

CHAPTER V

NONE TO ACCOMPANY ME :

WOMAN AS A MISSIONARY SHAPING THE FUTURE

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The heroine of A Grain of Wheat¹ is a gender-transcendent symbol of earth who becomes a redeemer of the past through her gender-oriented role as a wife and a mother. In the heroine of Anthills of the Savannah² Achebe maximizes the gender - transcendence in the heroine by presenting her as a visionary socialist prophet initiating the community into a condition of permanence. The conflict between gender-oriented and gender-transcendent roles in search of the essential self becomes the exclusive concern for Gordimer in None to Accompany Me.³ The multiple heroine of the novel becomes not only an initiator into the future but a missionary who has dedicated her whole life to the shaping of the nation's future.

Literature in South Africa without its social and political reference is not possible. The white settlers who were in power treated the Africans with contempt and followed apartheid policy which became government policy in South Africa in 1948. In February 2, 1990, President F. W. de Klerk announced the unbanning of the African

National Congress and other organizations and the release of Nelson Mandela on February 11, 1990. In 1991 remaining laws of apartheid were also cancelled and the multiparty negotiations began which gave a way to South Africa's first democratic elections in April, 1994. Because of such a background in South Africa, according to Stephen Gray, 'the relativity of class, race, and gender is strongly, crucially related to South African issues'.⁴

Now that the apartheid has come to an end, South African writers have to shape South African identity. According to H.H. Anniah Gowda, 'writers in South Africa . . . in the new atmosphere should . . . build on a large human dimension'⁵ and Gordimer exactly does this in None to Accompany Me.

Gordimer shows in None to Accompany Me the period of transition in South Africa from apartheid to the multiracial government. Gordimer's (b.1923) writing career covers a period from the late forties to the nineties. She lives in South Africa and belongs to the group of the white writers. Her basic interest is in the portrayal of the interdependence of blacks and whites in South Africa. Her characters, both black and white, search for a satisfactory relationship beyond class and colour and they also show a psychological conflict about their

position in South Africa. She was awarded the 1991 Nobel Prize for literature.

Along with the collections of short stories and essays Gordimer's work includes the novels : The Lying Days,⁶ A World of Strangers⁷, Occasion for Loving⁸, A Guest of Honour⁹, The Conservationist¹⁰, The Late Bourgeois World¹¹, Burger's Daughter¹², July's People¹³, A Sport of Nature¹⁴ and My Son's Story¹⁵, winner of the CNA Literary Award.

The action of None to Accompany Me is divided into three parts : 'Baggage', 'Transition', and 'Arrival'. It begins with the past of Vera Stark, a white lawyer working for blacks' struggle to reclaim land during white minority rule, and ends with her participation in the present post-apartheid black majority rule.

In the first part, 'Baggage', Vera divorces her first soldier-husband and, already pregnant, she marries Bennet (Ben) Stark. She lives with him in the house awarded to her in the divorce settlement. She gives birth to Ivan, a son. Bennet carves wood, models clay, and later works in the University Department of English. Vera works in a legal firm and also studies law and gets a degree. After the birth of the second child Annick, a daughter, Vera leaves the firm for a year to take care of the child. Afterwards she joins the Legal Foundation which works for

solving the problems of black settlement. This part refers to Vera's visit to Mr. Tertius Odendaal, a white settler who wants to establish a black township on one of his holdings, and convert his farm area into cash as a landlord by dividing it into plots for rent to blacks. Vera visits him with Oupa Sejake, a young black clerk at Foundation, and Zeph Rapulana, spokesman of the black squatters.

The second part, 'Transit', shows the return of the Starks's black friends, a couple, Didymus and Sibongile Maqoma from exile. Sibongile is appointed as the deputy director of the Movement which works for blacks' rights. In the Movement's elections Didymus is defeated although he was its dedicated active worker. Sibongile becomes busy with her social duties but Didymus is always afraid that the free ways of Sibongile's behaviour would be misunderstood by others.

Oupa's flat 121 has witnessed Vera's extramarital love affair with Otto Abarbanel, an Austrian working for an Austrian television, and her betrayal of Ben. Later the affair ends. Vera becomes busy with her social work. Meanwhile, Ivan who becomes a banker in London divorces his wife Alice, and lives with another woman Eva. Annick, who is a doctor, becomes a lesbian and lives with her friend Lou in Cape Town.

The Maqomas face the problem of their daughter, Mpho, who is made pregnant by Oupa. Didymus requests Vera to find a good doctor for Mpho's abortion. Later – Oupa and Vera are attacked by blacks while returning from a tour and Oupa dies in a hospital after few days due to the severe injury.

The third part, 'Arrivals', shows the arrival of Ivan's son Adam in Vera's house. Then it describes the increasing popularity of Sibongile which puts her name on the hit-list. Vera is nominated to serve on the Technical Committee on Constitutional Issues. Ben goes to live with Ivan in London when his business of Promotional Luggage closes. Although Vera and Ben have telephone contacts it is clear that Ben will not return. Vera sells her house. She goes to live in the annexe of Rapulana's house.

In None to Accompany Me, Gordimer describes not only the miseries of the South Africans both black and white but also suggests a solution which is a great hope for the future South Africa. Different critics have stressed the personal and the political life portrayed in the novel. For Briege Duffaud Gordimer creates, 'alive human beings who transcend the political issues they are involved with, while at the same time bringing those issues urgently to our notice.'¹⁶ Melinda Camber Porter believes 'None to Accompany Me should be a bible for any

fledgling democracy.'¹⁷ According J. D. F., Gordimer's 'response to the extraordinary transformation that has overtaken South Africa has all the relevance, the sympathy, the wisdom, that we could have hoped for.'¹⁸ Justin Cartwright thinks of the changing politics in South Africa and says, 'the return of exiles and liberation leaders, ... is transforming the city. All must change : the reader experiences the strange passions and dangers that accompany new-won power.'¹⁹ According to Richard Bauch, 'There are no puppets in Ms Gordimer's work, no mouthpieces : her people are all afforded the dignity of human vanity and complexity.'²⁰ For Fay Weldon, 'The struggle with politics is the struggle with self.'²¹

Some critics find expression of human nature in the novel impressive. Eileen Battersby sees, 'Nadine Gordimer's unflinching exploration of human nature and its myriad duplicities, set against a background of power shifts, lies and tensions.'²² For Dorothy Driver, 'in None to Accompany Me, the transcendence of political commitment stands as the novel's promise, rather than its narrative quest, and the novel's dynamic must depend instead on the quiet, sometimes, barely perceptible, shifts in characters' relations with one another.'²³ Gabriele Annan likes the style of the novel which is, 'full of action, sharply visual with slick cinematic cutting and packed with information that comes

across with the shock of the authentic as well as the new.'²⁴ For Laura Cumming, 'None to Accompany Me is easily the peer of Gordimer's superb Booker winner, The Conservationist.'²⁵

Different critics have responded to the significance of the novel. However, the role of women - both black and white - in the context of South Africa remains to be specially emphasised. The roles of Vera and Sibongile in the novel are highly promising for the future South Africa.

Gordimer appears to believe a woman to be a three dimensional existence on the level of self as found in her novels. A woman is, for her, a complex phenomenon of being with three selves in a constant clash - the biological self, the cultural self and the spiritual self. The biological self is the essence of a woman as a female in need of a male. The cultural self is an evolution of the biological in the context of others. Culturally she recognizes within her, the need of motherhood which leads to her struggle to build a network of the most essential familial relationships. An intellectually developed woman is aware of the need of her spiritual self - the need to commit oneself to the cause of others beyond the self. The inner urge of 'self' fulfilment in terms of social commitment becomes especially crucial in relation to the South African situation.

The specific vision of Gordimer significantly locates woman - urban, middle class educated intellectual-in the independent world of her own. She is neither a social victim of patriarchal oppression nor an economic victim compelled into the role of an earner for the family. Vera is allowed by Ben to work as a lawyer or a social worker and Sibongile, after her return from exile, effortlessly assumes the role of an active politician which does not involve any financial responsibility for the family. Vera and Sibongile enjoy the positions as decision-makers within and outside the family and hence, their journey toward self-discovery is purely personal and therefore most agonizing ordeal for them.

Vera's journey to self ^{discovery} can be divided into two major phases of her life :

I Her early married life

II Her later married life

I Vera's Early Married Life

The expression of biological need for a male in case of Vera is passionately ^{or} all consuming experience because she is a member of a privileged white class of South Africa. The biological - sexual need is dominating in the first few years of her life. Vera, wife of a soldier-husband divorces him because she disliked him in sex and 'she has

never forgotten or forgiven him premature ejaculation.' (p.161) She has told others more acceptable reasons for abandoning him but this was the real reason which she knows. She marries Bennet (Ben) Stark for his beauty and sustenance in sex and saw 'her happiness as conscious and definitive' (p.10) But after her divorce, once her soldier – husband comes for getting some keys from Vera. At that moment Vera is attracted to him, and they make love to each other. So Vera does not know whose son Evan is – whether of her first husband or of Ben.

In the first phase of her life Vera's cultural self as a mother dominates her spiritual self. She leaves her promising position in the prosperous legal firm after twelve years of service there after the birth of her second child, Annick, because of her need to be with the family and the child. She remains at home for a year for, 'taking care of the baby with the tender emotional fervour of one making amends... diffused in maternal energy' (p.18) She loves Ben and the children. But when her children grow up and do not need much of her attention, her spiritual self calls her to come out of her home.

While Vera is at home, she reads newspapers which describe misery of blacks driven off their farms, children taken off from their childhood and the violence. This tragic situation around her upsets her and challenges her spiritual self. She joins the Foundation, which

'came into existence in response to the plight of black communities who had become so much baggage, to be taken up and put down according to a logic of separation of black people from the proximity of white people.' (p.12) She joins Foundation 'not out of the white guilt people talked about, but out of a need to take up, to balance on her own two feet the time and place to which by birth, she understood, she had no choice but to belong.' (p.20)

Vera sincerely starts working for the blacks. She works until midnight at home as well as all day at the office. Alone in the house in bed at night, Vera and Ben who leaves University and opens a market consultancy in the city, talk over for hours the disappointments, worries, resentments and compensations each had gathered during the day, 'giving one another advice, putting together the context, from his experience of one level of society and her experience of another, their life.' (p.21) Both Vera and Ben love each other and are happy in their chosen fields of work.

Ben has taught Vera, a married woman, that possibilities of eroticism are beyond experience with one man and 'this meant that the total experience of love making did not end with him'. (p.61) So she loves a third man in her life, Otto Abarbanel, an Austrian about fifteen years younger than herself, who was working for an Austrian

television. She regularly enjoys sex with him in his flat no. 121. When from his name Vera supposes him to be a Jew, 'orphaned by racism', (p.67) her love for him gets a different meaning for her. As she works for the oppressed blacks her spiritual self is happy to love an oppressed Jew and this love gives her, a sense of pride and freedom rather than betrayal'. (p.63) She enjoys both Ben and Otto without any guilt. Her biological self is so urgent that she does not care for her children while enjoying the sex with Otto. Later Otto clarifies to her that he is not a Jew but a German, 'a Hitler baby'. (p.69) Now, Vera sees that Otto belongs to the group of oppressors but even then she loves him more intensely and is, 'fused with a man in blazing sensation.' (p.70) So 'that was the day and place of betrayal of Ben, Bennet, the chosen man.' (p.70) But when this experience clashes with her spiritual need of going beyond private life and work for others, she understands, 'This won't last long.' (p.68)

II Vera's Later Married Life

Vera's affair with Otto slowly dies and she continues her duties at home and office. In the course of the time, Vera's biological self slowly dilutes and as her children settle in their life. The cultural self, too, slowly becomes less important although it raises its head

occasionally. But her earnest urge to work for the blacks becomes strong which shapes her spiritual self.

Although Vera refuses to take the executive directorship offered to her by the Foundation, nothing is done without her at the Foundation right from the telephonist to the director. Her capacity to understand the blacks and find out the truth with her legal knowledge makes her popular as sincere woman. However, she often faces a clash between her cultural self and spiritual self. For example, she visits the violence affected Phambili Park the night the man was murdered on the young woman's doorstep. As a part of her duty, she observes the condition of the blacks and their 'families living in garages.' (p.85) She is accustomed 'to squatter camps, slum townships, levels of existence of which white people were not aware.' (p.85) But Vera – the mother – is compelled to throw Ivan's letter, addressed to her, half-read in her bag. While completing investigation tour, 'she had an urge to pull over to the roadside and read the letter.' (p.85) Her motherly concern and love for her son makes her restless over Ivan's letter informing that he has divorced Alice and is living with another woman. She notes that Ivan has addressed a letter to her and not to Ben because Ivan knows 'how deeply Ben loves him, and does not want to upset him with the sudden

evidence of any unhappiness or instability in his son's life.' (p.91) Evan thinks Vera strong to bear unhappiness.

Another problem that Vera faces as a mother, while remaining busy with the Foundation, is Annick's lesbian life. Vera tries to convince Annick of the pleasure of the sex with man, 'it's the being no longer alone. You exchange the burdens of self. You're another creature.' (pp.158-159) But she fails to change Annick's views and blames herself for it. Vera now understands how can Annick be expected to accept the families as she was told whose 'mother's sexuality' 'made a claim above the love of children'? (p.164) Although it is Ben who takes Annick and her friend Lou to joy-rides, cinemas etc. Vera, too, arranges parties for her children when they visit parents during vacation. She adjusts her routine duties at the Foundation for her children.

In spite of Vera's cultural self active as a mother and a grandmother, her spiritual self is constantly engaged in searching for opportunities to fulfil its inner need of living for others – especially - the blacks and thus, achieve transcendence of the self. Vera becomes popular at Foundation not only because she understands the blacks but also becomes their real friend. She loves them as human beings and they, too, respect her. For instance, after their return from exile,

Didymus and Sibongile, who are Vera's best friends, live in Vera's house for few days. When Mpho is made pregnant by Oupa, Didymus calls Vera and requests her to find a good doctor and have Mpho's abortion under her care. Oupa, too, has same faith in Vera who informs her that he is not the first man for Mpho. She is also 'motherly' (p.55) towards him. Zeph Rapulana, the spokesman of the blacks in Odensville case, also has faith in Vera. Vera understands him well. For instance, when Mr. Odendaal does not compromise with them in spite of Rapulana's request, Vera knows that Rapulana's words, 'were not tolerance and forgiveness but a threat' (p.32) and her fear comes true when the violence takes place at Odensville.

Although Vera works for the blacks and loves them, her life is not free from dangers. While returning from an investigation tour, Vera and Oupa are attacked by blacks. Oupa is hit by a bullet severely and Vera's leg is injured. Her ring put on by Bennet is also robbed and her finger is 'naked, free' as 'the ring has never been replaced' (p.203) which symbolises her freedom without any bond as neither Ben nor any other puts the ring and binds her.

Vera's parental attitude to Oupa originates in her sense of regret for his inability to have family life. She visits Oupa's home and observes his family which lives in resettlement area. She sees Oupa's

mud-brick house, his kids, and his wife, who greets him, 'in the manner of one expecting an explanation' (p.193) because Oupa visits her occasionally from the city. Vera is surprised to see that, while departing, Oupa and his wife meet alone in the next room for few minutes only. While Oupa is in hospital, only Vera is the regular visitor to see him suffering till his lonely death. No one at Foundation knows how to get in touch with Oupa's family. It is Vera's love for Oupa that makes her attend his funeral at his home, in spite of the warning given by Ben and Ivan who 'absolutely forbade her to revive the trauma of the attack in this way.' (p.209)

Vera's relationship with Rapulana is built in mutual trust and respect as dedicated friends. She is upset when she listens to the news, 'Nine people were killed and fourteen injured in violence at the Odensville squatter camp last night' (p.111) She is afraid of his safety and goes to see Rapulana in spite of Ben's warning. Her tension is released only when she sees Rapulana alive before her. She observes the violence in that area with deep concern though they disbelieve her sincerity.

In the course of the time, Vera checks her attraction towards Rapulana. She 'had never before felt-it was more than drawn to-involved in the being of a man to whom she knew no sexual pull.'

(p.123) She believes, 'they belonged together as a single sex, a reconciliation of all each had experienced, he as a man, she as a woman.' (p.123) She learns to define the true meaning of friendship as they come very close in their common work, 'she has a need to redefine friends.' (p.276) Now she knows that, 'the act of these friendships, in which the various aspects of self can not be placed all upon one person, is the equivalent of placing the burden of self within the other by which she used to define the sexual act.' (p.276)

As Vera grows old, her biological self is gradually passive. Even her cultural self now active as a grand-mother, welcomes her grandson Adam but she does not advise him, make his bed, sew on his buttons or supervise his activities in the traditional way. At this stage, when Ben goes to London, Vera's answer to Ben's question : 'Are you lonely?' (p.298) is 'No'. (p.298) For Ben, Vera 'had no plastic, tactile feeling - except for flesh' (p.299) . He hates not Vera but 'his dependency on loving Vera.' (p.300) About the relations in None to Accompany Me Gabriele Annan says, 'Personal relations are edgy, especially between the new arrivals and those - black or white - who stayed behind and sympathised with the anti-apartheid cause, or worked for it at home. ²⁶ Vera observes the changes in her life with Ben - 'Children born, friends disappearing in exile, in prison, killings around us, the death of his

father in the house, the whole country changing.' (p.223) But she observes that Ben's love affair with her which took place many years back has not still moved him from her. She confesses to Ivan, 'Love. There's been so much else, since then, Ivan. I can't live in the past.' (p.223) She does not want like Ben to close herself only in the world of her love.

Vera's spiritual urge to belong to her country with post-apartheid black majority government involves the understanding that new adjustments are to be done if the whites want to live with the blacks. Vera wants to re-root herself in the new society and so she sells her old house which has special significance for her. She has lived in her house right from her first marriage till her old age, and as a grandmother. The house and Vera are, 'old partners in crime (so long ago it had become respectable, a family home.' (p.304) Vera's house has to die with its past and Vera goes to live in the annexe of Rapulana's house as she wants, 'To find out . . . truth. In the end.' (p.313)

Vera, by now Deputy Director of the Legal Foundation, is nominated on the Technical Committee on Constitutional Issues. She and her colleagues sit week after week, sometimes into night, considering the basis of proportional representations, parties qualifying with five per cent or ten per cent, consensus in Cabinet decisions or on

the vote of a two thirds majority, the percentage by which the president should be elected etc. She is Rapulana's 'tenant' (p.320) and he introduces her to others as a woman 'drafting our constitution.' (p.320)

Vera knows it well that although she works in the Committee, the blacks do not consider her as their equal. For example, Rapulana says, 'if this committee does the job, it'll mean real empowerment for our people' (p.282) but, "when he spoke of 'our' people it was a black speaking for blacks, subtly different from 'we' or 'us' and this meant an empathy between him and her." (p.282)

Vera rediscovers her self when one night she encounters a girl on her way from Rapulana's room. For a few seconds, 'she and the girl were tenderly fused in the sap-scent of semen that came from her.' (p.323) Of course, Vera knows that she is beyond sex now, but her position in Rapulana's life is clarified to her. It makes her accept herself not as a white woman but as a human being who has to live in the particular atmosphere of South Africa. She comes out into the garden, 'breath scrolling out a signature before her.' (p.324) 'A signature' suggests that she agrees with the draft of her new identity and signs it.

The epigraph quoted in the novel, a haiku by Basho : 'None to accompany me on this Path : / Nightfall in Autumn', suggests that Vera is alone in the autumn of her life and, according to Dominic Head,

this, 'articulates both the loss and the courage of old age.'²⁷ The other epigraph from Proust : 'We must never be afraid to go too far / For truth lies beyond', according to Dominic Head, suggests, 'A brave acceptance of who one is in the light of who one was, is suggested in the allusion to Proustian time, the incorporation of the identity.'²⁸ According to Rosemary Dinnage, ' The theme of woman alone, facing up to truth, finding herself (and so on) has become . . . a cliché, and one feels a touch of disappointment here. But again it is the South African context that matters. It seems to be not so much Vera's past sexual secrets that dissolve the marriage, but the fact that she has been the active campaigner, going ahead alone.'²⁹ Vera's acceptance of her aloneness in continuing her work is a great hope for South Africa.

It is important to note that Ben believes their marriage was failure but 'Vera sees it as ^a stage on the way, along with others, many different. Everyone ends up moving alone towards the self.' (p.306) Justin Cartwright observes, 'with great dexterity and force Gordimer combines all these stories - career, colleagues, political struggles, sexual love, identity, family - into a compelling narrative about one woman's mature assessment of her life in South Africa.'³⁰

Vera's biological self, 'her young self when all other faculties of judgement were blinded by sex' (p.306), and her cultural self slowly

become less powerful and almost dissolve into the spiritual self. With her decision to live alone with the blacks purely as a friend, Vera, is at last able to arrive at the stage of her identity as a human being beyond race and gender and complete her process of defining and discovering the self. She, thus becomes a missionary shaping the future.

Sibongile

Sibongile's journey to the discovery of 'aloneness' is similar to Vera's. The expression of her biological self is not like Vera because she belongs to the dehumanised black community suffering under the consequences of apartheid for a period of fifty years. Hence, her biological self is not dominant like Vera's. With the years as her familial responsibilities no longer hold her in the family her cultural self becomes less powerful so that her spiritual self only remains dominating in her life.

Sibongile has lived a very hard life in the exile and for her sex was not the luxury like Vera. She reminds Didymus of that life, 'Have I lived like any other woman, hubby coming home regularly from work every day? Have I known, months on end, whether you were dead or alive?' (p.99) Being young both Sibongile and Didymus wanted to live together and enjoy a normal comfortable life during their period of exile. But this urgency diminishes same after their return home.

Back in their country, Sibongile wins the election of the Movement and Didymus although an active member of the Movement, is defeated. The tight schedule of the Movement's work and Sibongile's spiritual self's demand to work for her people reaches such a stage that when 'Didymus did make the approaches of love making Sibongile felt no response' (p.133) and she could 'lay beside him, not saying goodnight for him to try to rouse her again.' (p.135) The biological self of Sibongile thus becomes less powerful.

Sibongile's cultural self plays a prominent role when she maintains her family in the exile and after their return. She brings up their daughter, Mpho in the all-facilitating atmosphere of London, 'with her own bathroom, fresh milk delivered at the front door in Notting Hill Gate every morning, tidy people who sorted their newspapers for recycling' (pp.50-51) Sibongile does not like that Mpho, brought up in London should go to Alexandra because, according to her, how can such a girl, 'be expected to stand more than one night . . . going out across a yard to a toilet used by everyone round about !' (pp.50-51) She does not want the shades of such worst life, she and Didymus lived in their childhood, on Mpho. However, she explains to Mpho what has been done to her people. Mpho, being educated in London, can speak neither the Zulu of her mother nor the Xhosa of her father, and Sibongile

tells her, 'My girl, that is exactly what has been done to our people ... you were robbed of your birth – that should have been right here. Take back your language.' (p.50)

Sibongile turns out to be very anxious mother about Mpho when she is made pregnant by Oupa. She is so upset that she thinks it would have been better if Mpho would not have been brought home, 'to get pregnant at school, like very school girl from a location.' (p.173) Sibongile wants the proper development of Mpho.

Sibongile's cultural self clashes with her spiritual need for social work. For instance, when Mpho leaves home without informing anyone Sibongile has to attend a press conference on the same day. She hesitates to leave home as she worries about Mpho, although she knows that, 'personal obligations must be subordinate to the cause, always had been in exile'. (p.183) It is only after Didymus's promise that he would inform her, Sibongile goes out.

Sibongile's cultural self is anxious not to break her marriage and also home, although 'she did not have time to do the daily tasks that would maintain it...'. (pp.74-75) Still after her return from duties late in the night on the next day before going to office, Didymus could see her, 'going from room to room, inspecting the traces of her absence, closing

cupboard doors in Mpho's little room, changing the kitchen bin shut on something he or Mpho had neglected to throw away.' (p.126)

Through the same cultural self, Sibongile understands Didymus who is defeated in Movement's election and is given the work of writing the history of the Movement. She knows that Didymus is insulted and is depressed. It is to Vera that Sibongile confesses, 'I'm showing interest, I'm talking about whether he's written letters ... whether he's organizing his notes' (p.132) She believes that as her part has changed so is Didymus's. For her, 'He's still a living man who has work to do even though it can't be what he'd choose.' (p.133)

Sibongile discovers the need to work for her people in the changing political and social situation of South Africa which needs stability and equality while apartheid is crumbling down. At her office she stresses that the people employed will have, 'to work harder, not less than they would for some white boss.' (p.74) She has her office and battery of commands - computers, fax, assistants whose poor education and lack of skills she tolerates while disciplining and training them. She has to attend many meetings and conferences and Didymus is afraid that her free ways of living may be misunderstood by others. He does not know how to give her 'the benefit of his own

experience, teach her how to conduct herself if she wanted to realize the ambitions he saw were awakened in her.' (p.78)

According to Rosemary Dinnage, 'The marriage of Sibongile and Didymus remains close because, though they have been physically separated, as blacks they have to be together in their commitment.'³¹ However, in her married life Sibongile's urge to work for her people remains very strong in her mind. But although she is black and belongs to majority, her life is not free from dangers. As a member of multiparty commission in negotiation talks she becomes a popular leader which causes her name to appear on the hit-list as one day, 'pushed under the front door, a note written in straggly capitals called her a black bitch who should keep her cunt out of politics.' (p.263)

Sibongile finds that she is alone in her mission for her people but facing the threat of death she continues her work with the same dedication. Didymus always accompanies her wherever she goes with a gun in the inner pocket of his jacket but Sibongile cares for Didymus, she looks at the gun, 'with disgust, and constantly asks Didymus if he's sure the safety catch is on, there against his body.' (p.286) She is on a mission all about the world now as the delegate of her country, and is in search of funds for the election campaign. She is tipped for a portfolio in the cabinet when it came. There are newspaper photographs in

which she can be picked out among Japanese and German dignitaries and Scandinavian politicians. She meets different people and collects funds for the Movement : 'No pledges, she says : cheques not promises. And she gets them too.' (p.302)

Sibongile becomes a strong activist for the rights of the blacks. According to Laurretta Ngcobo, 'if South African women are going to emerge stronger, equal and able to speak in their own voice, there should be a greater readiness on the part of others to create room for them and a willingness to step a side from positions of leadership which have been guaranteed by privileges in the past.' ³²

Sibongile knows that although she is alone, her work is very important in stabilising society so she does not go away from it in spite of the occasional problems created by her biological and cultural selves. She accepts her spiritual self's dominance and completes the discovery of her 'self.'

Other Women

Vera and Sibongile represent the intellectual life of a white and a black woman respectively in South Africa while other characters show the remaining roles and position of a woman in African Society.

Annick

Although Annick, Vera's daughter, is a white and a doctor she becomes a lesbian and does not believe in the need of a man in sex.

Collocation This attitude ^ais shock to the human civilization. However, by adopting a black female baby she tries to discover purpose in her life. This is a new solution suggested by Annick in the post-apartheid situation to find peace and friendship between the blacks and the whites.

Mpho

Mpho, the Maqomas' daughter represents those African girls who being educated in western countries can not speak their mothertongues. She also represents the free ways of behaviour as Oupa tells Vera that he is not the first man for Mpho and Ivan, too, tells her that Mpho will without any hesitation agree to sleep with him. When Mpho is made pregnant Sibongile refers to other school girls who become pregnant at an early age. Being a daughter of a well-to-do and sophisticated *Syntax* parents Mpho's life is settled by them but this is not possible for other poor girls in South Africa.

Oupa's Wife

Oupa's wife, like most of the black women lives away from her husband a separate life. Although Oupa works in a city with a white lawyer like Vera for his own people, he does not try or is not able to

bring his wife and kids with him in the city and lead a happy life like the whites. Oupa's wife is surprised to see her husband who comes without any intimation, while departing, too, she is silent and normal which shows that she is happy and does not feel any rejection in such a lot because it represents the African woman's submissive lot. No one informs her of Oupa's hospitalization which shows the lack of communication facility to blacks. The things that Oupa's wife is not able to see her husband during his illness illustrates the ways of African woman's life. 9

Mpho's Grandmother

Mpho's grandmother represents the innocent and ignorant but loving African rural women. She believes in traditional ways of life and hence does not want to have Mpho's abortion. She says, 'we are not white people' (p.187) to have abortions.

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