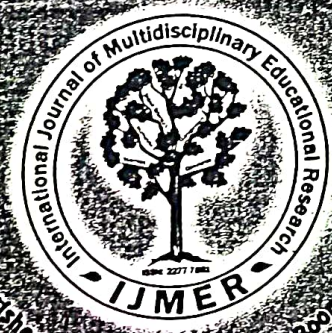
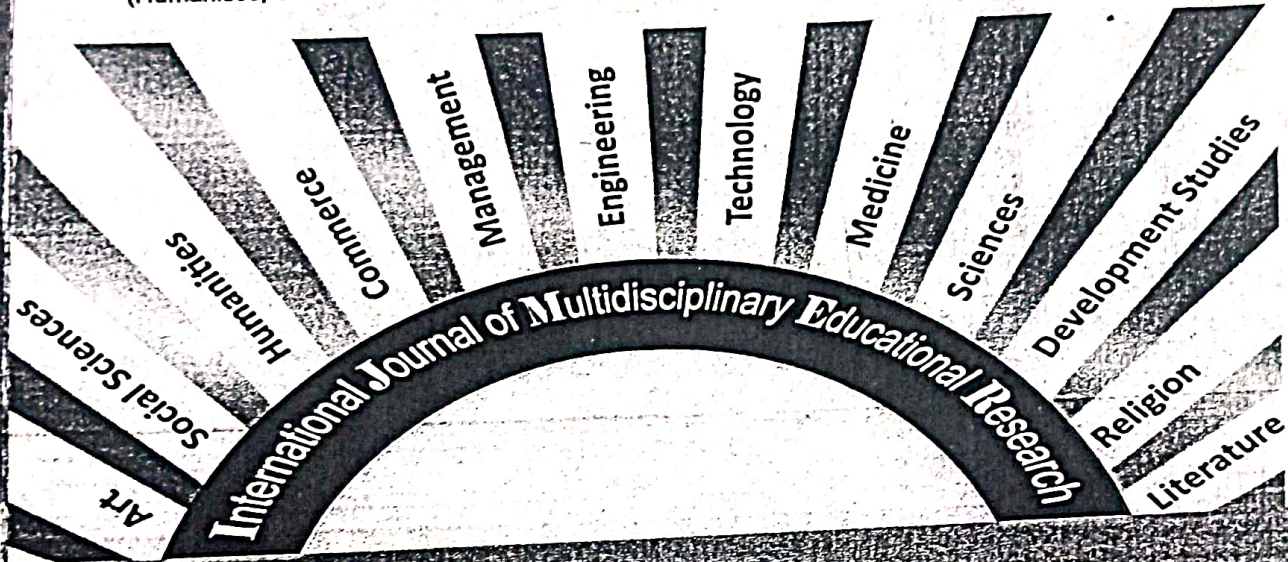


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George Lamming's Novel *The Season of Adventure*: A Backward-Glance for a Forward March

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Abstract: *Season of Adventure* (1960) as the title implicates, explores how true freedom is achieved in the lives of the West Indian people, both in the realms of their social and personal lives. The Chapter traces and unfolds the unresolved dilemma of the coloured middle class who has turned its back on its African ancestry and heritage. Lamming's ennobling vision to reconcile the diverse heritage of the West Indies as symbolised in the character of Fola, a mulatto girl has been highlighted.

Key words: Vodoun ceremony, Black Consciousness, Creole, Authentic, Mulatto, Tonelle

Narration

There is an intricate network of paradoxes working around the novel-personal, racial, national and cultural. This novel records the events of the fictional island San Cristobal after three years of attaining its independence. It also illustrates the reasons for the fall of the First Republic because the ruling class belongs to middle class black elite of the society, which predominantly imposes white cultural values. The ruling class tries to destroy the indigenous African culture of the peasant masses, eventually that becomes the bone of contention between these two classes of people. The African Vodoun Ceremony, a serpent cult which has survived in the island from the time of slavery, acts as a connecting link. Fola's dilemma about her personal, racial, national and cultural dilemmas has been resolved artistically by Lamming when she goes through a set of transformations. Her search for her father is also symbolic of the young nation's search for its roots. Lamming creatively unifies these two quests. Ashcroft says ". . .



modern black consciousness . . . is the first assertion of those black cultures which colonisation sought to suppress or deny." Near the tonelle, Fola has been resurrected to her "black self" and accepts her African origins. Fola could boldly say: "What I am comes out of this". Fola who has been studying in the exclusive girls' college in San Cristobal is an outstanding student. Charlot, her teacher is attracted to her beauty. Fola, who has denied her African past, is led by steps to recognise in her the African instinct. The attitude of rejecting and insulting of blacks has gone deep into her blood. Fola looks at her skin which is brown as sugar and cries out in realisation that it is not race, the European race to which she belongs. The horrible history hidden behind her light skin is understood: "It was and is the contagious black mail of slavery working a crime on every skin that comes too thick with colour. Not race, but the black mail of slavery" (Season 94). This is her painful backward glance to her past. Fola comes to this shocking realisation that she is a victim of slavery. When the English in their role as masters, seduced the Negress, the mulatto offspring born out of such union would naturally be given an elevated position above the Negroes and enjoy certain privileges in the society which has caused rivalry between the Negroes and mulattos. Fola accepts her African heritage as "her natural gift of legacies" (93). She accepts her Negro ancestry as her original roots. Fola also realises that her light skin is not a cause for her to feel proud of but a condition of shame. Sarah Milbury-steen says regarding the position of a mulatto in the society, "A mulatto in the post colonial world is an object of scorn or even hatred for blacks and whites alike" (qtd. in Simoes 47). Everybody knows that a mulatto's birth is impure due to her mixed blood. Her white skin itself is an open secret and shame which she cannot hide. Thus Lamming says "Her shame, like that of all San Cristobal was unavoidable" (94). Lamming runs the two quests in parallels. The first one is Fola who has denied the African past and her consequent reconciliation to her African heritage. The second one is Fola's search



for her own father, for she doesn't know who her father is. The two quests therefore become one. This search conveys a wider perspective of a nation's quest for its roots. Thus Fola starts her journey to search into her origins. There is a death - like condition in Fola which can only be resurrected when a spiritual reconnection with Africa is performed. Kenneth Ramchand points out, since the ceremony is for the resurrection of the dead it lends itself symbolically to Fola's condition :

The middle class West Indian's denial of the masses, and his shame of Africa are seen as obstacles to the fulfilment of the person, and the inauthentic existence of the unfulfilled person is a kind of death. Fola is imagined as such a dead person, and the creative task of the novel is to probe this condition and to feel for the problems and possibilities of re-birth. (143)

Fola is split between the authentic and inauthentic self, the real self is the self that has a sense of its African past, that is sensitive to the *tonelle's* music. Her unauthentic self is an artificial one moulded by her European education and upbringing. "It is not until Fola has undergone, through humility, a second death at the Vodoun ceremony . . . that she resurrects as a new personality" (Kemoli 314). Humility is the highest spiritual quality. Fola's second death as Kemoli points out is that she is dead to her ego or to her pride. Fola needs humility to accept and reconcile herself with the black people whom she considers inferior due to their black skin.

Thus, this African serpent cult or Vodoun Ceremony acts as a connecting link with Africa that has been severed through their forced exile to West Indies. Fola through her experience in the *tonelle* could identify herself with the black peasant masses. She draws the portrait of her non-existent father with a mixture of white and black colours, as she, in the given context, rightly guesses that her father could be either



black or white. The inhabitants of San Cristobal identify themselves with the portrait which looks quite familiar for the black and white picture represents San Cristobal's population of mixed race. Fola reconciles with her bastard origins through her visit to the maternity ward. Her shame due to her bastard origins and the artist Chiki's shame due to his black skin, the kind of shame experienced by blacks in general have been beautifully connected and reconciled. Finally she prefers to identify herself with the peasants, the lowest of the low.

"Season of Adventure is the first literary celebration of the Steel Bands." The sound of drums and the specific Creole English language spoken by the poor people have been combined in order to dispel the complexities between the middle class and the poor. Since the peasants have no good education they cannot speak Standard English like the middle class. It is this oppressor's language which has separated the peasant folk from the middle class and has resulted in the total failure of the First Republic. The newly elected leader Dr. Kofi James William Baako urges people to understand the "language of the drums" which should be the model for the appropriation of the double-cultural heritage. In the end there is miraculous transformation of random, noisy beat of drums into meaningful music due to the fusion of Christian, African/West Indian traditions. Chiki, the painter whose paintings are inspired by biblical themes loses his creativity through the confusion created by the double - cultural heritage. His art has been revived only when he meaningfully reconciles himself to the two traditions. Thus Lamming creatively dispels the racial and the cultural dilemma of the people and concludes the novel with a meaningful season of adventure in order to move forward in a hassle free society. The novel has profound intellectual significance: "what is important is its symbolic drama, the drama of redemption, the drama of returning, and the drama of cleansing for a commitment towards the future."



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