

# **CHAPTER – IV**

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### **MINOR THEMES : LOVE AND SEX, FRIENDSHIP AND OTHERS.**

#### **4.1 Love and Sex :**

*Livingstone's Companions (1971) :*

*'An Intruder' :*

James Seago is presented to us as a crooked man with perverse, obscene sexual instincts. For him, woman is a toy and sex is a game. He could not play with the same toy for long. He gives up the toy when he has played enough with it. That is why, he is infamous for his divorces and relationships with women. He is a skillful flirt and is able to lure the women. In spite of his 'reputation' with women, he succeeds in impressing Mary and her mother by showing concern and candour. Contrary to James, Mary is too innocent and moral. She marries him with tender yearnings and expectations. For James, it is only one more game. He drags Mary into his life full of orgies. He spends the whole nights in the clubs, drinking with the friends and sleeps during days. He forces his lifestyle upon Mary. Gordimer delineates their unusual kind of sexual relationship. James makes love to Mary in the afternoons. He caresses her like a kitten. The way he addresses her shows that she is not a better half to him but a pet-an object of amusement. He tries to persuade her for sexual act by coaxing her as – 'my little marmoset', 'my rabbit nose', 'little teenage doll' etc Gordimer describes his perverse sexual instincts

...He taught her to do all the strange things she would not have guessed were love-making at all, and that he seemed to enjoy so much. (87)

Contrary to James' malicious nature, Gordimer emphasizes Mary's innocence, and tenderness. She has stepped into married life with the warm feelings of home-making typical of a bride. She tries to make her home cosy by decorating the tiny flat with silk curtains, dining table, chairs etc. She is very much happy when she is pregnant. But James' nasty mind doesn't allow him to indulge in such pious relationship and sentiments. He is now tired of 'the doll' and wants to get rid of her. To threaten his gentle wife, he uses an obscene trick. One night, when Mary is in deep sleep, James wrecks everything in their house. Everything is torn and turned upside down. The rags, garbage are arranged on the chairs. The objects related with their private life are arranged in an obscene pattern. He does all this to frighten her and to make her leave him. But Gordimer suggests its contrary effect on Mary. After initial terror and confusion, Mary becomes composed and poised. She realized her husband's real nature and is suddenly transformed into a much strong and mature woman.

### **'Rain-Queen' :**

The story is a reminiscence of a married woman of her first sexual relationship. It is about a young girl's entering the sensuous world. Her innocence, virginity is replaced with the knowledge of passion and lust. Jillie is now a married woman and has had many lovers. But she still remembers vividly her first experience of the sexual relationship. It is firmly imprinted on her mind. The story is a sensual account of the illicit relationship between Jillie, a girl of twenty and Marco, a married man. Gordimer focuses on Jillie's embarrassment as well as Marco's adult maturity with which he covers their clandestine affairs. Marco was the experienced man who dragged Jillie into the physical relationship. After the initial fear and hesitation, Jillie too, began to enjoy it. Marco taught

her how to behave naturally in the company of their relatives. As their relationship developed, Jillie's guilt'-consciousness disappeared and she completely got immersed in it. For her, it was a transfiguration.

Gardimer gives us very frank and passionate description of their relationship. For both, Marco and Jillie, their closeness is like a tender, sensual dream from which both returned regretfully. Jillie describes their love-making as –

It is another world, that dream, where no wind blows colder than the warm breath of two who are mouth to mouth. (157)

When they were together with each other in the caravan, it was extremely blissful state for them. He “escaped” with her and she “entered” with him. (154) He escaped from all the sordid problems of the daily life which made him nervous. Jillie, with Marco, entered entirely new world far from her childhood or other familiar experiences. But this state of pleasure, in which nothing existed but the two who made it, was temporal. Jillie had to leave the place with her parents and their relationship stopped. But the memory is still fresh in her mind, as it was her maiden experience.

### **‘The Life of Imagination’ :**

The story is one more account of an adulterous relationship between a married woman and a married doctor. We find Gordimer probing into the lovers' minds, especially Barbara's. Barbara is a woman of artistic mind who wants to lead the life of her imagination. She prefers living solitary, calm life, immersed in her own self and books. She is married to Arthur, an architect and has two children. They are living

serene, happy life. Gordimer suggests the gap between appearance and reality. She seems to be advocating the idea of 'marriage of true minds' Though Arthur and Barbara are living happy life according to the apparent social set up, both of them know they could not satisfy each other's soul's cravings. Barbara is not satisfied with the "mindless happiness of physical exercise" (118) i.e. their married life. By making relationship with Dr. Asher, she tries to seek her soul's happiness.

Gordimer depicts the intricacies of this extra martial affair. Barbara's relationship with the doctor started with intense passion. But at the same time they had to think about the down- to-earth, realistic things, i.e. they had to plan where, when and how to meet secretly. Barbara knows this relationship will be regarded as "a shabby love-affair." (113) by the society. But she disregards society's judgment for her search for true lover. In Dr. Asher, she seeks the lover who would, through the body, enable her to reach the soul. But her search fails, as she learns Dr. Asher too, like her husband, is occupied with many things and she herself was one of these many things. He is not the lover of her imagination. The relationship proves to be only physical and not the spiritual one. Gordimer tells us about her frustrated mind as "There seemed to be a dark wind blowing through her hollow mind." (199)

Her empty mind longs for death. She imagines, during one night when Dr Asher has gone, some black burglar should come and stab her. At this moment, she shares the stale fantasy with the white population of the town which she never did before. But this longing also remains unfulfilled as there comes the morning light and there was no black burglar to kill her.

## ***Jump and Other Stories (1991) :***

### **‘Safe Houses’ :**

The story deals with a clandestine, short-lived relationship between a rich, white lady and an underground activist. Gordimer presents the relationship to us as merely physical one. Both of them are not involved emotionally; they do not even pretend to be in love. Their strong physical urge has brought them together. Their casual meeting in a bus results into the sexual relationship. Gordimer provides some reasons. She underlines lady's loneliness and the activist's sexual hunger. The lady's husband is most of the time abroad for business and her sons are at the boarding school. In spite of having every comfort in life, she is alone. She could not carry on with the loneliness. She tries to cover her loneliness by living lavish life. She makes her looks beautiful, rather cheap. Gordimer describes her as –

a creature lavished by the perfumed unguents of care  
from the poll of curly tendrils... to the painted nails of  
her pedicured toes. (202)

With such appearance, she attracts the activist in the bus. On the other hand, the activist who is underground and lives the life of non – existence and non-identity is presented to us as a sexually greedy man. The words describing him, for example ‘his greedy grin’, ‘open smile like the yawn of a predator’, ‘a cannibal tasting flesh’, ‘the voracious, confident smile’ – show his sensuous nature.

Both recognize each other's physical urge and decide not to make things difficult for each other. The lady very skillfully manages to conceal the affair from the servants. They have good time together. But

the relationship has to be stopped, as the lady's husband is to return the next day. The activist has to pay the price for this involvement. He is arrested by the police. But he wonders whether the lady has reported about him to the police. Gordimer throws light on the vulnerability of the rich people living in the 'safe houses' covered by trees. They think themselves 'safe' from the threat of activism or Movement. However, they are not safe and secure emotionally. The lady is easily seduced by the activist.

### **'Some are Born to Sweet Delight' :**

Gordimer has used a line from William Blake's poem 'Auguries of Innocence' as the title of this story. But the characters portrayed in the story are not born to 'sweet delight' as per the title. They are born to 'endless night' especially Vera who is chosen as a bomb – carrier by her lover. Vera is a bold, carefree teenage girl who falls in love with Rad, a foreigner living as a tenant in her house. Rad attracts Vera not by flattering or making advances to her but with his silence and reservedness. It is Vera in whom we find the initiative and 'unstoppable passion'. Gordimer wants to highlight the power of sensuality in a female with which she defeats and frightens her parents. She makes and continues the relationship in spite of the objection of her parents. Gordimer describes at length how Vera is overcome, amazed and engulfed by the sensuality.

Nevertheless, Gordimer stresses the 'innocence' in Vera's sensuality. Vera uses no guile or trick to conceal the relationship from her parents. She so much succumbs to the passion that she could not understand her lover's silence and blind love-making. She does not share his language nor she is able to share what he is thinking in his own language. She could not follow in his eyes what is going on in his mind.

Her parents who wish 'sweet delight' for their daughter give consent to the marriage. They have no idea of the apocalyptic world of terrorism. They are happy when their daughter is going abroad to visit her in-laws. They speak proudly to their neighbours and friends about her journey. Vera and her parents do not know that Vera, along with the baby inside her is going on journey towards an 'endless night'.

### ***Something Out There ( 1984)***

#### **'Crimes of Conscience' :**

Unlike the other stories dealing with the theme of love and sex, this story describes sex as a way of reaching to the mind. The physical relationship performs the role of a key unlocking the lover's mind to his beloved. It makes him confess and unfold the long-concealed secret that he has been spying on her. Derek Falterman is a government paid infiltrator who seduces a radical woman, Alison, in order to spy on her group. He wants to find out whether she is associated with any master organization doing subversive activities. He makes the relationship with the intention of getting the things out of her. But finally, it is Alison who makes Falterman reveal the things. She is a strong woman, ardently committed to her cause. He tries his best to break her 'reservedness. But She is a composed woman and never tempted to reveal the secrets even in the most passionate moments between them. What she shares with him are only banal, surface things of her imprisonment. She confidently introduces him to her friends. He learns that her group of friends of different races and colours is very important for her and she is severely loyal to them. She can do anything for her friends. As a lover, he could not make her undermine them. On the contrary, Alison gets him involved in her love completely.



Gordimer describes how Alison outsmarts her lover in everything. She is much determined and intelligent and understands her lover very well. Her very reservedness compels him to confess that he has been spying on her. This confession serves as a password which opens the lover's minds to each other. Once he utters this password, she accepts him wholeheartedly.

## **4.2 Friendship :**

### ***Livingstone's Companions (1971):***

#### **'Meeting in Space':**

In this story, we land into an entirely different realm. The other stories in the collection confront us with the tensions of betrayal, sufferings, sensuality, loneliness and selfishness. But here, Gordimer relieves us from the tensions of these bleak realities of the adult world by taking us into the innocent world of children. She portrays the friendship of two ten year's old boys. While portraying this friendship she is thinking on global terms. All the national boundaries and distance dissolve when Clive, a South African boy and Matt, an American boy become friends in a French village. The word 'space' in the title itself suggests the global scope of friendship Gordimer suggests such meeting between innocent, eager minds can take place anywhere in the world. This temporal friendship leaves everlasting impressions on their mind, though they have not exchanged each other's addresses.

Clive was feeling lonely in the foreign place before meeting Matt. Matt comes into his life with new wonders and amazing attractions. Clive's dejection disappears and he gains confidence in the foreign land. On the other hand, Matt, the son of rich parents is also alone and finds a true companion in Clive. He has got all kinds of equipments a camera,

tape-recorder, transistor, etc. But he has not even one companion who could share the wonderful amusements offered by these equipments. Clive and Matt enjoy themselves and have great time together. Matt introduces Clive to the wonderful things in the village with which Clive was unfamiliar before. Their families are totally different. Clive is not allowed to go beyond certain distance in the village. On the contrary, Matt's parents are making documentary on various countries and they themselves are visiting the places. The equipments—camera, tape recorder are the part and parcel of their job. So they happily give such equipments to their son. But Clive's mother considers it pampering. Throughout the story, Gordimer also suggests the difference between the adults and the children. She presents the adults' self-preoccupation versus the children's innocent, outright behaviors.

Here we have a fine picture of childhood, full of mischiefs and careless wanderings. Clive and Matt wander from morning till night, watching interesting places and things. They go to a museum, casino, an aquarium at Monte Carlo. They wander from street to street, alley to alley seeing various people and speaking with them. Matt always catches the interesting people and animals with his camera; for example. He takes photos of dwarf and a big, fainted woman. Sometimes, their adventures invite problems. Once, they are chased for taking photo of a man and girl kissing. Gordimer creates the atmosphere so skillfully that the readers too starts wandering with the boys until there comes the time of departure. Clive and Matt enjoy the time thoroughly and there is no talking about returning to their home-countries. The time of departure comes somewhat abruptly, as both have not got the time to think about it. Again there is no formal see-off or saying good-bye like the adults. But certainly, the vacuum is in their deep hearts which both of them carry with each other.

### **‘Otherwise Birds Fly In’:**

This is another story dealing with the theme of friendship. This time we have friendship between two young women in their early thirties. This long-spanning friendship started from their childhood. In both of the stories, Gordimer seems to suggest that the persons having similar yearnings become friends. Toni and Kate, both were left by their parents in an international school and had orphan childhood. They studied in ‘Ecole International’ the international school for children from five to eighteen years old displaced by war and divorce. Kate’s father was killed in a war at Malta. Her mother married an American major and went with him. Toni’s father was from Brazil. She was left in the school because her English mother had gone off with someone her family hated. Thus, both were displaced due to similar reasons. Along with their similar background, Gordimer tells us about their different personalities. They have different interests and abilities. Kate played the flute and was top in maths. Toni was the best skier in the school and was fond of writing letters in four languages to her pen-friends. Yet, Gordimer makes it clear to us that they were ‘real’ friends. They were a pair, meeting in an “euphoric third state”(184) which each one of them imagined in the other. (184).

Gordimer depicts their life progressing in two different ways. Kate had been intellectual with talent and opportunity, when they left school. Yet, it was Toni who moved among the fashionable thinkers, painters, writers and politicians. She moved all around the world taking various jobs as a typist, receptionist, personal assistant, etc. At last, she married a young tycoon who himself was moving all over the world for his business. She too, went with him about the world. Gordimer describes her changed personality. She grew up used to the conveniences of being a rich woman. Contrary to her, Kate continued living the former life. She

had a flat in Geneva which she had shared with Toni for five years. But afterwards Toni had started her travelling and her visits became less frequent. Kate became a music teacher and married a young music researcher in her institute she settled there with her husband. They led modest, quiet but contented life.

While dealing with the theme of friendship, the story becomes a compendium of moral lessons and values. Gordimer hints at the need of 'roots' or 'settlement' Everyone needs 'home' where one could return after the work or a trip. Toni becomes rich and lives luxurious life. There are servants to look after her daughter and various household responsibilities. She gradually acquired a rich woman's life on her own. She has money and so she can go everywhere she likes and whenever she likes. She enjoys expending lavishly on travelling, drinking, eating. She is very quick to enjoyment and full of zest. She comes to Kate once a year. She arranges trip for Kate and her husband. She tries to teach them the 'enjoyment' and 'zest.' But in her latest visit, Kate realizes that her friend's zest is apparent and she is not enjoying the trip as she did before. Toni's husband is away most of the time and she tries to substitute his absence with the luxurious, extravagant life. Gordimer presents Kate as a true friend who understands Toni's inner feelings though Toni makes a show of enjoyment.

Moreover, Toni moving around the world has never got the respite in which she could realize the eternal values of human life. She has given herself to the extravagant life, devoid of contemplation. She considers money as the most important thing and measures everything with money. When her daughter's life is saved by Kate, she wants to reward Kate with some valuable present. After a lot of thinking about a suitable present, e.g. a car or a flat, she decides to give an expensive 'emerald-and-diamond collar.' But Kate, who has got the firm foundation

of her principles and values, rejects the valuable present. She reminds Toni that this time Toni has forgotten the bottle of Poire Williams and lily flowers which Toni always brought on her every visit for Kate.

### **Other Themes :**

#### ***Livingstone's Companions (1971) :***

##### **'No Place like' :**

This short story tells us about a woman who wants to get rid of "the known, familiar and inescapable world." (180) Gordimer presents her as a representative of all the people who want to get rid of 'boredom' of life and its bondages. The woman is shown as a queer fish who uses a very strange trick to avoid the journey to her destination. The destination symbolizes limitations and regulations for her. She wants to free herself from them and live the life of her own. The story, with the woman's quest for 'privacy' and 'freedom', is the revelation of modern man's mind. The human life is presented as dull and dreary and 'the home' or 'the roots' are no more efficient to summon them back or to offer them any solace. The woman wants to avoid going back to her destination and meeting the relatives. Instead, she would take the unknown road to a unknown place.

The story begins with the description of an airport building where some passengers have taken the last stop before their destination. The building is described as dirty, hot and congested. Its windows are sealed and the air conditioning is out of order. The airport building may be the symbol of hostile human life. The passengers are not allowed to open the windows or to go out. Likewise human beings are trapped and are pressed with a number of rules and regulations in their lives. Gordimer repeatedly describes 'the woman in the beige trousers' walking slowly about the room. The woman's pale coloured attire and her trudging symbolize that she is fed up of the routine life. She doesn't want now any

commitment to certain identity and place. Contrary to her, the other passengers want to leave the room immediately. They want to board the plane and reach their destination. They make hurry so that they would not be left behind. Only the woman has an insight which enables her to understand the truth that the life outside the room is all the same and going back will not relieve her. She patiently waits there. But again there are rules of the airport authority. They would certainly compel her to board the plane. She uses strange trick to avoid going back. She goes in the toilet and throws her plastic card which is necessary for boarding the plane. She sits there patiently until all passengers board the plane and the plane takes off. Though she has successfully avoided going back, she has not thought about what to do next. Gordimer suggests the uncontrollable nature of life. Life never follows the systematic planning or careful thinking on the part of human beings. At this moment, the woman only thought of the road outside the room.

### **Undeveloped, Remote Africa:**

#### **‘Inkalamu’s place’:**

The story brings out Gordimer’s extraordinary skill of describing things. Here we have a very good example of descriptive story. Gordimer describes a remote red mud house built in the thirties by Inkalamu Williamson who was once a big land-owner in England and had come afterwards to the colony of Africa. Inkalamu built this three-storeys tall house defying the limitations of mud. It was a sand-castle reproduction of a large calendar-picture English country house. The house was covered with mango and orange trees. Inkalamu had made mile and a half long avenue to his house after the style of carriage way in his family estate in England. The house lasted for thirty years. Gordimer picturizes the decline of both the mud house and its owner. Inkalamu

stands for the past glory. Once he was a wealthy estate owner in England and the big house is the elevation of his social status which faded away. Here, he became a trader and hunter. He married native black women and had children. There was decline in Inkalamu's financial condition and health as well. All his farms were sold and nothing was left for his children.

The protagonist of the story used to visit the house in his childhood with his father and sometimes secretly to play with Inkalamu's children. Now he visits the unoccupied house as a member of United Nations Demographic Commission. Through him, Gordimer describes the house in past and the house at present. The house in past was "a naïve-artifact." "an African mud-and-wattle dream." (98) But presently, the house has worn away. Gordimer laments over the historic ruin. She describes the deteriorated condition of the house as-

---it was all being taken apart by insects, washed away by the rain, disappearing into the earth, carried away and digested, fragmented to compost. (99)

The walls are eroded. The wasps and ants have made piles of soil inside. On seeing this decline, the protagonist feels no 'nostalgia' but only 'recognition.'

The story begins with the description of house as 'sinking' and the prediction that it would not last the next five rainy seasons. The dilapidated house represents the decline of ancient African civilization. Gordimer evokes ancient and remote Africa. For her still it is full of mystery and wonders. She wishes the revival of ancient monuments. Though the remote areas were and are still 'backward', they have their own characteristics. The protagonist is happy that Inkalamu's children

have got rid of their eccentric father. But still he is impressed with one of his lordly eccentricities. Inkalamu was fond of collecting various kinds of books and he even used to teach his children as they could not get admission in the school of the whites. Gordimer depicts the poverty and backwardness of the area. The protagonist is not left unmoved when he sees Inkalamu's daughter and speaks with her. She has no means of earning. The area is so remote even today that there is no doctor in the district. The territory is still untouched by progress and development.

#### **4.3.3 Independent Africa : Paradoxes and Contradictions**

##### **'Livingstone's Companions':**

Gordimer presents twentieth century Africa to us with its paradoxes and contradictions. Here, she places Africa in the world context. Carl Church, a Western correspondent has been in Africa to get political news. He has already sent a long article on the secessionist movement in the Southern province. He attends a parliamentary session, but finds nothing 'newsworthy' there. He has decided to return home immediately. But there is a cable instructing him to stop and retrace Livingstone's last journey for an anniversary article. Reluctantly, he sets upon the task given to him, deciding not to stay more than two days. Gordimer portrays Africa as a maze in which a person is lost. The mysterious African ethos is capable of puzzling any foreigner. Carl Church hires a car and leaves the capital in search of the graves of Livingstone's companions. He loses his way and finds himself twice back at the same crossroads. He takes another road and reaches through a pass to a hotel situated in bush and scattered with water tanks and outhouses. After a perfunctory search in the hotel's grounds, he fails to find out the graves which are supposed to be there. He spends his time idly in skindiving in the lake, drinking. Finally, he gives up the idea of finding



out the graves and leaves for the capital and the airport. But suddenly, on his return when he is still in the premises of the hotel, he sees the patch to the graves. He would not go further without having a look at the graves. He gets down from his car and climbs the path. Such is the confounding power of African land. When Carl Church desperately wants to find out the graves he is lost and instead, reaches the hotel. When he wants to return, the land summons him back and presents before him the graves. Gordimer may want to suggest the profound power of Africa which charms and manipulates the visitors.

Carl Church, by chance has reached the hotel owned by a lady whom he had met on the plane. Enervated due to losing the way, he wants to have been there and go, “changing nothing, claiming nothing”. But he comes to know that he could not return as there is no plane. He is forced to live there. he spends time idly, feeling emptiness. Gordimer presents to us the white man’s Africa. There are weekendening white hotel guests drinking and goggle-fishing. The white lady, the owner of the hotel, has the whole authority and she orders her son and servants strictly. But there are also glimpses of the black Africa in the story. There are natives who could not speak English and communicate with gestures. The black servant in the hotel is inaudible to Church, in order to disguise his lack of English. In fact, the story is set against the juxtaposition of white and the black Africa. Gordimer describes incongruous and discordant present of Africa- in the modern capital “behind the main street a native market stank of fish” (15), the Arabized African fisherman with his ivory bracelets working on his net on the beach, an old man sitting calmly at the crossroads with women who carried dried fish and at the hotel the white guests enjoying, dancing, eating, drinking, dressed in fashionable clothes.

Gordimer evokes the past Africa with the name of Livingstone and by referring to the slavery, missionaries, and colonial servants all had brought in something and taken something away. This past is a century dead and a totally different world from now. But this Livingstone's past still reverberates and it is recorded in the story in the form of Carl Church's attempt to retrace Livingstone's journey. It is a story of great resonance.

#### **4.3.4 *Something Out There* (1984)**

##### **Human Curiosity :**

##### **'Rags and Bones' :**

The title suggests in the story the possibility of being trivial. The beginning is in a casual tone, telling us about a woman's picking up of an old tin chest from a junk shop. The story begins with the commonplace incident and progresses in a light mood. But in the middle we are made somewhat serious. Our curiosity is stimulated and we expect for something 'sensational' towards the end. The curiosity and the expectations are not satisfied, as the story ends on a casual note. Nothing startling or surprising which is called 'twist', comes in the end. Perhaps, Gordimer wants to 'twist' the style of twist itself. It seems that Gordimer is manipulating the readers. Their emotions are heightened and then made to subside. But they are not offended, as nothing is much intense. We can feel Gordimer smiling in her cheeks at the readers being cheated. The story does not have the peculiar surprise ending suggesting the drab, monotonous life.

Beryl Fels is living without a man, but is efficient as any male about household maintenance. She is much careful in maintenance of her beauty, too. The information given about her friends-circle and her gossiping nature do not allow us to take her much seriously. But when we

find her reading the letters with great patience, we become serious not about her but about what is written in the letters. Fels has found 307 letters in the chest which she has picked up from the junk shop. The instruction written in a visible way on them tells that the letters should be kept unread until twenty years after the death of the writer and then to be presented to an appropriate library or archives. It makes her feel that they are of antique value, something rare and monumental. She reads them voraciously at one sitting. She reads continuously in kind a of feat. She learns that they are love-letters. The lovers are not ordinary persons. They are famous personalities avoiding public eye. The lover is a scientist and is busy in the research which is worth of winning noble prize. The beloved is a renowned writer and is the creator of many famous books. They avoid meeting even in public gatherings as the media would smell a rat. Beryl Fels curiosity is aroused and she decides to find out more details of the love story. She is sure that as the lovers in the letters are celebrities, she will definitely get some information about them in the libraries. She investigates in libraries; she speaks with a professor of science. But to her disappointment, no such persons existed in reality. All turns out to be imaginary. With her, the readers too, feel disappointed.

Gordimer throws light on some of the typical tendencies of people. The people are greatly interested in famous people's private lives, especially their love-affairs. She also points out the fickle nature of fame and people's taste. Even letters written by ordinary people become famous, if they are found after fifty years or so.

## ***Jump and Other Stories (1991):***

### **4.3.5 Life partner:**

#### **‘A Find’:**

This amusing anecdote tells us about a cynic finding his life partner. The man had bad luck with women. He had married twice for love. Both of his wives had vowed to love him forever. But they had turned unfaithful to him. The man was much irritated when his second wife left him. He decided to live alone for a while. He goes on holiday without a woman for the first time. The man, while cursing the unfaithful wives, has decided to live alone. However, Gordimer suggests that he could not live without a woman. But definitely, he had learnt some lesson from his broken marriages. He would, at least be careful while choosing his third wife.

The man goes to a resort alone. Once while lying on the beach and enjoying the sight of women there, suddenly he finds a diamond ring in the sand. The ring offers him an opportunity to find a wife. He gives advertisement about the ring in the newspaper. According to his expectations, many women come to claim the ring. He rejoices in observing and speaking with them. After some interviews, he selects one beautiful lady in her forties. This time he selects a woman who does not make show of love and honesty. He selects her purely on the basis of the physical criterion. The whole account is amusing Gordimer narrates how an incidental find of a ring gains the man the find of a wife in an entertaining and tickling way. The twist in the end adds to the amusement.