
CHAPTER III : IN THE CASTLE OF MY SKIN

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In the Castle of My Skin represents the Caribbean child during its first phase of his relationship with the illusory mother - 'Within the (illusory) Mother.' He completes the process of individuation and emerges as an individual personality during this first stage. His process of individuation passes through the three stages involving his relationship, With his own mother, 'Within the Mother', 'With the Mother', and 'Away from the Mother'.

WITHIN THE MOTHER

'Within the Mother' is the earliest phase during which the Caribbean child - G, the hero of In the Castle of My Skin - experiences symbiotic unity with his mother. G the protagonist and the narrator of his story, of his own life, is nine years old. He lives in Barbados, which is called 'Little England', the colony of whites. In this novel Lamming depicts a 'home', which consists of a mother and an illegitimate son. Their home is a movable property, because the threat of eviction constantly lingers on their heads.

In that impermanent house she creates 'home' which gives a cozy, womblike atmosphere. She is the mother of G (George Lamming himself). She maintains her family by hard labour and makes both ends meet. She is not only his mother but a guide and a teacher also. Their relationship is intricate.

On his ninth birthday G's mother gives him bath and when it is over she leaves naked G, thinking that he will go inside, and begins to talk with neighbours. But nine years old G stands before the ladies and waits for the next order of his mother. Generally, the children of this age are independent, but G is not, he fears to act individually. This scene shows that G is mother's child and is living in the castle of his mother's skin. Mary Donnelly rightly comments, 'G lives in a state of pre-Oedipal unity with his mother, recalling the un-differentiated liquid atmosphere of womb, He is almost literally in a state of gestation and, like a fetus is dependent upon his mother for everything.'¹ But it should be noted that this state is far more in the case of the normal child because his family inherits the salve family pattern imposed by white plantation owners for centuries. Ninth year is the phase of self-assertion but G still cannot take decisions on his own. Actually he is on the threshold of the phase

of latency. He can not even go to play with his friend, Trumper without the permission of his mother.

It is the first phase of West Indian mother child relationship, where 'acceptance is all' for the child. He obeys her when he takes primary education. He is one with his mother. Mother and G are the part of one identity.

In the case of the West Indian mother it is natural to see her child to take the position like 'Whites' in the society. Manjit Singh calls it 'virtual surrender to white value system.'² She sends her child to take primary education because education is an ideal solution for child's future for her. She is ready to toil for her child's future and for that she plays double role, as a nurturer and as an earner. She has to perform the role of a father more than the role of a mother. G proudly says, 'my mother who really fathered me.'³ Hence mother is the father of a child in Caribbean society. She struggles to elevate her child's position in the society. She is the guiding force for her child.

Psychologically the relation of mother and child is based on love, affection and care, then only the emotional growth of a child is possible. But in Caribbean colonial society, mother sacrifices her tender

feelings on the altar of 'duty', often she has to forget her 'motherhood'. She is a hard task master, who is vigilant about his education. She sends him in the school regularly and does not allow him to mix in the company of his friends Bob, Boy blue and Trumper, so that they might not ruin his career. She does not allow him to linger at the 'corner'. G says, 'I stopped at the corner to say hallow to him (Bob), but my mother saw me from the varandah and shouted me to hurry up. I ran home, and my mother, unhooked her belt from a nail and lashed me throughly.'⁴ Perhaps she thinks, she and her child are superior to them because she is mullatto, 'being mullatto could be mark of society status.'⁵

When G's mother beats him she, repeats 'to choose between her or his friends.' It makes him laugh because their teacher Mr. Bruce also threatens them like her, then she also joins in his laughter, 'then the switch over take place in her head and she started to laugh.'⁶ She cannot remain hard-hearted for a long time, and we understand that she tries to be angry with him by wearing the mask of sternness which occasionally drops! Her child is her constant companion. In colonial experience it is her need for emotional support. In her desire to teach and guide somebody, Caribbean mother turns to her child. Norman Cameron

states, '.... bearing the mother's own individual stamp that she brings her child to be her constant companion.'⁷ Motherhood is significant in the Caribbean context because the Caribbean mother as a mother is loving but as a father very strict and occasionally terrible. Bob's mother is so furious that she would like to beat him till 'he don't live another second'⁸ and G's mother strikes the naked child till G runs to save himself like a mouse before the cat. The Caribbean child respects his mother, because she is the male person who runs the house. This respect is reflected in the children's talk about the punishment given by their mothers,

'Bob said, "But I won't ever hit her back", he said, 'Whatever she do me I won't ever hit her back.' "You ain't to do that". I (G) said.

'They say you'll be cursed if you hit a mother'
'And she don't hit me for purpose. She does it 'cause She's God - fearing, She always say that Bible say "Spare not the rod and spoil the child ." And 'tis . only that she don't want to spoil me.'

'That's what mine says too.' I said'⁹

G's mother is more practical than 'normal' mother because she is colonial mother with salve past. She has to prepare her child in order to 'survive.'

As G describes, 'My mother on such occasions looked pitiful beyond words. I had often seen her angry or frustrated and in tears, but there were other states of emotion she experienced for which tears were simply inadequate. Seized by the thought of being left alone, she would become filled with an overwhelming ambition for her child, and an ever greater defiance of the odds against her.'¹⁰

WITH THE MOTHER

The second stage of G's relationship with his mother, the child's sense of unity with mother is substituted by his awareness of his separate existence from her from psychological point of view. It is the second phase of child's individuation. Still supervised, guided and economically supported by mother, G is gradually exposed, as he grows, to the world of school, on the one hand, and to the village - world around him on the other. He is now 'With the Mother' not 'within her.' But at the same time it strengthens his ties with the illusory mother, England.

The world of School receives G, first as a student of primary school and then as a student of high school. Mother's ambition to educate her child dictates G's course of growth. It is she who sends him to primary school.

The education given in the Groddeck's Boy School is planned by the colonial masters which whipes out their native identity. Their day in school begins with the prayer to the King of England, 'God save our greicious kind,'¹¹ and then they salute tri-coloured Union Jack, 'the red, and the white and blue. How strong and deep the colours were.'¹² But there is no room for 'black'.

On the day of inspection they receive pennies with embossed head of the King of England. The embossed figure of the king 'automatically' gets embossed on the mental slate of the children. The aim of their curriculum is 'to enable them to praise 'Big England.' And teachers 'stamp' the children, 'made in England.' The objectives of West Indian education were to :
'...teach the mutual interest of the mother country and her dependencies, the national basis of their connection, and the domestic and social duties of the coloured races.'¹³ There is no reference of 'slavery' in their history books. When enquired about it, their teachers say it doesn't exist in Barbados and it isn't any serious matter. Lamming comments, 'It was too far back for anyone to worry about teaching it as history.'¹⁴ Even Jamaica Kiniciad presents the same 'attitute to colonial masters in his book Annie Jones.

Craig Tapping says that history fails to give them 'empowering explanation for the present.'¹⁵ Protagonist Annie understands that icon of an empire is hard to shake because 'once naturalized such obedience as these icons' nobody could subvert, even after emancipation.

Althusser states in his theory that the ruling class holds the state power and it has its disposal two main apparatuses, one is school and other is church. They function predominantly by ideology and, secondly use suitable methods of punishment, expulsion and selection. Such ideology of sepression is used in Groddeck's Boy School On the day of inspection the head teacher punishes a student. G narrates, 'Four Boys were summoned and they bound his hands and feet and streched him flat over a bench. The head teacher removed his jacket and gripped his leather. --- no one could know how long he was beaten or how many stroke he received.'¹⁶ The ideological apparatuses of the colonizers work affectively on the natives as well as on the children without their knowledge. As the children don't understand why the school building and the church are erected within the same enclosure.

Both G's mother and G are the victims of the colonial conspiracy of educating the subjects. The child's mind is being systematically poisoned by the fictitious myth of England as their 'mother country' but G's mother is completely ignorant about it. She

thus unconsciously causes the entrapment on her child by the illusory mother.

G's mother is a symbol for her country during this phase of passive acceptance of the colonial rule. She represents the West Indian community living contentedly under the colonial rule. She is a part of that unchanging pattern of miserable life for two generations. Lamming describes it significantly by referring to the mothers of the land thus, 'Miss Foster', My mother. Bob's mother. It seemed that they were three pieces in a pattern which remained constant. The flow of its history was undisturbed by any difference in the pieces.'¹⁷

G's mother belongs to the generation brought up in the faith that the white people were gods and 'Acceptance was all'¹⁸ for them. She is shielded from the awareness of sufferings by her deep faith in religion. The West Indian community lived by the system of values of the masters as is seen in G's mother's struggle to educate her child and place him in respectable society.

G's exposure to the world of primary school is balanced against his exposure to his own world his native village and its people. Significantly enough, his mother orders him not to mix with his friends, yet G enjoys their company taking care not to be seen by the mother! It reveals how the child desires to have a separate existence now as an individual, he

is ready to disobey his mother, if necessary, to follow the dictates of his own heart.

Unaware of the political conspiracy of education children amuse themselves in public bath, wait to see how pin turns into blade by placing the pin on railway track. G and his friends secretly go to seaside. They enjoy the beautiful landscape of Barbados which is surrounded by the blue lagoons. Hiding a pebble under a leaf at seaside is the favourite game of G. Their other favourite game is swimming. The sea near light house is dangerous where Bob's life comes into danger, when he is nearly drowned, fortunately his life is saved by a giant like fisherman who shouts at them. After swimming they dry their skin in sun. G watches them. Trumper's skin is fair, best of all and clear. Boy Blue is simply black. His blackness makes them laugh. Boy Blue gives funny explanation of his dark skin, 'Just as I was goin' to born the light went out.'¹⁹ Lamming expresses, that is the irony of the life of Barbadians. He comments, 'The light, we admitted, had gone out for many of us.'²⁰ Children do not like the idea of being black.

G's exposure to the world of his village gives him opportunity to acquaint himself with the beliefs and superstitions of his motherland along with his

friends. The people in the village are religious and superstitious. It is part of their mother - culture. Bob tells Boy Blue, Trumper and G the story of Bambi. It shows how he and his women lived happily until European culture 'Sabotages their faiths.' Pa always dreamt of silver and pork and sometimes wedding. Ma says it is bad, wedding and pork in to dream always meant death and silver is disappointment. Another belief is about Caribbean fishermen who never put their nets on the land. It is believed that they should not touch land when they are not being used in the sea because it is not too good for the nets.

G's entry into the world of high school is only in fulfilment of his mother's ambition. Selection of boys from primary school for higher education is one more strategy of the colonizers. Such selection is done every year in Groddeck's Boy School. The school gives scholarship to selective boys to enter highschool. The boys feel proud and wish to go to England for higher education. The head teacher addresses them, 'The future is theirs and they will always remember with gratitude the school which taught them the first things they ever learnt.'²¹ Naturally the privileged boys feel extremely proud and special and desired effect of 'alienation' takes place. It begins from within. G's mother is the victim of this effective

ideology. She sends G to private classes to win the scholarship for his highschool education.

As Bob, Boy Blue, Trumper and G grow older their paths diverges, Mervyn Morris comments, 'Winning a scholarship to a secondary school, G grows away from his roots.'²² Scholarship is a reward given to the school children, is another strategy of colonial masters to terminate them from their own roots, Now G separates himself from his friends and prefers to play on the school ground as it is better than the village ground. Now his identity evolves independently on the school ground by separating himself from his mother and his friends. K.T.Sunitha interprets it as , ' ... a division within the self : In art as in life, village life and school life separate.'²³

In adolescent phase a normal child is generally rebellious and rough in behaviour, but in the case of Caribbean child, he is serious and introvert. He still obeys his mother and teachers and he never even answers back to his mother. He concentrates on his studies seriously, as it is his struggle of survival.' As G is in adolescent stage, Freud says as the male child grows, he identifies himself with his father, as father image is the symbol of power. In the case of G his mother is his father. However, naturally

he turns to his first assistant teacher for guidance as he becomes his ideal. G is fascinated by his teacher as he is interested in theatre and an art. G sees his extended image in his teacher.

Apart from the exposure to the world of school during the period of primary and high school education, G as a growing child, is also exposed to the world of his village. It speeds up the process of his separation from the mother, a child now assures a distinct identity of his own. The historical moment at which he lives in the village is the moment of quick changes. G, along with his friends, is a witness to that most crucial period, marked by the journey of the villagers from the illusion of Mrs.Slime as saviour of his own people to the disillusionment of Mr.Slime as their most cruel betrayer.

Mr.Slime, a teacher from Groddeck's Boy School who resigns and becomes the founder member of 'Friendly Society'. and 'The Penny Bank', Natives faithfully worship him as he educates their children. They have invested their 'Sweat amount' in the bank, in the hope that someday they will have their own piece of land. Mr.Slime is a 'dream merchant.' He has full control over the natives. They obey him and follow orders without any suspicion and regret. Manjit Singh comments, 'Mr.Slime, a dismissed school teacher both exploits and ironically directs the village consciousness to

a moment of change.²⁴ Even the oldest couple Ma and Pa, have invested their amount in Penny Bank. They call him, 'another Moses come to save his people.'²⁵ Mr.Slime works as middle man between Mr.Creighton and the natives, the natives who live under the shadow of 'Creighton's paternal benevolence.'²⁶ Natives have a faith in Mr.Slime because he is of their own kind. When political and economical changes start taking place in Barbados, they look upon him as their guide. The natives have not only invested their amount in Penny Bank but have endorsed on the document of eviction order. Shoemaker is the only person who smells the danger but his knowledge about 'colonial strategy' is limited and he has no power over it. Natives are weak in everything except in their trust.

Pa understand the betrayal of Mr.Slime who wants to buy Pa's house, is helpless to do anything against him, because his 'old wisdom' doesnot work before the 'new order'. Not only are their houses evicted but their peasant roots too. The uprooting of the village itself begins, as the land is sold to outsiders, middle class men with legal deeds laying claim to the estate that Mr. Creighton has sold them through Slime's company. The legal notices of eviction extinguish the fighting spirit of the natives rapidly.

Ngugi Wa Thiang'o states, 'The feudal colonial relationship - Crieghton's paternal 'responsibility' and the peasant's customary rights is finished.'²⁷ The Caribbean village suffers from the double trauma, Mr.Slime their own man, a black agent and his white master both betray their society.

The peculiar nature of the colonial environment, the world of school on the one hand and the village world around him to which G is exposed to emphasize the limitations of G's mother role as colonial Caribbean mother, to guide her child. As a mother, inhabiting the family patterns of the slave past, her exclusive concern is her child. She is obsessed by the ambition of making him a gentleman with a status. She does not take interest in the political activities and changes in the village under the leadership of Mr.Slime. Although the news about the sale of the land is received by her as 'an earthquake', as she confesses before Trumper. She fails to understand the intensity of Trumper's contempt for Mr.Slime.

This disastrous consequences of education exploited as a means of perpetuating the colonial system are particularly evident in the mother-child relationship when G enters high school. G is painfully aware of how high school has cut him from the village

and his friends. As he confesses, 'I remained in the village living, it seemed on the circumference of the two worlds. I was as though my roots had been snapped from the centre of what I know best ...'²⁸ But G's mother cannot comprehend the agonies of her boy. She is happy to see her child - now a respectable member of respectable high school world. She would have been gone to live in the respectable district for his sake had her financial condition allowed her to do so. She regrets this inability and consoles the boy that, 'if you had a mind you would be what you wanted to be.'²⁹

The colonial educational system thus proves to be the most barbarous weapon, used by the politically motivated colonizers, against the colonized. It makes parents enemies of their children making them victims of self-deception. The colonial masters employ the subject race, to poison their own younger generation. For the poor illiterates, like G's mother, education, unfortunately appears to be the only available medium for economic stability.

AWAY FROM THE MOTHER

The stage of separation from the mother, and formation of an identity distinct from that of the mother is followed by the stage of assertion of an independent identity by the child. It is the stage

of G's growth into adulthood. The novel closes on G's last day in his village, before his departure to Trinidad, to take the job as a teacher. The two events on that particular day - the farewell feast of the mother for the child, and Trumper's visit - clarify the assertion of an adult identity on behalf of G.

G's mother expresses her intense love towards her child by preparing special Barbadian dishes 'Cuckoo' and 'Flying fish', because it is an 'occasion of love' for her. Special dishes are prepared on special occasions such as birth of a child, marriage ceremony, arrival of a guest, on departure and on death. It is the occasion of G's departure and she wants to celebrate it by preparing a feast, Kammu Brathwaite states, 'The feast (every feast) is an important, primary form of a human culture.'³⁰ We get the detailed description of those dishes in the last chapter from page no. 274 and 275. It is the finest gesture of G's mother. Last meal with mother is the occasion of love and gathering. She prepares him for 'another distance' but before that she wants to sustain the cultural bond but G rejects her. He does not pay heed to it, as he has prepared to transplant himself in another soil, he does not understand the 'value' of his mother-culture.

Understanding the social significance of food, Lamming expresses the quality of living. He knows traditional values bring with them the concept of creativity and sense of self-respect, but he fears of this, 'cultural drain.' He has shown the hospitality of G's mother to stranger and her pride in belonging to a community, clearly states in the narrative. She shares the values with pride, although she is poor materially. Her sense of moral values is embodied in her action. Edward Baugh thinks that, 'Her pride in her skill at "turning" cuckoo is a sign of the value which she attaches to local or native traditions or skills and consequently a sign of the importance which Lamming attaches to the idea of community or social rootedness.'³¹ G's mother is the tutelage of the culture. She wants to cultivate the 'values' in her son, who is negligent about them.

Mary Donnelly presents that at the time of the feast G and his mother once again enjoy 'symbiotic unity.' She states, 'Before leaving home, however, he indulges one more time in the pre-Oedipal oneness he once shared with his mother - a bitter sweet last meal at home, marked by fun and mind games.'³² According to her this symbiotic unity is signified by the liquid images like jug of water, ice cream steam.

Actually G is very detached at the time of feast, not trying to recreate the symbiotic unity. Mother wants to celebrate the last night with him, but he feels the whole thing childish. He neglects her mother because she goes on advising him like a child and he hates it as he is adult now. He has separated himself from her in order to search his identity as a child of his illusory mother. She has no place for her in his world, in that sense she is helpless. It is inevitable. She feels orphaned and tries to regain the past. It is revealed in her attempt to beat him.

Lanning has depicted his own mother In the Castle. He tells about her helplessness but that helplessness does not make her weak. She is strong in her will. She is ready to send him away from her and does not want to cripple him emotionally. She is Caribbean mother ! Camera Laye's African mother is helpless in his autobiographical novel L'Enfant noir. She does not want to send her child away.

G's mother is the 'architect' of his future. She celebrates the 'separation' by preparing the special dishes. G also accepts the 'separation' willingly. His community or ancestors like Pa are unable to form his future. So he has to leave mother, motherland and his community in order to shape his individual identity.

Although mother is the cause of alienation, although she cuts him off from his peasant roots, although G knows her limited role in his life and knows she could not guide him any more, he is full of gratitude for his mother. 'You never miss the water till the well run dry. You never miss mother till she close her eye!'³³ Yet the Caribbean child is presented from enjoying a sense of emotional stability of being rooted because of the conflicting claims of two mothers on him, England and the West Indies.

The scene of beating at the close of the novel contrasts sharply with another but similar scene at the beginning of the autobiographical narrative. Where the mother beats nine years old naked G. Frightened by mother's fury the child then runs like a mouse before the cat. The difference between the responses of G to the mother's beating is significant both physically and psychologically. It symbolizes G's emancipation from mother's domination as an adult.

The second important event that evidences with full emergence of G's adult identity is Trumper's visit. Trumper arrives in Barbados on the day of G's departure. He surprises G and his mother. He looks so polished and confident. American experience has given him the certainty of his identity. He is charged with thought of 'freedom', this new awareness has

taught him that politics means to recognize one's power to overcome slavery. Now he feels 'proud' that he is ~~black~~ black. And hence G owes his awareness entirely to Trumper. Trumper is the first person who has given him the feeling of tremendous injustice in the transaction of land selling, so learning 'the awareness of rights,' for G this separation, dislocation from his mother and Barbados is a matter of necessity, if he wants to gain Trumper's assurance he has to break the connections.

G goes away from the mother psychologically in launching on a journey on his own - a journey not only with the practical purpose of serving as a teacher but a journey in search of that 'something to cradle his deepest instincts and emotions,'³⁴ which Trumper had found but which he had yet to find.

G's adult consciousness asserts itself in its refusal to accept Trumper's discovery of black identity as a Negro. He believes honestly that the West Indian identity is distinct, so does not accept the restricted definition of Trumper's 'Black Brotherhood', but is inclined to Pa's vision.

G's mother, Mr. Creighton's village undergo the experience of change under the leadership of Mr. Slime. The villagers wait anxiously for the moment of change-

the moment when they would own their land. But the tragedy of the village proves that the change was no change. Their transitory excitement at having rebelled against the white master through the strike in the shipping yard turns into traumatic shock when they learn that it was a part of master's conspiracy, with Mr.Slime as their agent, to win their confidence in the leadership of Slime as a preparation for the final blow. The community withdraws into deathlike silence of the defeated when the sale of land, is in progress. It is represented through reaction of mere shock and puzzlement of G's mother - herself a victim to the tragedy, during her talk with Trumper in the last part of the novel. She tells Trumper about the sale of the land, 'We couldn't believe our ears', she said, 'an' even those who read the paper don't sort o' understand what happen.'³⁵ Trumper spoke with an almost criminal contempt of Mr.Slime and my mother was puzzled.'³⁶ She registers the awareness but cannot react. It is upto her son, to react and fix the path for future action. In this sense she represents the peasant linking, the earliest generation of Pa and Ma to the third generation of G. Pa belongs to the past, 'the old order' with memories of slave trade while G initiates future with his resolution to act.

If G's mother represents the first phase of acceptance, on behalf of the earlier generation in the West Indian colonial history, G as the symbol of the younger generation of the West Indies and represents the point of transition from acceptance to awakening. Nurtured by the mother on the imperial value system, he confronts experience through his exposure to the world of school on the one hand and to the world of the village around him, with its poverty, superstitions and the exploitation by the white masters, on the other. The highschool world strengthens his agonizing awareness of being uprooted from his culture, land and people. It culminates in his feeling of helplessness and inability to help the village in the hour of need. He confesses to Trumper, 'What could I do? What could any one of us do who know the village, lived in it, loved it?'³⁷ But inspired by Trumper's transformation, G overcomes the moment of helplessness and resolves to discover that 'something' to cradle his deepest instincts and emotions. His moment of awakening comes when he realizes that, 'To be a part of something which you didn't know and which if Trumper was right it was my duty to discover.'³⁸ Notably enough, Trumper's thought merely puzzles the mother, the representative of earlier generation while they encourage G to launch on the journey of self-discovery-

the discovery of his West Indian identity, as the representative of the next generation.

The arduous task of self-discovery necessitates G's going away from his village and his people. It is the beginning of the second phase, as Trumper prophesies, 'You're one of my people all right ... but you can't understand it here. Not here. But the day you leave an' perhaps if you go further than Trinidad you'll learn.'³⁹ Alienation from the mother and motherland is an inevitable stage in the process of discovery of one's relationship to them. He is prevented from the instinctual response to his land as his authentic mother because of the lessons implanted on his child consciousness right from the beginning of the educational career that England was the Mother Country and Barbados was 'little England' - its child. Deep within his instincts lies the assurance that he was 'the child' and England was 'the mother'. It is essential to uproot the false myth.

The Emigrants concentrates on this second phase which follows the first most naturally. G as the representative of the collective consciousness of the younger generation, sets on a voyage to England to learn the truth about his relationship with the authentic mother - the West Indies, through his life with the surrogate mother - the Mother Country England.

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