

A Postcolonial Analysis of George Lamming's *Season of Adventure* (1960)

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Abstract: *Postcolonial endeavour establishes the foundation of the binary power relation between colonizer and the colonized, orient and occident, master and slave, superior and inferior. It also establishes a well-defined discourse of domination and subjugation. "Season of Adventure" is Lamming's fourth novel. It was published in 1960. "Season of Adventure" dealt with the post-independence period of a Caribbean island. It showed that the post-independence period handed over power to the elite society. The elite society made a huge gap between them and the peasant class because their mind was per – occupied with the idea of colonialism. Again, it brought the peasant class to a state of alienation and encouraged poor natives to resurrect racism, and rouse nationalism to create resistance to establish their identity. "Season of Adventure" exposes the fall of 'First Republic' which was controlled by the elite society.*

Key Words: Colonial, Postcolonial, Alienation, Resistance, identity, Nationalism, and Racism, etc.

Introduction: There is no cast-iron formula to define postcolonial literature in a concrete way because it is most interdisciplinary in nature. Postcolonial writing in English is defined as 'that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspective.'¹ Leela Gandhi in '*Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*' comments: ".....postcolonial studies (is) about the worst victims of colonial oppression, or about most significant anti-colonial insurgencies over the last decades, postcolonial studies has emerged both as a meeting point and the battleground for a variety of disciplines and theories whereas some critics invoke the hyphenated form 'Post-colonialism' as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonizing process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath – on the grounds that the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation."² Postcolonialism is a reflective academic assessment of the socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-economic legacy of colonialism and imperialism. It discusses mainly the impact of the human control and exploitation of colonized people and their native lands. More specifically, it discusses the binary power relationship between the colonizer and colonized, self and the other, white and the black, orient and the occident, master class and the slave class, inferior and the superior, civilized and the uncivilized.

Discussion: Lamming is probably the first literary man in the Caribbean islands who very consciously represents the binary power relationship between colonized and the colonizer at the psychological level, during and after colonization. If the characters in Vic Reid's 'New Day'(1949) fail to understand their mother country and its revolutionary spirit, the characters in Lamming's novel 'Season of Adventure' are totally opposite to them. In this novel, the pivotal characters are preoccupied with the colonial reality and it becomes the prime theme of Lamming's novels. Lamming exposes the psychological texture of the Caribbean mind as they face colonial oppression and struggle for independence. The novelist understands that one needs to have a clear conception of individual psychology to understand the psychological and spiritual life of a community. That is why Lamming in his novels, layer by layer, exposes complexities that motivate every character to develop self-consciousness and think over his present condition individually and intellectually.

'Season of Adventure' basically deals with the theme of resistance. In this novel, Lamming mainly focuses on the collective subconscious mind because he thinks that Haitian Voodoo and the ceremony of the soul may importantly provide material for his work. They can also be set as symbols and myths. Regarding the ceremony of soul, Lamming comments in his seminal work 'The Pleasures of Exile'(1960):

"This ceremony of soul is regarded by the Haitian peasant as a solemn communion; for her as, at first hand, the secrets of the Dead. The celebrants are mainly relatives of the deceased who, ever since their death, have been locked in water. It is the duty of the Dead to return and offer, on his momentous night, a full and honest report on their past relations with the living. A wife may have to say why she refused love to her husband; a husband may have to say why he deprived his wife of their children's affection. It is the duty of the Dead to speak, since their release from that purgatory of water cannot be realized until they have fulfilled the contract which this ceremony symbolizes. The Dead need to speak if they are going to enter that eternity which will be their last and permanent Future. The living demand to hear whether there is any need for forgiveness, for redemption; where, in fact, there may be any guide which may help them towards reforming their present condition. Different as they may be in their present state of existence, those alive and those now dead – their ambitions point to a similar end. They are interested in their Future." (The Pleasures of Exile: 9)³

The ceremony of soul is used symbolically to provide multiple facts at the same time. As Selwyn R. Cudjoe points out:

"Firstly, it acknowledges the necessity of communicating with the past; second, this effective myth, filled with innumerable possibilities, gives the work texture; and the third, the way in which the upper classes recognize or ignore Voodoo and the relationship between the followers and the non-followers manifests the class distinctions and provides Lamming with his particular manner of literary vision." (Resistance and Caribbean Literature: 203)⁴

Lamming understands the need of recording and reconstructs these relationships in his works. The episode of Fola is set to show the cultural relationship. A middle-class young woman, Fola is compelled to witness the Vodum right in Touelle, a temple. She was thrust into the scene only to make her remember her identity. When Fola tries to get rid of her underestimating identity and hopes for a better one, she is forced to witness the ceremony of the soul. After observing the world of voodoo and the Steele band she discovers her own identity and she composes a new consciousness. From her father's reference, she is gradually getting the

identity of the upper class, but she commits an unpardonable crime when she sexed with a lower-class boy and become pregnant. Now she is going to dispossess the previous neo-colonist status for the unpardonable crime.

As the Steele band is banned and the republic's vice-president is murdered, the lower class bring themselves to the street to raise their voice of protest and resistance. The lower class gradually tried to assert their importance in the republic and therefore established their identity. Lamming here defines the term 'independence' and shows the relationship between occident and orient in an independent country. The protagonist of Lamming's novel '*Season of Adventure*,' Powell asserts:

“ ‘change my arse,’ he shouted, ‘is independence what it is? One day in July you say you want to be that there thing, an’ one day in a next July the law says all right, from now you’s what you askin’ for. What change can that be? Might as well call a dog a cat and hope to hear him mew. Is only words an’ name what don’ signify nothing.” (Season of Adventure: 17)⁵

In this novel Lamming makes us acknowledge the relationship between self and others. He thinks freedom is more important than any political sentiment, caste, crew, flag, or speech. Through his mouthpiece Powell, Lamming defines, “Free is how you are from the start, an’ when it look different you got to move, just move, an’ when you movin’ say that it is a natural freedom that make you.”⁶ To him freedom is as spontaneous as Powell's steel music band should be free from any biasness.

Most importantly Lamming deals with the theme of nationalism in his novel '*Season of Adventure*' (1960). He begins the novel with the following lines, “Beyond the horizons of the trees, it was too black to see the sky. But the music was there, loud as a gospel to a believer's ears. It was the music of steel Drums, hard strident and clear...” from the very beginning, Lamming gives us a hint that he is going to celebrate the steel band of his native people. V.S.Naipaul also acknowledges the existence of the steel band in his '*The Middle Passage*' (1962) as he says ‘The city throbbed with steel bands. A good opening line for a novelist or a travel writer but the steel band used to be regarded as a high manifestation It was a sound I detested.’

In the novel, Lamming does not use steel bands as mere musical bands but they symbolize nationalistic aspiration. The sound of the drum rings with rhythm throughout the novel. At the same time member of the band was directly involved with the political movement of the country. At the juncture of the novel, all the band members bring themselves on the road to involve themselves in the formation of the new government.

“Gort led in solo with the calypoes and digging songs that had first christened his master's.....his dead master's drum.” (Season of Adventure: 358)⁷

But it needs to remember that Lamming is different from Naipaul in his approach to nationalism. Our present novel '*Season of Adventure*' deals with nationalism and its failure in San Cristobal when it was declared free. In this regard, Fanon's opinion is particularly important. He says, ‘In the colonial countries, the spirit of indulgence is dominant at the core of the bourgeoisie; and this is because the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the western bourgeoisie from whom it has learned its lesson. It follows the western

bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stage of exploration and invention It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearless or the will to succeed of youth.” (The Wretched of the Earth: 124)⁸

Fanon’s description of the new ruling class in postcolonial countries is very much the same as George Lamming’s description. In ‘*Season of Adventure*’ Lamming shows the contrast between the lower class and the Middle class who wants to imitate European culture in the post-independence period. Throughout the novel, Lamming shows the contrast between the drum Boy’s and the middle class. The Drum Boys immediately earn the taste of nationalism and the language of the Drum. On the contrary, the middle class continuously tries to imitate the language, manner, and culture of the European people because they think them as a superior class. ‘Is like how education wipe out everything San Cristobal got except the ceremony an’ the bands. To teacher an’ all who well-to-do it happens. Everythin’ wipe out, leavin’ only what they learn.’⁹ The key theme of this novel is exposed in the declaration of a Drum Boys, Crim when he says, ‘man must got somethin’ that he can’t let go like how Gort hold that drum.’ Lamming not only deals with the theme of politics, he diverts his topic from politics to cultural phenomena. The beat of the drum not only highlights West Indian cultural, it also connects African heritage also. The importance of the drum throughout the novel can be perceived at the end of the novel when the newly elected president in second republic comments: “It was language which caused the First republic to fall. And the second would suffer the same fate; the second and the Third unless they tried to find a language which was no less immediate than the language of the drums.” Lamming describes that the individual relation of the Drum Boys with the drum is highly symbolic because after the establishment of the second republic, the sound of the drum retains their cultural heritage. Fanon in ‘*The Wretched of the Earth*’ (2001) brings out the picture of the disillusionment of poor in the following way: “The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly – coloured through they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives the masses begin to sulk; they turn away from this nation in which they have been given no place and begin to lose interest in it.”¹⁰ It is noteworthy to mention that Lamming’s root intention is not to criticize West Indian middle class people or not to sentimentalize peasant class. Novelist’s root intention is to lay bare the existing political issue, not the typical political issues, but he deals with social issues which directly involve individuals and their relationships.

In ‘*Season of Adventure*’ Lamming does not deal with an individual conscience but deals with a whole society and its social issues, at the same time he amalgamates history with it, which shows how records of history formulate a society. Lamming’s main intention is to describe public issues. To do it successfully, the novelist describes a society with honesty and set it as the background for this present novel. In this novel, society is represented as a dominating character.

The main story of the novel revolves around an educated upper-middle-class girl Fola. Fola visits the slum area with an urge to witness the voodoo ceremony, the ceremony of the soul. During her visit to Tonelle, Fola plunges herself into the ritual.

'Part product of that world, living still under the shadow of its past disfigurement, all her emotions had sprung from a nervous caution to accept it as her root, her natural gift of legacies. Fear was the honest and ignorant instinct she had felt in the tonelle. Her shame, like that of all San Cristobal was unavoidable.' (Season of Adventure: 94)¹¹

In Tonelle Fola develops self-consciousness and begins to perceive the incompleteness of her life as she is completely unknown of her ethnic root. She becomes desperate to find out her personal and racial identity. In the progressive part of the novel, Lamming exposes the crisis of Fola's life through a set of characters. Fola begins to estimate her mother's secrecy and sexuality as vulgarity and a cheap mentality. Again, she estimates her grandfather as the beast. But she shows little respect to his teacher, Charlot as introduces his students to the history and especially with the voodoo ceremony.

Lamming sketches the character of Fola with intense care. After getting self-consciousness, Fola develops a private relationship with slum dwellers in the peasant world or the neglected class or suppressed class. Fola is seriously involved with Chiki and Powell. The consequence of the involvement was not very favourable to her. Racism and colour discrimination bring huge obstacles. Powell, the political fundamentalist, plans an uncompromising, terrible assault because her skin colour is slightly civilized. Powell suspects people of her skin colour never can encompass the black-skinned indigenous people.

All the sets of binary power relations are presented with realistic detail that every set has come forward as a rigid episode in the general drama of Flora's shattered life. Every relation is portrayed with such artistic craftsmanship that all the events demand readdresses of critical acclaim. The character of Agnes is represented symbolically. The character of Agnes is portrayed to show the real condition of the Caribbean island. In the novel, Agnes is a secretive mother of a rebellious daughter and a willing sex worker of her age. The condition of the island was also the same in the past. Presently, Agnes is expecting something better would happen in her life to give her a dignified identity, as the island is hoping to have a dignified identity would be established by the native people whom the island has reared for so long. Again, Powell is represented as the dissatisfied, extremist whose only motto is to establish a dignified identity for the indigenous coloured people. " 'What I do, I do alone,' said Powell, 'no help from you an' your lot, 'cause I learn, I learn how any playing 'bout with your lot bound to end. You know the rules too good, an' it too late, it too late for me to learn what rules you have for murderin' me. So is me go murder first. Otherwise is you what will murder me or make me murder myself.'"¹²

Though Fola is set as the pivotal character in the novel, still other semi-important characters like Belinda, a prostitute, and Piggott, a new exploiter, are portrayed with such craftsmanship that they also fetch the readers' attention surpassingly. In this regard, Lamming is quite different from V.S.Naipaul who loves to give prominence on an individual character. At the very end of the novel we love to see Lamming says:

"I believe deep in my bones that the mad impulse which drove Powell to his criminal defeat was largely my doing. I will not have this explained away by talk about environment; nor can I allow my own moral infirmity to be transferred to a foreign conscience, labelled imperialist. I shall go beyond my grave in the knowledge that I am responsible for what happen to my brother.

Powell still reside somewhere in my heart, with a dubious love, some strange, nameless shadow of regret; and yet with the deepest, deepest nostalgia. For I have never felt myself to be an honest part of anything since the world of his childhood deserted me.” (Season of adventure; 332)¹³

Lamming interestingly introduces the reader to the character of Fola and her journey from innocence to experience. She develops intelligence during her participation in a voodoo ceremony; there she discovers herself and her place in the big universe. The way she discovers herself may be claimed as ‘every man’s backward glance’ and her development in the novel is the symbolic representation of the relationship between the middle class and lower class, eurocentrism, and nativity. With slight auto-biographical strain, Lamming portrays the character of Powell and Chiki to show the blockage of double cultural heritage. The social discrimination is best represented in the conversation between the two peasants Crim and Powell when they discover the light-coloured girl in Tonelle.

Another important postcolonial characteristic highlighted in the novel is that the theme of alienation. This is somewhat different. Fola is suffering from alienation not in exile but in her own country. In tonelle, where the voodoo ceremony was performed, in a place which reminding one of the slave migrations and the state of African in West Indies. By discussing about Fola’s intellectual development during voodoo ceremony and her condition among the peasant, Lamming symbolically highlighting Caribbean Negro’s view about African people. Fola feels wonder to experience that why West Indian Negro are so antagonistic in Africa. To make it more convincing Lamming inform about a parallel relationship between America and European:

“It was because, for Liza and herself it was because their relation to the tonelle was far more personal than any monument could ever be to an American in his mad pursuit of origins. Personal and near.Her relation to the tonelle was near and more personal since the conditions of her life to-day, the conditions of Liza’s life in this very moment, could recall a departure that was near and tangible: the departure of those slaves who had started the serpent cult which the drums in their drums eloquence had sought to resurrect”(Season of Adventure: 93-4)¹⁴

Lamming confesses that West Indian Negroes did not feel themselves safe in Africa, but opposite picture is seen in America; they felt secure during their journey to Europe. The West Indian Negro’s crisis in Africa is more problematic and complex. The West Indian Negroes encounter this problem because they did not have intense experience of past.

“His relation to Africa is more problematic because he has not been introduced to it through history. He knows it through rumour and myth which is made sinister by a foreign tutelage, and he becomes, through the gradual conditioning of his education, identified with fear....” (Season of Adventure: 160)¹⁵

Lamming in ‘*Season of Adventure*’ focuses on the complex relationship between West Indian Negro and African. The middle-class people’s attempt to deny peasant class creates an obstacle for the discovery of individual identity. Through Fola’s character Lamming shows destruction and reconstruction of the ethnic identity. Voodoo ceremony or the ceremony of the soul at Tonelle or resurrection of dead influence Fola and her lot to discover herself. Charlotte thinks Fola’s response to bit of drum in voodoo is almost enchanting and spiritual.

At the climax of the novel, the readers' expectation reach at its zenith, the readers expect some terrible or serious is going to happen with Fola as made a complicate racial relationship with the peasant drum boy. Lamming provides an air of truth to Charlotte's initial observation of the drum by providing a connection link between voodoo drum and steel band music. Charlotte's continuous insistence and Fola's confident denial serve to confirm that she is aware more than she cares to admit.

In this novel Lamming prepares a cock tail of Caribbean history and cultural heritage. Fola become confused with liveliness and monotony of the voodoo music. Besides, Charlotte's typical behaviours made her more puzzled.

"The voices were all raised in prayer answering to the grave supplications of this priest. Fola look to see if there was moment in the tent; but her glance was intercepted by an old woman who steel watched her. Was the old woman's glance and accident? The voices had wrought a gradual contamination of Fola's sense. Was she becoming a part of their belief? Would they really hear dead voices in the tent? Her questions were other than an interest to examine. She became aware of their contagion in their mind. The prayers were a conspiracy against the doubt. The voices grew loud and louder in their prayers, each prayer like a furious bargain of her faith." (Season of Adventure: 33-4)¹⁶

The episode of ceremony of soul is set in the novel to give a close profound picture of the characters of the novel and their intentions. With the characters, namely Charlotte and Fola the novelist shows subjective impression with crime and power, lamming exposes totalitarian theory.

Like Lamming H.G. de Lissier has also given same account of ceremony in '*White Witch of Rosehall*' (1929) but in a bit different way. Rutherford, the pivotal character of the story also come to experience with his friend Rider, but he does not plunge himself within the crowd. In '*Heart of Darkness*' (1902) of Conrad, Kurtz is also affected by the African primitive class. In the writings of both Conrad and Lissier the gap between the colonizer and the colonized education is represented with huge craftsmanship.

In "*Season of Adventure*", 'the dark continent' prospect is observed in a character who is to be offloaded; the exciting aspects of the ceremony of soul, are described as a depreciating force, by influencing Fola to partake in the ceremony at the Tonelle. Lamming has not been intended to describe Fola's action with negative impression. Fola participates in the ceremony of soul not to share the belief of the peasant. Rather when she recollects her experience, she comes to the realization that her fear and ignorance are intensely associated with her distance from the West Indian Negroes. Fola gradually starts to discover herself from the same and her education and upbringing have helped her to erase the shameful past.

Voodoo ceremony is celebrated to resurrect the dead which is a symbolic representation of purgation of past and hope for the new world and the better world. Fola in her season of adventure comes to the republic to keep herself isolated as 'decrepit Skelton near federal drive polluting the live air with their corpse breathing.' Fola finds herself in the state of dilemma between the shame of rediscovering herself and the safety of denial, Fola in the state of purgation, accuses herself like 'the dead souls that could not trespass beyond their recorded lives, she had cut herself off from her own future.'

Conclusion: Lamming focuses on the cult and the cultists to reconstruct lost identity, and to surprise Fola in her season of adventure, the novel does not represent Tonelle with sentimental viewpoint. At the very end of the novel, the meeting place is destroyed by fire, and the high priest gradually lost command. Baako, the politician comments with sociological interest:

“He said he would ask the citizens of the Reserve and all like them to think again about their relation to the tonelle. He would not order them to change, but he would try to find a language which might explain that the magic of medical science was no less real than the previous magic of prayer. The difference was one of speed. Injections worked faster than a bribe for knowledge they could not guarantee.” (Season of Adventure: 365)¹⁷

‘*Season of Adventure*’ is one of the most significant Caribbean novels that deals with the African Negro, Lamming deals with Africa not to share his opinion about Africa but he exposes the disputed elements of West Indian culture and nationalism. Fola’s special circumstances although an unavoidable need of the contemporary Caribbean island influenced her to take the past with humility, fearlessness, and receptivity to assure concrete identity and freedom.

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