Paton's *Too Late The Phalarope*, five years after the publication of *Cry, The Beloved Country*. Another noteworthy name in South African literary circle is Athol Fuggard, whose plays portray racial tension and inequality. His works include *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1972), *The Island* (1972) and *My Africa, My Children* (1988). Sen has also mentioned names of other Black South African writers with an apology that their works are not easily available due to South African Censorship. Maybe this is one reason why Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* remains a symbol of South African literature in the world.

The pervading theme in Paton's writing is the effects of apartheid in the social, political and personal lives of the people of South Africa. Most of his characters and events are from real life and even the fictitious ones are inspired by or based upon real life. The locale of all his novels is South Africa and the subject is mainly the interaction between the Afrikaners and the Black and Coloured people and the devastating effect interaction has on the lives and emotions of the people.

Paton has untiringly campaigned for about thirty years for justice in South Africa where the Blacks and other
Coloured people suffer the most outrageous discriminations. Colour consciousness had arisen during the 19th century and particularly after the liberation of slaves in 1834. The Afrikaners have accepted their separateness as the will of God and the Dutch Reformed Churches officially supports apartheid by preaching the myth of an Afrikaner volk chosen by God.

In 1927, when the Nationalist-Labour Pact was in power, an Act was passed which prohibited extra marital relations between Europeans and Africans. From 1948 when the Nationalist and Afrikaner parties came to power, they immediately set to passing legislations to prohibit both illicit intercourse and marriage between Europeans and Coloureds. The Immorality Act of 1927 was amended in 1950 to include Coloureds. A prohibition of mixed Marriage Act was passed which made marriage between a white and a non-white a crime and marriage officers were held responsible to refuse to solemnize such marriages.

The Nationalist Party rode to power on the slogan of "Apartheid", a broad term meaning separation of the races, but which also implied 'baaskap' a political term in South Africa meaning white domination. The word 'Apartheid' was coined by Paul Sauer, who was chairman of a special sub-committee of the Nationalist Party appointed to draw up a programme for the 1948 general election. Dr. D.F. Malan, the leader of the party began with some of the more obvious
forms of separation that could be enforced without too many difficulties. Separate entries were decreed for whites and non-whites to railway stations and public buildings. Railway passengers were ordered to ride in separate coaches and Bills were introduced in Parliament providing for separate group areas and amenities of various kinds.

But in 1953, a new party called the Liberal Party was founded which included in its programme non-racialism, wide non-racial franchise and the abolition of all racial discriminations. As founder member of this party and as an English-speaking South African, Paton is often critical and disapproving in his writings about apartheid and white power. He argues convincingly that there is no justification for Afrikaner domination over the Black and Coloured races. He suggests in his novels that only love can rectify the damages and bridge the enormous racial chasm. The characters in his novels are faced with a dilemma that has riddled South Africa since the implementation of apartheid. Amidst the turbulence of all this, however, is Paton's great love for South Africa and his desire to save his beloved country.
END NOTES


5. Ibid., p.70.