

CHAPTER – III

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THE THEME OF RELATIONSHIPS

3.1 Family Relationships:

3.1.1 Introduction :

The family is a universally necessary social institution. It is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It is a first social unit which a newly born child comes into contact and also it is a major mediator between the individual and the society. The child comes to understand the social structure and his position in it through the mediating influence of the family. The family is essential for its four functions which are fundamental to human social life. They are- the sexual, the economic, the reproductive and the educational or socialization functions. These functions are integrated and connected with each other. Fulfillment of the sexual function leads to achievement of the reproductive function. These functions are necessary for the existence of the society. Without provision of them, the society would become extinct.

The family is a sub-system of the wider social system. It is linked to the wider system largely through the father's role in the occupational sphere. The father is supposed to be a provider in the family. His occupation determines the social status of the family as a whole. However, today we find women who are earning also play the role of provider. We find allocation of the roles according to sex within the family. The responsibility of bearing and rearing of children is given to the mother. This establishes prior close relationship between the mother and the child. Mother is responsible for the internal maintenance of the

domestic unit, the care of the children, the emotional support of her husband.

The family is the institute where the process of 'socialization' of the young takes place first. Socialization is a process whereby an individual personality becomes prepared to take an autonomous role in society. It is an interactive process in which the child learns to identify himself with other family members and internalizes the values. There is imposition of social norms on the child. The child is bestowed a social identity. The family teaches the child the limits of tolerated behaviour. It introduces him to the acceptable ideas of right and wrong.

The family differs considerably between classes, different parts of the world, different ethnic and religious groups. But in every society it is central institution and no institution has been devised yet to replace it. Generally, there are two types of family- 1) Joint family and 2) Nuclear family. In the joint family we find grandparents, their sons and daughter-in-laws and their grandchildren living together. Nowadays, nuclear family of husband, wife and their children is more common. Due to industrialization and urbanization, we find multi-generations living under one roof are separating and forming nuclear family.

The family is a social unit made up of various interactive relationships. The 'marriage' is central to the idea of the family in most of societies, as it formalizes and regularizes the relationship between family members. A good marriage relationship provides emotional security and warmth to both husband and wife. It is a source of emotional support and growth for the children also.

3.1.2 Nadine Gordimer's Treatment of the Theme of Family Relationships:

Husband-Wife Relationship:

Livingstone's Companions (1971):

'An Intruder':

The story deals with the short-lived happiness of a married young woman until she realizes her husband's real nature. Gordimer describes an innocent wife's deception by her perverse, immoral husband. But finally this betrayal transforms her into a strong, mature woman. James Seago, a very wicked man given to drinking, nightclub parties and sex manages to impress Mary, a tender, innocent young girl. James is a flirt and has married and broken up the marriages several times. He knows very well how to persuade the girls. Mary is a frail, delicate girl who has grown up in the warm protection of her mother. She is like an innocent child who has no idea of the outer world. She always feels the need to be protected by some adult. This very thing is perceived by James and used to persuade Mary to marry him. He impresses Mary with the 'gentleness and tenderness' while protecting her from other young men's crude, rough behaviour in a party. Along with Mary's innocence, James' maliciousness, Gordimer exposes overconfidence of Mary's mother, Mrs. Clegg. She is an artist- a painter who lives in her ivory tower and lacks practical knowledge. Gordimer ironically describes her 'modern' attitude with which she takes her daughter's sexual freedom for granted. She is impressed by James' frankness, candour and care-taking nature. She ignores James' reputation with women and consents for the marriage.

Gordimer depicts the sexual relationship between James and Mary not as an act of communion of two minds and bodies. Mary is too young to understand what is 'love-making'. For James, it is a game. Mary

is like a toy for him. Gordimer stresses Mary's timidity, shyness and James' lustful instincts-

She had never been warmed by lust. He had to coax her: 'My little marmoset, my little rabbit-nose, little teenage-doll, you will learn to like this, really you will ...' always using the simple words with which some shy pet is persuaded to drink a saucer of milk.(87)

James continues his lifestyle of- spending nights at nightclubs and sleeping whole day even after marriage. Mary dislikes it. But she is too gentle to reject accompanying him. Still she tries her best to make her 'home' pleasant and cosy. She decorates the house with silk curtains, dining table, chairs etc. Gordimer describes a married woman's expectations and yearnings. Mary is pregnant and she feels proud that no other wife of James has child. She is happy as she is going to be mother. She thinks about the forthcoming baby and the necessary provisions they should make for it. But James could not enjoy the simple, moral joys or could not accept the role of dutiful father or husband. He has played with the 'doll' enough and now he would throw it away.

Mary could not understand the perverse mechanism going on in James' mind. She realizes this only when an intruder has wrecked everything in their house. The wicked intruder has smeared filth on the cosy home-making of the living room and has made rags of silk cover and white muslin curtains. He has made chaos in an obscene pattern. The objects related with their private life have been turned upside down. There is a jeering pattern in the arrangement of garbage and the torn things. The mess is made to speak something, rather to threat her. Mary is filled with horror. At first, she is puzzled and aghast. James frequently

suggests her to think about the rational explanation of the intrusion. Then, suddenly, it dawns upon Mary that her husband himself is the intruder.

Gordimer presents us a transformed Mary after the 'realization'. The ugly reality suddenly changes her. She is not a delicate 'wife' seeking support from her husband. She is now a mother prepared to protect her child. Gordimer writes about the change in her-

But she was going to have a child, and- yes looking at him, she was grown-up now, suddenly, as some people are said to turn white-haired over night.(93)

'Rain-Queen' :

Gordimer presents to us an account of an adolescent girl's entering the sensuous world from her maiden, naïve world. She focuses on the girl's anxieties, embarrassment of the first sexual relationship. Now the girl is a grown up woman and she has had many lovers. But her first experience is like a dream from which she has never woken up. This sensual account forms the central theme of the story. But we find the sense of 'betrayal' underlying the whole account. Gordimer is mainly concerned with the girl's feelings and reflections. By using first person narration, Gordimer emphasizes the girl's perception of the events. The husband-wife relationship is presented to us through the girl's perception.

Jillie, a white South African girl of nineteen had come reluctantly to Congo with her parents. Her mother has forced her to leave behind her boy friend, Alan in Johannesburg. In Congo, Jillie developed a secret love affair with a married man, Marco Gatti who was working with her father. Marco was a man with 'adult confidence' who taught her how to behave as if nothing was between them. He behaved naturally with his wife, Eleanora and Jillie's parents. It is Jillie who feels embarrassment to

face Eleanora. Whenever she thought about her boy friend, Alan or Eleanora, she felt guilty of betrayal and infidelity. She tells us-

I alternately pitied him and underwent an intense tingling of betrayal- actually cringing away from myself in flesh.(149)

But Marco had not such guilt-consciousness. He continued to enjoy the game of squash with Jillie. Gordimer presents us here not only an unfaithful, deceitful husband but also points out his egotism. In Congo, during rainy season when it rains, it is a usual thing that Congolese find themselves a girl for the duration of a shower. Marco and Jillie too, had such relationship during the rain. Gordimer shows the male hypocrisy. When Jillie asked Marco how he would react to his wife's relationship with another man, Marco answered 'honestly'. He would be mad with jealousy if his wife sleep with another man.

Something Out There (1984):

'Sins of the Third Age':

Many of Gordimer's stories deal with the 'betrayal' in marital relationships. The present story deals with a husband's short-lived extra-marital relationship in the middle age. Here, Gordimer deals with it from the moral point of view. The word 'sins' in the title itself suggests her moral concern. Her conscience regarding fidelity between a husband and wife is revealed here. Peter and Mania met during the Second World War. Both had left their native countries due to the war. Their native places were destroyed in the war and there was no relative remained to

whom they could return. "Unfurnished, unpeopled by the past"(66) they married and started a new life.

Gordimer depicts a 'well-made' life of the modest planners. Peter and Mania were "enthusiastic, energetic, industrious and modestly ambitious."(67) They planned their life and worked hard to construct the life according to the planning. Mania was an interpreter at a conference centre. She learnt more languages qualifying her for the promotion. She had opportunities to travel to international conferences. Peter too, started as a medical representative. He studied electronics at night school for the technological expansion. He became an assistant sales manager in a multinational company. They brought up and educated their children well. Gordimer tells us that while doing all these things "they always had each other." (68)

Gordimer presents a happy, harmonious married life. Mania had been sent to Rome and Milan many times. Peter joined Mania whenever her period of duty was contiguous with a long weekend or his yearly holiday leave. After their frequent visits to Italy, Mania was attracted towards a mountainside farmhouse. It was a safe, unfashionable part of Italy and living was cheap there. Both decided to live there after their retirement. Gordimer emphasizes Mania's resourcefulness, ingenuity. It was Mania who saw the opportunity to settle in that place. She made the calculations to buy the house. They mortgaged their present house and bought that house. Peter's retirement came eighteen months before Mania's. He moved to Italy first to settle in with household goods. For the first time in their life they lived apart from each other.

Mania was doing everything to save money. She was preparing to go to her husband. Hitherto, everything was going smoothly according to their modest planning. But suddenly, a blow came to Mania in the form of Peter's affair. In Mania's absence he had developed

relationship with another woman. When he told Mania about this, she was very much hurt. It was a hard blow to her. Gordimer praises Mania's patience and steadfastness. She accepted the fact without any fuss and decided to live with him. Contrary to Mania, Gordimer presents Peter as inactive and indifferent to his wife's feelings. Time itself proved the falsity of the attraction. The affair was over. But it had made Peter more dejected and pale. Mania, going through emotional crisis and anguish managed to keep her equilibrium. Apparently she continued to live the calm, industrious and satisfied life. But the sense of 'bereft' would not leave her. She was hurt deep inside and the damage could not be undone.

'Terminal' :

Gordimer depicts here a very different kind of 'betrayal'. A husband betrays his wife by breaking the pact he has made with her. The wife is suffering from an incurable disease. When she learns that her disease is 'terminal', she forces her husband to make a pact with her. She makes him promise her that he will not prevent her from committing suicide; he will help her to come out of her suffering. The helpless husband has to agree with the pact.

The wife thinks the disease as dirt. The contraption is attached to her body. It is issued from the small wound. She has to deal with it alone. It is 'horribly private' and she has to suffer it alone. He could not share her sufferings. The wound is kept open to be sewn afterwards. Their friends consoled her that she would be 'whole' again. But she is doubtful about her cure. That is why, before going for the exploratory operation, she reaffirmed her pact. When it turns out to be 'terminal', she decides to commit suicide. She thinks, 'death' alone could free her from the sufferings. Before this, she had understood death as 'a deep sleep'. She also had understood that if one is not awakened from the

deep sleep, one will not be aware of it. Now, she wants the deep sleep but not the awakening from it. She has no fear of death, but has the fear of waking from it. That is why before going into that 'deep sleep', she writes a note for her husband- "Keep your promise. Don't have me revived." (101) But her husband does not keep the promise. He takes her to the hospital and has her awakened there. When she wakes up, his hand is in hers.

Jump and Other Stories (1991) :

'Home':

Gordimer portrays here the husband-wife relationship against the background of the liberation movement. She depicts the upheavals in the relationship while undergoing various circumstances. Teresa, a South African young girl from a dark family married Nils, a Swedish middle-aged man. They have been living happily since seven years. Both of them have their own reasons to marry each other. Teresa wanted to get rid of her family, the crowded ghetto, the suffocating servility and smothering religion there. She hated her mother's meekness and subservience. Nils came from the silent rooms of an only child. He was an ichthyologist. He married her to end his solitary routine in a glass bell among fish on the sea-bed. Gordimer describes the closeness between them as, "the special closeness of a couple who belonged to nobody else." (124)

Gordimer depicts a particular kind of relationship between the husband and wife. It is like the relationship between an elderly person and a child. The elderly person always thinks a child as a dependent person in need of support and comfort. The child is never thought to be on an equal level of capacity and maturity. Here, the husband treats the wife in this way. For example, Nils always addresses Teresa as 'Min lille

loppa' meaning 'little flea'. The news of the arrest of Teresa's mother, brother and sister filled her with anguish. She wept and trembled with sorrow and fear. Gordimer tells us how Nils tried to console her-

He listened and stroked her hair, sheltered her folded hand between his neck and shoulder as she cried and raged, pitying, blaming and cursing. (124)

They had always shared the discomfort of one another's small indispositions. This time also Nils tried to share her sufferings. But we find Nils sharing Teresa's sufferings, sorrows until she wept. The crisis transformed Teresa. She was no more the dependent, delicate and dazed woman. There were no more tears or trembling. She became strong, independent woman of action. She struggled for her mother's release. She spent all her spare time in meeting lawyers, magistrates, chiefs of police, government officials and consulting organizations concerned with the conditions of detainees. While she was doing all this, Nils found himself apart from her. He no more shared her anguish. Gordimer points out the reason why he failed to feel her feelings. Neither he shared her language nor did he share her background of poverty and servility. He was not a 'comrade' with her in the freedom struggle. Moreover, he thought that she was too young to like a middle-age husband. This lack of sharing made him suspect his wife of having a young lover who might be a comrade brought up in the same poverty. But finally he realized that it was not for the young lover she had left him alone, but for the dark family. He also realized that he neither belonged to her family nor to her country.

‘A Journey’ :

The story deals with a split created in husband-wife relationship due to the husband's love affair. The love affair disturbs the happy family of the husband, the wife and their son. Gordimer describes the son's journey from immaturity to maturity in which he takes the role of his father. In fact, the conflict in the parents develops the son to take the responsibility at a premature stage. Gordimer uses multi-narration style to unravel the complex triangular relationship of the husband, the wife and their son. The three of them lived happily. They used to go for swimming. They had their private 'cat language' in which they exchanged their daily intimacies. They spoke using three different cat voices. But suddenly this 'cat language' stopped. There was silence in the house. The husband had love affair with another woman. He no more loved his wife. The wife felt forlorn in the need of comfort. But he could not understand her agony; rather he felt angry at her 'forlornness'. Once out of this anger, he made love to her and she conceived from it. As the act was only 'a flesh contact', it was shameful for both of them. It did not serve as a way of speaking to one another. It was more like a murder than a conception. It murdered the conversation between them.

The silence grew between them. The husband and the wife even did not want to see each other. The husband remained away from the house most of the time. The wife was alone in the house with the boy and the growing baby inside her. In the last month, when the baby was to born, he sent her away to her mother. He sent his son- an immature thirteen years old boy as her only companion. Gordimer tells us that he sent the son with her "when her own place was with her." (156)

The son was very much like mother not only in looks but also in the temperament. Gordimer emphasizes the affinity between the mother and the son from the very beginning. The boy could not

understand why there was silence between his parents. But he could understand his mother's agony. He was the only companion of his mother during her pregnancy. He saw how the baby inside her changed her body. When she gave birth to the baby, it was he who first saw the mother with the new-born baby. Thus, he really took the place of his father. He took care of his mother and the baby on their returning journey to his father. The husband was waiting for his wife. He was ready to accept her with the baby. He was ready at the airport to claim his wife and the baby. But there, he realized that the son had already taken his place. Gordimer describes it as -

But the boy is looking at him with the face of a man,
and turns back to the woman as if she is his woman,
and the baby his begetting. (158)

Parents-Children Relationship :

Livingstone's Companions (1971):

'The Bride of Christ' :

Here, we have a picture of a family of liberal parents and their adolescent children. Gordimer portrays Sidney Berger and Shirley Berger as the loving parents who skillfully treat their adolescent children full of excitement, impatience and confusion. Bergers are the liberal parents who allow their children to have their own way. But they do not leave their children alone on the way. If the children are going in wrong direction, they guide them. We find discussion between the parents and the children. The parents convince the children rather than imposing a decision upon them with the power of authority.

Gordimer finely portrays a mother-daughter relationship. Shirley handles the situation very delicately when her daughter Lyndall wants to be confirmed. Lyndall is an adolescent girl of sixteen. She wants to be a Christian because her friends are going to be. The parents realize that it is only out of attraction. But they do not oppose Lyndall outright. Shirley discusses with Lyndall. It was Shirley who had allowed Lyndall to go to Church with the other girls, just to see what it was all about. She brought her a book on comparative religion. She herself has read the books on the origin of Judaism and Christianity. She wants her daughter to read these books. But she knows that Lyndall had not read any of the books. Gordimer describes here the true liberalism. The family is Jew. But they do not believe in meaningless rituals and gatherings of the synagogue. They don't go to synagogue on Sunday only because all others go. The religion is a private matter of belief for them. They do not accept any religion for social reason. Shirley wants Lyndall to differentiate between the original doctrines, ethics of the religion and prevalent religious practices.

Through Shirley, Gordimer exposes the Church's discriminatory policy. Shirley explains to her daughter the discrepancy between the preaching and the actual following of it. The Church preaches 'brotherhood', but it doesn't encourage that brotherhood with a black man. Like all public places, the Church is also only for the white people. If there is a black person, he is given inferior treatment. Shirley reminds Lyndall of the violent past- Christian Nazis who massacred Jew or Dutch Reformed Church who sprinkled pious sentiments over the colour bar. She cites many examples of injustice. The white Christians who believe in 'brotherhood', do not think it wrong that their black 'brothers' had to carry a pass or were forced to live in ghetto. The church justifies colour bar and does many awful things in the name of Christ.

Shirley herself respects Christ and his teaching. But she can't forget the bloody past of Jews. She can't forget that she is a Jew. She allows Lyndall to be confirmed on some conditions. First, Lyndall would be a real Christian and not a social one and another, Lyndall would not give up her Jewish faith as well. Shirley tells Lyndall, "I'd want you to take the kicks from both sides."(162)

Gordimer delineates Lyndall's adolescent excitement. Lyndall accepts everything only out of that excitement. She promises her mother to be a real Christian without knowing what it is to be. Shirley promises to bear the responsibilities of both- a Jew and a Christian. Shirley could not dissuade her from being confirmed. Shirley and Sidney are not adamant parents doing tyrannies to their children. Lyndall is given the opportunity to learn by her own experience. She is confirmed and baptized accordingly. Shirley is present there on the occasion. But she is not like other mothers who give their children presents after their confirmation. She explains to Lyndall that instead of giving some present, they are sending a donation in Lyndall's name to the African Children's Feeding Scheme. Lyndall does not like it. But apparently she agrees to the idea and appreciates it. Initially, she follows all the religious rituals sincerely. She goes to Communion at the Church on the Sunday mornings. She does it all alone, as it is her own affair. On Christmas she attends Mass at early morning. She does all this to assure her mother that she is a real Christian. When the initial attraction is over, she begins to avoid the Church services. Also there are other temptations around luring the adolescent girl and distracting from the religious services. There are parties with the friends. On the day of Good Friday she gets up late at the morning due to last night's party. Shirley expects that she would go to the Church in the evening. But, there is a phone call from Lyndall's friend, Jean. Lyndall forgets all the services of the day, even though it is a Good

Strauss to explain to her daughter that one should carry his past experiences while progressing towards future. But her daughter does not believe in that. She even does not comprehend the citation. Gordimer says that there is only 'physical comprehension' at this moment. She describes it as-

Pattie saw that the skin of her mother's forehead would never have the shine of tautness again, the mother saw that little scars of adolescent turmoil had left their imperfections on the slightly sulky jaw-line that attracted men.(57)

Gordimer also points out the gap in one's outward behaviour may betray others about his feelings. Mrs. Aucamp is a liberal person and she is a writer too. She had once fought for the blacks. Her house is a gathering place for her white as well as black friends. They sit, discuss together. But Mrs. Aucamp is strictly against her daughter's marrying a black man. Gordimer points out the racial distrust. There is 'a credibility gap' between the blacks and the whites which prevents them mingling completely with each other.

Gordimer describes how the younger generation is 'advanced' in betraying their elders. Pattie and her friend Davy inform Mrs. Aucamp about the death of a girl friend. They lament over her death. Mrs. Aucamp naively believes that their lament is sincere and thinks that Pattie is very much upset due to the death. She understands that all their lament and weeping was a pretence only when her son Robbie explains to her how Pattie and Davy were yapping together before her arrival. He describes how Pattie has 'put on' the sorrow on her face. For Mrs.

Aucamp, her daughter's act is more incredible than the news of the girl's death.

'Abroad':

Gordimer depicts the relationship between a loving father and his ungrateful sons. She portrays here the middle class people with their modest wishes and ambitions. Mannie Swemmer, an old man lives alone in Bontebokspruit. His wife, Helena died of a diseased kidney, leaving him to bring up two little boys. Manie brought up his sons, Thys and Wills who now have gone to Northern Rhodesia to make their lives. Manie works as a motor mechanic and earns well. He spends his leisure time at a hotel where he has a good friend circle. On Sundays, he is always welcomed by his relatives. In early thirties, during the war, Manie had worked in Northern Rhodesia with the South African First Division. Manie feels now proud that he knows something of the world. He is happy that his employer depends upon his skill. He is satisfied with his modest salary. In spite of this, he feels lonely in his deep heart. Gordimer highlights Manie's loneliness. He hopes in vain that his sons would return to the home. In this hope, he never rented out their rooms. He takes care of his sons' things for example- Willie's collection of bottle-tops, his bike etc. but Thys and Wills do not care for their father's feelings and loneliness. They even do not bother to answer the father's letters. But still Manie always speaks proudly about the sons to his friends. When his friends say that the sons themselves should come and live with the father, he assures them that his sons are living abroad for better future.

Gordimer unfolds to us a father's compromising heart. At last, Manie himself decides to go to meet his sons. When he reaches there, he is received by his son Willie. But Willie does not welcome him warmly or enthusiastically. He does not even take him to his room. He

tells that he has left the previous job and now is living with a friend. Manie immediately compromises with reality and decides to live in a hotel room. As it is the period of Independence anniversary celebration, all hotel rooms are reserved already. He has to share a room with an Indian businessman. But the Indian man does not open the door for Manie when he returns to the room at late night. Manie gets insulting treatment. Already, he is very much hurt due to his son's callousness, ungratefulness and unlovingness. He gets offended by Willie's rough language and manners. All his expectations are shattered. But with the broad heart of a father he forgives his sons' unlovingness. Gordimer hints at a reason of their unlovingness. Thys and Willie had the motherless childhood. Manie also thinks that being without wife, his sons were not properly brought up by him.

Something Out There (1984):

'A Correspondence Course':

The story describes the relationship between a mother who thinks of herself to be a liberal person and her innocent daughter. Pat Haberman, a divorcee, in her fifties lives with her young daughter, Harriet. By the time Harriet was twenty, Pat had her degree and was working on a literacy programme by a liberal foundation. Now she is secretary to the Dean of the Medical School. Both, the mother and the daughter do jobs that are more than a way of earning a modest living. Harriet is studying for her Master's degree by correspondence and has already published a contribution to a symposium on 'Literacy and the Media'. Pat's hobby is gardening and she daily works in her garden for an hour when she comes home from work in the afternoons. Gordimer describes their well-to-do but artificial life, far away from the reality as-

The five-thirty to six-thirty hour is an illusion of peace in middle age just as the innocence of Cape thrush calls and the freshness of leaves spattered by water from the municipal supply is an illusion of undestroyed nature.(109)

They live in a quiet suburb, untouched and undisturbed by the social realities such as- the blacks- whites violent encounters or the black protests. Pat learns about it only through the newspapers. She has a romantic attraction for it, until it is beyond her gates. There is parallel description of Pat's tending and growing plants in her garden and bringing up her daughter inside the safe walls of her house. Harriet is an innocent young woman who relies on her mother for the understanding and interpretation of the events outside. When she receives a letter from Roland Carter, a political prisoner who has been detained since five years, she asks her mother about him. On seeing the letter, Pat is very much excited. She encourages Harriet to answer the letter. Pat feels proud that she is a liberal mother. She encourages her daughter to develop the correspondence with the prisoner. She does not read her daughter's letters as she respects her privacy. Pat views the correspondence as two young people with shared interests exchanging views on education in Africa. There could be political implications in the subject, but she does not worry about it.

Gordimer describes Pat's attitude towards the correspondence. Pat boastfully talks about it to her friends to prove her liberalism. The news of Roland Carter's escape from the prison fills her with excitement. She describes it to her daughter as an act of chivalry. Harriet, this time too, depends on her mother for the understanding of the

event. She innocently tries to help Roland by keeping a bag of clothes outside the gate at night. She does this secretly. Pat comes to know this. But she doesn't say anything to Harriet, as she does not want to embarrass her child. Gordimer exposes here, how people like Pat are unable to face reality. Pat's romantic excitement, illusions are over as she lands into reality. The excitement is replaced by fear when unexpectedly, the prisoner comes to her house. The game has turned real and Pat could not deal with the 'reality'.

Grandmother-Grandchildren Relationship :

Jump and Other Stories (1991) :

'The Ultimate Safari' :

Gordimer describes the relationship between a grandmother and her grandchildren against the background of civil wars in Mozambique. It is not a usual kind of relationship. The grandmother in this story is not described as giving gifts or telling bedtime stories to her grandchildren. What she does for them is far more than that. She not only saves their life from the violence of civil wars, but also strives hard to make their life better. Even in a refugee camp, she successfully tries to provide a quality life for them. Like all other refugees, she is not satisfied merely with the food, clothes and shelter given to them in the refugee tent. She is a strong woman of vision who educates her grandchildren in the most hostile circumstances.

Gordimer presents the anarchic situation during the civil wars through the narration of a ten years old girl child. It is realm of terror, insecurity and violence- the bandits looting villagers, burning the houses and killing the people. The girl's mother goes to shop to bring oil

and disappears. Their father has been fighting in the war. He, too, never returns. The girl and her siblings are left orphan. The bandits are running all over the places and creating chaos. The people run away from them like “chickens chased by dogs.” (33)

Gordimer gives a very heart-rending account of people's struggle for existence. The girl and her siblings are taken over by their grandparents. The grandmother decides to migrate with other people to another place “where there were no bandits and there was food.”(35) The expedition is very dangerous and difficult. While going through the Kruger Park- they have to hide themselves from wild animals and the police. There is nothing to eat and they are crushed under starvation and fear. The girl's grandfather disappears in the elephant grass. But they even could not stop long to find out him. The grandmother makes her mind to go further to save her grandchildren. They even have no time to shed tears for the grandfather.

Gordimer portrays the grandmother as a constructive person. The grandmother begins from a scratch. Even in the dark tent, she tries to lighten her grandchildren's life. She admits them to the school. She herself is literate woman. She can sign the card on which they get ration or clothes. Gordimer describes her efforts to provide better life to the children. She makes sleeping mats from the grass. She works as a labourer- carrying bricks and stones for the building. She makes the girl and her brother do their homework every afternoon before it gets dark as she does not afford candles. She has not bought herself a pair of shoes for church, but she has bought black school shoes and polish for the children. Every morning she makes them to polish the shoes properly. She sacrifices her own happiness and works hard for the children's bright future. In the dark tent, through her efforts she makes the children feel that they are in real house. The girl still expects to return to her home

where she could meet her mother and grandfather. But for the grandmother there is no home. Now what she wants is only to educate her grandchildren so that they will get job and earn money.

Sister-Sister Relationship:

Livingstone's Companions (1971):

'A Third Presence':

Gordimer portrays contrasting lives of two sisters. Though born to same parents, the two sisters are very much different from each other and lead parallel lives which never cross each other. But suddenly there comes 'a third presence' between the two sisters which intersects their different lives. Rose and Naomi are the daughters of a poor tailor who does not afford to educate them further after the schooling. Naomi, being pretty, qualifies herself for marriage. Gordimer points out how marriage is a criterion to decide a person's status in the society. Naomi enjoys the status of being called 'Mrs.' Her husband builds a red-brick house in the new suburb. She enjoys the fun of choosing furniture for her house. She gets the importance of being a mother. Rose is opposite to Naomi. She is ugly and even has no idea how to attract a man. She is considered as a 'misfit' in the society where the marriage is an obligatory thing.

Gordimer presents contrast between a married and an unmarried life. According to the social norms Naomi lives a 'full' life of bringing up the children, celebrating the marriage anniversaries and maintaining her beauty. Rose regularly visits Naomi's house with the gifts for children. Contrary to Naomi, Rose leads an 'empty' life. She lives alone in a back room in the city. She takes various jobs to support herself and her family. She takes the responsibility of educating her

mentally retarded brother. Rose had two lovers in her life. But they too, were 'misfits' like herself. One was a Hungarian Catholic philosopher, much elder man with bald patches on his head due to nervous disease. Another one was an Africaner, at least ten years younger than herself. His painter, political, jazz friends came to her flat for the discussion. Rose's lovers are intellectuals and due to her relationship with them she got her name in the newspapers. But her family felt shame and pity for her. Gordimer explains to us that the preoccupations of Naomi's household are pathetically limited and meager. She also shows how Naomi had had no chance to learn that a man who had lived life in another continent, of another age, another tongue could be patiently reached through the body. Rose does this.

Gordimer describes how the criteria of status and standard in the society change with time. The two sisters continue to live their lives in their own ways. Naomi leads married life doing household duties. Rose remains single but prospers herself economically. She has now her own flat and car. She continues to visit Naomi's house dutifully. Their conversation is confined to the apparent things and both do not want to penetrate each others life. But suddenly, there comes 'a third presence' between them. Gordimer calls it "a phenomenon of double vision." (52) with which the two sisters want to see themselves living each other's life. Rose who never has thought of her looks, now tries to make herself beautiful. She gets plastic surgery done on her nose. When Naomi sees it, she too desires for the change in her life. Her house, furniture what was once a status and luxury, now are ordinary and humble. People are going up and doing better than her family. They have better houses with patios and swimming pools. Naomi praises Rose's new looks and suggests having contact lenses. She wishes that, had Rose been beautiful, Rose could have married her husband instead of herself.

3.2 The Blacks-The Whites Relationship :

3.2.1 Introduction :

According to Gordimer, Apartheid is an ugly reality of multiracial South African society. Apartheid, which is euphemistically called as policy of 'separate development' has created the walls of separation in the people's mind. The system does not separate the races on the basis of qualities or caliber. The colour and physical appearance are the criteria of the division. It has created social hierarchy in which the white minority is given super-ordinate position and the black majority is given sub-ordinate position. Gordimer's stories reflect the segregated South African society. The segregation has determined the nature of relationship between the blacks and the whites. They are relationships of the ruler and ruled, the oppressor and the oppressed, the superior and the inferior and the most common is of the master and the servant. Her stories deal with racial misunderstanding and prejudices. The atmosphere of racial distrust prevails in most of the stories. The white masters need black servants. But they keep the servants only when they are authentically recommended. The whites fear the black burglars and terrorists. So most of their houses have burglar-proof windows and alarm-system attached to the gates. The blacks, living ineffectual life in 'ghetto' or backyard of white family, almost lose their dignity as human beings. Gordimer portrays the 'yes-baas' and 'yes-missus' system. She also describes the black people's awakened minds which make them protest against the prevalent system. Her faith in the blacks-the whites coordination is revealed in the stories. She asserts that the blacks and the whites should live together happily and should have intimate relationship.

3.2.2 Nadine Gordimer's Treatment of Theme of The Blacks-The Whites Relationship:

Livingstone's Companions (1971):

'Abroad' :

Gordimer depicts the white people's contempt for the blacks. This contempt is deeply rooted in their mind and wherever they go it accompanies them. In this story Manie Swemmer, a South African old man, goes to Southern Rhodesia to meet his sons. He crosses geographical boundary, but not the racial one. He is very much hurt due to his son's indifference and ungratefulness. He is disappointed to see his son's mediocre life. All his expectations and yearnings are shattered. But immediately he accepts the reality and compromises himself with it. To Gordimer, black-white equality is an inevitable change and all whites should accept it. She critically points out that Manie in a foreign country compromises with some unpleasant facts- his son's callousness, the insulting treatment given to him by an Indian businessman. But he is not willing to compromise with the racial discrimination.

Gordimer delineates the 'Apartheid' in the white people's mind which makes them have grudge against the native blacks. In the hotel, while Manie is drinking with his son, an affluent black man returns Manie's two-rand note which he has dropped unknowingly. Manie is much impressed by the black man's honesty, polished and educated manners and politeness. Manie offers him beer out of thankfulness. Afterwards he learns from the bar man that the black man is a minister's relative. Manie praises the black man's decency and humbleness. According to Manie, such honesty is not found in a native black. Manie thinks that 'open-mindedness' is necessary while traveling abroad. He appreciates the foreigner with his 'open-mindedness' but at the same time

he has narrow outlook towards the natives. Gordimer wants us to view the blacks as 'human beings' with good as well as bad qualities. Manie is taunted by some rowdy, black hooligans in the hotel, which he disapproves.

Gordimer focuses on the white man's adamant outlook of hatred towards the blacks. As it is the period of Independence celebrations in Northern Rhodesia (renamed as Zambia after Independence), all hotel rooms are reserved. Manie has no place to live as his sons are not willing to take him. There is no choice left for Manie but to accept sharing a room with an Indian businessman. But when he returns to the room, the gentleman does not open the door. He even does not answer the knocks. The receptionist offers him a room which is meant for sudden intruders like coolies or bully people. On the very first day, Manie faces insulting and offending treatment. He somehow bears with it. But he decides that he will no more bear with any such thing surely. He tells the receptionist that he will share the room with a coolie, but not with a native black. Gordimer describes how Manie bolts the door from inside determinedly.

'A Satisfactory Settlement' :

Gordimer expresses the existence of racial hatred as the peculiar feature of the South-African society. She ironically points out that the contempt for the blacks has pervaded the white society. This contempt has become the point of agreement among the white beyond all their differences. In the story, it acts as a link making new neighbours familiar and bringing them close. A white woman, divorced from her husband, has just come to live in a suburb. The estate agent had told her that it was a quiet suburb where civil servants and university lecturers were the sort of neighbours one had. But he didn't say anything about the

natives there. Gordimer depicts the reserved atmosphere of the sophisticated suburb. The woman is busy in consultation about her divorce case. The things in the house are not unpacked and arranged properly yet. The woman and her son are not familiar with the neighbours. So there is no conversation between them. she has not settled in the new place. But suddenly, an event makes her familiar with the neighbours. It helps her for 'a satisfactory settlement' in the new house. A drunken , black woman creates nuisance at midnights by shouting, singing and crying loudly. Her sleep is disturbed every night. What breaks her sleep is the black woman's shouting in English. If it were in her own language, the white woman would have ignored it as an usual jabbering of a native. At one night, she shouts back at the drunken woman. A neighbour comes to help her. He drives the black woman away. The next morning, all neighbours are in her house without any invitation. They converse about the black hangers-on and all totally agree the point of nuisance created by them. The agreement connects the neighbours at once.

Gordimer is very much critical of the white society, while showing the racial hatred inculcated in the children without fail. The little boy's bicycle is stolen. He too, takes part in the grown-up conversation. He adds that his bicycle must have stolen by an old native 'boy' who just talks anybody in the street. A neighbour offers his help. He would go to the police station for the boy's mother's sake and lodge a complaint of theft. All are invariably sure that the bicycle must have been stolen by a native black.

Something Out There (1984) :

1) 'Blinder' :

The Story deals with the monotonous life of a black

maidservant living in the backyard of a white family. Rose, the domestic servant who has been serving the white family for many years is a representative of the resourceless blacks who cannot control their lives. On the contrary, their lives are subject to change and manipulation. Here, the black servant is not exploited by her masters. She is a victim of much larger system which changes her life. Rose is a trustworthy servant and the lady of the house is kind to her. Rose has a lover, Ephraim who lives with her in the backyard. The white family accepts it because it is an usual thing that a young man comes to work in a city, spends his whole life there away from his home because he has to earn money to send home. Ephraim lives on Rose's money and sends his earning to his wife and children. Rose knows this. But she could not do anything about it. She lives with him, as it is necessary for a woman to find a man.

In her forties, Rose began to have the problem of going on 'blinder'— a bout of uncontrolled drinking. The lady did everything to stop her drinking. She had Rose treated by her own doctor. It was found that Rose had high blood pressure and the doctor told the lady that the drinking must be absolutely stopped. The lady also took her to the Methodist Church that ran a non-racial Alcoholics Anonymous as part of its community programme. But Rose didn't stop going on blinder. Rose continued working in the house and going on week's or month's blinder. Suddenly Rose has to cope with a different sort of befuddlement – a different blinder. Ephraim is killed in a bus accident. Rose is left alone. She is not even informed officially, as she is not his wife. Ephraim's wife has the right to bury and mourn him. Rose is nothing. The lady and the family members sympathize with Rose. But no one can share or lessen her grief. Rose has to live the given life of loneliness. Gordimer focuses on her loneliness by describing her sudden excitement when Ephraim's wife and children come to her house. They have come there in the

'simpleton trust' of getting pension from Ephraim's employers . The children and the lady know they would not get anything. But they do not want to disappoint Rose by telling it to her. Gordimer describes Ephraim's wife and children as – "a little group captured and corralled" (86) Rose is very much happy and excited with this small event as she knows there will be no other arrival to be happy in her lonely life.

'Something Out There' :

The story proclaims Gordimer's faith in the blacks-whites collaboration. The story not only describes the prevalent blacks-whites relationship, but also prescribes how it should be, through the depiction of coordination of the four revolutionaries. It has two plots—one is concerned with the news of a monkey roaming in a white suburb creating fear in the residents and another plot reveals the four revolutionaries' secret preparation for the explosion of a power station. Both plots are dominated by the feeling of 'fear.' Gordimer suggests that the reality has become 'horrible' as a consequence of consistent oppression of the blacks. She expresses here the need of change in the unjust discriminatory policy and advocates the equal blacks-whites relationship.

Gordimer explores the interdependence of the blacks and the whites within the framework of the deep-rooted racial hatred. The four revolutionaries are a white man, a white girl and two black men. They perform their duties with perfect understanding. The sense of attachment among them is so strong that they have forgotten all the barriers of gender, age and race. They have left behind the 'normal' racial prejudices, reservations and fears. They are comrades fighting for the same end. Gordimer describes some happy moments shared by the four. She depicts the four revolutionaries dancing and playing music together. It reveals Gordimer's faith in the harmony between the blacks and the

whites. Gordimer also reverts the social order while making Vusi, a black man the leader of the group. She praises ingenuity in the blacks. Eddie has made a musical instrument out of tin rings of beer cans. This illustrates Gordimer's concept of ideal society. There is equal distribution of work among the four revolutionaries. The girl is not forced to cook for the men. In spite of being a girl, she helps the men in building the shed wall. Charles is given the task of providing everything they need and Vusi is given the whole responsibility of the mission. This is the ideal society in miniature form. But there exists also a real society with the racial distrust. Charles and Joy take an isolated house on rent for the preparation of their plan pretending themselves as a married couple. The estate agent offers them recommendation of trustworthy servants. Vusi and Eddie—the black revolutionaries arrive to assist Charles and Joy. The four pose themselves as a white couple and their black servants according to the prevalent system.

The other plot in the story deals with the newspaper reports about a monkey—like animal roaming in the white suburb. There are many instances of the monkey's attack on pet animals and snatching food from the houses. The reports are full of suspense. No one has actually seen how the creature looks like. But the 'fear' for the monkey is equated with their fear of black burglars, loafers and murderers. Gordimer underlines the existence of the horrible reality. Some newspaper express sympathy with the monkey as it has wandered away from its place. But, they could not sympathize with the blacks who are forcefully moved away from their ancestral land to live in the ghetto place. The monkey seems to be in self-imposed exile; but the blacks in South Africa live in 'exile' in their native country.

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Jump and Other Stories (1991) :

‘What were you Dreaming ?’ :

Gordimer portrays the blacks the whites relationship through an encounter between a black man and two whites – a South African lady and her English friend. The black man is given lift in their car. The Englishman does not know the social stratification in South Africa. The lady is a guide and mentor who interprets the country for her friend. She is the representative of the brutal, snobbish white class. She defends the colour bar and justifies the white superiority over the blacks. She explains to her friend the Apartheid laws and the history of the racial policy. Through her explanation, Gordimer shows the white people’s contemptuous attitude towards the blacks. The white people think of blacks as the uncivilized, barbarian people needed to be controlled. She laughs at the strange rituals prevalent among the blacks. She mocks at the ritual of pulling the front teeth of young girls when they come of age. She has nightmarish imagination about the young black men.

The black man represents the powerless, servile and vulnerable community. The story begins with his narration of his experience of getting the lift and travelling with the whites. Gordimer depicts the blacks man’s submissive and cajoling nature. He speaks too politely with the whites. He exaggerates his poverty and hunger to win their sympathy. The man was born at Wynberg, but the government moved them to Cape Flats. The lady at once recognizes his birth place and race - Cape coloured from his long vowelled English accents and his darkness. She could easily differentiate between the blacks and the Coloureds. The Englishman does not know these details. He has a tourist’s curiosity about the blacks, their lives and background. The lady provides every kind of information to him. She explains to him the Classification of the population, homelands, forced removals and black townships. But

along with the explanation, she adamantly justifies the Apartheid. To her, the forced removals, i.e. kicking people out from their places, moving them to another place like goods, is “an everyday affair.” (221) The black people should not make fuss of it. She wants the blacks people should live “out of sight of white.”(221) She tells her friend to take the black man’s story with a pinch of salt because they are theatrical by nature and they dramatize their story. The black man remains silent pretending asleep and expects that the white masters would give him money. The lady really gives him money, so that he could buy something to eat. The Englishman believes the lady, as he doesn’t know the country. As she is his mentor and guide, he relies upon her for the knowledge of the country.

‘The Moment Before the Gun Went off’ :

The story deals with an intricate relationship between a white farmer and his black servant. It also implies Gordimer’s faith in the blacks—the whites intimate relationships. The young black servant is actually the white master’s illegitimate son . But the relationship is kept secret and the white man does not accept is openly. The son is killed accidentally by the father’s gun while they are hunting. The father is shocked. He feels distress for the accident. He weeps over his son’s death. But the people who don’t know the relationship view the event as ‘the death of a black servant due to his master’s callousness’. The whites interpret it in their usual casual way. For them, it is not a very serious crime. The white farmer has to go through some rituals at the police station. He has to give his statement of accident on oath. The statements will remain there on record permanently. But it will not affect the white man or his children anymore. The winds of change have not yet reached the rural areas. But the event provokes reaction in the cities. The black

agitators raise a hue and cry against the event. It will be used for the anti-Apartheid campaigns. Nothing will appease their agitations. Gordimer gives the glimpses of the changes in the relationship of the blacks and the whites. In the cities, the blacks can sit and drink in white hotels. The Immorality Act has gone—the physical relationship between the black and the white is no more a crime.

Gordimer describes the social order in which the whites are land owners and masters and the blacks are farm labourers. The dead man's grandparents and mother also have served the white master's ancestors. Gordimer describes how the servant's death is compensated by the white master. He provides money for the funeral. That is why there is a good coffin which the blacks hardly afford. An elaborate funeral is thought as the appropriate compensation. The white man's wife is present there dutifully. But, she observes the relatives' lament with coldness and reservedness. The white man even cannot console the dead man's mother. She is standing there quietly. She does not look in the white man's eyes. She is too weak to question him. Gordimer highlights the racial misunderstanding. Neither the black people nor the white people can understand what may have happened the moment before the gun went off. Only the white man and the dead man's mother could understand it, when they stare at the grave with perfect communication.