

## CHAPTER-V

### THE LONG DREAM

Rex Tucker is the hero of this outstanding literary work of Richard Wright. He is the only son of a rich black father who was living at Clintonville in Mississippi. His father Tyree Tucker was a well-known Negro in the town because he owned an undertaking establishment. He had been selling the coffins for the dead bodies after embalming and preserving them.

Although Tyree's only son was christened as Rex, people called him Fishbelly. Among his friends he was known as Fish. Fishbelly's mother Emma was a religious black woman who almost remained indoors and took a little interest in her husband's business. As Fishbelly was the only issue of his parents he was the centre of their attraction. He never fell on their blind spot.

This novel covers a period of sixteen years in the life of Fishbelly. Fishbelly comes across some people of his community and the agents of his society who shape his emotional response to his world. The encounters and meetings which bring Fishbelly face to face with some problems of life, and then mould his personality in a peculiar way are worth studying from a Psychological point of view. Among such experiences is his encounter with the white gamblers.

One day when Fishbelly was going alone to his father's shop , he was called upon by a whiteman. Fishbelly was frightened because he hadn't met the whiteman before. In response to him, Fishbelly started running away from him and yelling 'naw !'. But he was caught; the grip of the whiteman had tightened upon his hand. The man took him toward the ground where the other three whitemen were seated around the heap of money. They were gambling. The white man showed him how to throw dice. Fishbelly rattled and rolled the pieces of dice and waited. Fortunately the whiteman who possessed him got all the luck. He got money. Pleased as he was, he gave a dollar to Fishbelly. However, the other gamblers were angry with Fishbelly. One of them tried to throw a brick at him. But Fishbelly had taken to his heels. He had sensed fear and he was running away from the jaws of death. For the first time in his life, he had closely looked at them.

He stared at their dead-white whiteness, at their gray, blue, brown eyes, at their black, brown, and blond hair that capped their skulls. He had never been so close to the white people before and they seemed like huge, mechanical dolls whose behaviour he could not possibly predict.<sup>1</sup>

Although Fishbelly got a dollar from the whiteman, he was not happy at all. Instead he feared them all. He kept running along till he came into the middle of the street, not knowing where he was going. Behind him a harsh horn sounded and

he heard the screeching of tires on concrete. He feared it. He stopped panting and listened to the yelling of a whiteman from the car :

"What in hell you trying to  
do, nigger ? Git killed ?"<sup>2</sup>

He was warned of his death. Fishbelly was successively caught in two terrible situations when he was five. He was among the white gamblers who had threatened him; and when he was on the city-road, a white man's car was about to overrun him. The fear of the white gamblers had led Fishbelly into another danger in the street. This first encounter with the members of the white race had taught him that to be among them is to invite death, and get heart-piercing words loaded with racial hatred. This unpleasant incident was engraved on his tender heart. Henceforth the whites were associated with fear-the dominant emotion in human life.

The next important incident is Fishbelly's quarrel with one of his paymates-Sam. Tony, Zeke and Sam, all friends of Fishbelly were arguing on the 'race-war'. Tony and Zeke were of different opinion while Sam, who seems to be Richard Wright's mouth-piece, was harping on the race-war. Sam was revealing the fact that their ancestors were forcefully brought from Africa which was their original home. And the place where they had been working hard for centuries hadn't given them human recognition. And the modern whites still had the

orthodox mentality. Tony, Zeke and Fishbelly accepted Sam's words. But Fishbelly was terribly upset when the branded name 'nigger' was thrown at him very often. Actually Fishbelly had realized that he belonged to an inferior black race that was always looked down upon by the whites. Fishbelly suffers from the inferiority complex; he becomes stupidly angry and tries to get rid of the inferiority by challenging Sam. Tony and Zeke had already disappeared from the scene when Fishbelly and Sam exchanged blows and kicks. Now they were standing some ten feet apart exchanging threats. Their dialogues is important :

"If you'd hit me, I'd've cut your damned throat," Fishbelly panted.

"I hope them white folks kill you ! Sam burst out.

"I hope they kill you first !" Fishbelly topped Sam's bitter wish.

"I hope they kill your black mama !" Sam hurled.

"I hope they kill your mama and your papa ! Fishbelly surmounted Sam's dire hope.

"If I was white, I'd lynch you and your whole goddamned family" Sam reveled in vicarious revenge.

"But you ain't white'; you black black like me, and you going to always be black !" Fishbelly panted in triumph, turning and running.<sup>3</sup>

Their quarrel ends in their strong latent desire to be white and to be free from the black colour that made their lives somewhat different and difficult.

When Fishbelly returned home after the quarrel, he looked into the mirror and saw his reflection in it; and as it was black he spat on it. The spitting on one's own image is the terrible self hatred and self rejection. It is the rejection of an identity that one receives in society in which one is born. Fishbelly suffers from the inferiority complex. When he understands that he is permanently black; and he would never shed the colour of his skin, he tries to reject his self. His 'racial consciousness' drags him into the inferiority complex the outcome of which is self hatred.

When Fishbelly was a school boy he heard that there was a 'farm-fair;' and the blacks were allowed to see it only on Thursday. With his parent's permission Fishbelly went to see the fair with his friends. The shooting show made him restless. Its banner was 'Hit The Nigger Head.' A chained nigger was peeping now and then through a hole in the hard canvas; and was quickly moving his head to avoid the attack of the base-balls. There were three chances in a turn. Except Tony, Zeke, Sam and Fishbelly; the rest of the crowd was mostly white. They saw the whitemen throwing balls whole heartedly, angrily and enthusiastically. They were trying their best to hit that nigger's head. But his head was safe, and the crowd was cheering every new hitter.

Fishbelly thought of it seriously. A black man was openly challenging the white crowd to make money. To hell

with it, he thought.

Somewhere deep in Fishbelly's heart was self-respect though he was black. But here was a man bearing insult, accepting abuse and obscene words. According to Fishbelly, the show-man was really a degraded one born only to get money. Moreover, he was representing the whole black race. And therefore, Fishbelly became angry with him. The whites were comforting themselves by throwing balls at him and he was playing to make his living. Fishbelly was burning with rage. Anyhow he wanted to stop the show, but he knew he couldnot.

Suddenly Fishbelly decides to hit him. He prefers to quench his anger by throwing some balls at the nigger. That was the only thing he could do. Now it was Fishbelly's turn. But as he was burning with anger, his eyes were not fixed on his mark. He couldn't hit it. Just to expel his anger he was trying to hit the black mouth of the nigger.

However, after his turn Tony hit him leaving his mouth bloody. But none of those black children was proud of it. They were really hurt by Tony's deed. They were now out of the area of the farm-fair. None spoke a single word for ten minutes. Each of them had a guilty conscience. Tony had hit one of the members of their own race. This visit to the farm-fair and 'Hit The Nigger Head' incident brings forth Fishbelly's self-respect, self hatred and then guilt. He was

entirely racially conscious while witnessing the show.

Once Fishbelly suffered from pneumonia. In the feverish-delirium he utters something irrational. He fears and shouts, and what he sees is an illusion. Fishbelly's illusion is quite interesting from a Psychological point of view :

Tony is teasing him as he has put on a white shirt; and he calls him a white boy. Later on Tony forcefully grabs his white shirt. Therefore Fishbelly cries. Again, a spider in the corner of the room enlarges. Fishbelly fears his long black legs and the complex net that he weaves. Fishbelly fears and cries to save himself. And then in that fearful frenzy, he sees many black flies swarming on his left hand and adhering firmly to it. He sees 'their tiny feet sunk into his flesh.' He slaps his hands against his arms, legs and chest to remove those black flies. And as he couldn't get rid of them, he shouts.<sup>4</sup>

This illusion flashes light on Fishbelly's unconscious mind and the things that he fears. From his early childhood his parents had been telling him that he was superior to other members of his community. His mother used to say :

'Son, they your color, but they ain't your kind'. And his father would think himself a superior human being : "I touch 'em when they dead, Fish, and I wouldn't do that' less I was paid."<sup>5</sup>

He was supposed to be better than his playmates. Fishbelly might have thought of his own indifference to his black people, or, he might have understood that he was far away from the other members of his community. And as he had created a gap or a line that separated him from them, he might have feared them. And therefore, Tony who represents the black race teases him as a white boy and forcefully grabs his white shirt in order to leave him black as always. The repressed fear of his own people disturbs him.

The image of spider is appropriate. A spider is a self-centered and self-satisfied creature. Again it prefers to lie in its own net. Its lying suspended in the delicate threads that it weaves around itself symbolizes the rigid and traditional entrapping traits of the Negro community. Such traits engulf any Negro and block his development. The black people with all their customs and habits were entrapping Fishbelly, so he tries to save himself.

The black flies that swarm over his left hand stand for many torturing instincts and habits of black people. The age-long instincts and impulses, that were typically of the black people, were eating up the sap of their life. And Fishbelly was trying to get rid of them. Herein lies Fishbelly's strong desire to get rid of what is black; to put on new garments and to accept a new mode of life. But his racial aspects stand before him and warn him against what he was



longing for. His racial past was dragging him behind. The images involved in this illusion are purely Psychological.

The most striking incident that made the mess of emotions in Fishbelly's life is the death of Chris. He was a young man of twenty-four. The whitemen had lynched and castrated him for having the sexual relationship with a white lady in a hotel. His death had raised the race-war temporarily, and the innocent black people suffered from it. Chris's death gave Fishbelly manifold experiences of black life. His horizon of knowledge about the Mississippi world was broadened. And it created a peculiar emotional overtone that made him guilty. By the time of Chris's mutilation, Fishbelly was twelve. He had just entered the adolescence-a period of stress and strain in everybody's life. The endocrine glands were now working to make his blood hot and the nerves alert.

That day his papa took Fishbelly home hurriedly in the car from the school. They reached home under tremendous tension. His papa was holding a gun in his right hand and was warning him to lie on the floor of the car, to hide his face and head so that no white man could see him. They heard many gun shots while they travelled. At last they reached home that was clad in darkness. They dared not to put on light. His mother too was anxious and restless. All of them were living under a terrible fear that had swung all over the room and atmosphere. But for the inexperienced and

frightened Fishbelly it was all new and strange. He wanted to know what it was they feared. Why were they hiding themselves under their own roof ? or, what made them run away from the public life ?

Later on, Fishbelly was told that Chris the blackboy had committed an unavoidable mistake and he was being punished for it. He was told that it was a race-war. The whole white race was against the blacks. From the expression of his father he knew that his father was a coward who was running away from danger to save his life. Fishbelly was ashamed of his father who was unable to protest. To his surprise, his father was blaming the black people, his black race instead of trying to resist the whites. A money minded father he was ! Fishbelly knew that his father had been hating and exploiting his own race members rather than helping them. Well, his father's property was forty thousand dollars worth but it would not wipe out shame . Tyree enjoyed all the gifts of the white world but freedom to live fearlessly. Actually his father feared the whites through out his life. He was saying one thing and doing another. In the entirely white world where a black man had no place or identity, he was saying to his son :

"Be a man, son, no matter what happens."<sup>6</sup>

And he himself was hiding in his home to be alive when the race-war broke out. Fishbelly carried one impression about his black life that the powerful whites ruled the lives of

the black in the South America. And his men were not defending themselves whole heartedly. So he developed a kind of detachment with his own people. His parents were not powerful to encourage him. They preached him instead. His father even limits his imagination by saying :

A black man is a dream, son,  
a dream that can't come true.  
Dream, Fish. But be careful what  
you dream. Dream only what can  
happen....<sup>7</sup>

Tyree's preaching carried the overtones of fear for the whites. He hands over his own fears, anxieties and tensions to his only son who was twelve. It had an adverse effect on the development of Fishbelly's personality for he was not old enough to understand all those emotional tensions of the blacks. No doubt, Tyree did all this out of his love for his only son but he failed to know that his son was too young to understand that stuff in a sitting. As a result of it, Fishbelly was puzzled while coping with all those disturbing factors in his life.

Chris's dead body was brought in Tyree's shop for preservation. Dr. Bruce had examined the rotting corpse of Chris that was lying on the table. Fishbelly looked at Chris's body, his sex-organs were cut off. He was petrified. He warned himself that it would happen to him if he wanted a white woman. His mother had warned him :

"Always be careful, Son."<sup>8</sup>

Again his papa had tightened him :

"You twelve years old and it's  
time you know ! Lissen, Fish :  
NEVER LOOK AT A WHITE WOMAN !  
YOU HEAR ? "<sup>9</sup>

Richard Wright rightly remarks, "Too ~~much~~ had been hurled  
at him too quickly."<sup>10</sup>

The lynching and castration of Chris had shattered the imaginary sexual life of Fishbelly. Henceforth he was not to look at sex as a pleasurable thing. And even the death was more insulting for they (the whites) lynched the black who tried to be with a white woman. In this way, sex, the dominating impulse in Fishbelly's life was linked with fear, guilt and death. Chris's death had taught him too much.

The novelist has devoted much space for the adolescent Psychology of Fishbelly. He has shown how the libido energy (which is largely sexual energy, according to Freud) works.

Mrs. Sims, Chris's mother had been in Tyree's shop to see the dead body of her son. She was to return home. Tyree took her and Fishbelly in his car. He was to drop Fishbelly at home on his way to Mrs. Sims'. In the car Fishbelly saw Tyree throwing his hand around Mrs. Sims' shoulders. Anyhow Tyree had to console and support her for she was completely broken down. But Fishbelly misunderstood Tyree. Fishbelly had shut his eyes. An emotional outburst follows when his father drops him near his home, and goes away with Mrs. Sims.

"I hope they kill you too !" he hissed with rage. Then, stunned at what he had said, he wailed, "Naw !" He fought off guilt, choked back jealousy. His flooding emotions ebbed and he stood alone, dry-eyed, struggling toward independence.<sup>11</sup>

It seems that Fishbelly disliked his father's behaviour in the car. The car incident hints at the 'sexual jealousy' in him. That is why he hated his father who was with a bereaved woman. Fishbelly's adolescence distorted reality. This incident brings forth the sexual instincts of an adolescent who was longing for the intimacy of the member of the opposite sex.

His seeing the 'blue-films' is one more incident that nourishes his sexual desire. In his school, Zeke, one day brings the films of the naked white men and women in the different stances of sexual exercise. Zeke shows them to all his classmates. When Fishbelly saw those pictures, he was surprised with the boldness of the whitemen. How daring it was ! while looking at pictures, suddenly he saw Chris's dead body lying on the table in his shop. He was frightened. In the evening he was returning home from the school. He saw a car. There was a white lady in it. He stopped and stared at her until the car disappeared from the scene. Though he feared the white ladies, he secretly liked them. Fishbelly's sexual desire was not healthy or pure. It was mingled with the fear for the whites. His father had made a mistake by allowing him to see the castrated Chris. From that moment on, he feared the whites too much. The blue-films of the whites had exposed a new world of sex before him. And at the same time he was warned against it. So he

had to suppress his desires.

Fishbelly's mother, oneday, found a bit of cigarette in his pocket. She was warning him all the time because he was about to cross his adolescence and step into the manhood :

"Gawd's making you into a  
man, but watch  
out",.....  
"Don't let your manhood turn  
you into a devil."<sup>12</sup>

His mother had slapped him for smoking and especially for laughing at God in her presence. Fishbelly leaves his home angrily just after he receives a slap on his face. Soon he joins Zeke in the mud-fight. As it had already rained it was a pleasant moment for the fight. He remembers that his parents had never allowed him to join a mud-fight. But as he was now angry with his mother, he thought it was a proper thing to do.

Just before the mud-fight with Teddy and his friends; Zeke, Tony, Sam and Fishbelly are lost in day-dreaming and acting the white role. Their day-dreaming is a kind of wish-fulfilment. Only the dreams are there to satisfy them, not reality.

Zeke, Tony, Sam and Fishbelly  
wanted to be rich; have many  
servants; live in a big house  
with paintings and books all  
around them; wanted to be  
with a pretty blond wife;  
smoking and listening to the  
Nigger Jazz coming over the  
radio and drinking scotch....<sup>13</sup>

Their repressed desires linger on in their minds. Moreover, they tried to model their living on that of the whites. It is again a bi-product of their inferiority complex.

Fishbelly fought the mud-fight but the effects of it were grave. They were unaware of the fact that their fight took place in the white man's area. As they had traspassed, the two white policemen caught Tony and Fishbelly. Now they were only 'handcuffed shadows' in the police car which was going to the police station.

The police car stopped near the out-door soft-drink bazær. The policemen ordered two coca-cola. When a white girl dressed in decent but few clothes was serving them the cold drink, Fishbelly couldn't help looking at her.

"Fishbelly stared at the girl's  
white face, her pink cheeks,  
her ruby-red lips, and her  
sky blue eyes-and he remembered  
chris....<sup>14</sup>

He feared the white world. He longed for security which was only in his black belt among his black people. The tall white policeman frightened Fishbelly who was looking at the white waitress. He drew his knife out, opened it and pointed its blade toward Fishbelly's groin. The policeman said that he was to castrate Fishbelly. <sup>Now Fishbelly</sup> remembered Chris's tragedy. A terrible conflict took over him and he fainted. For the white policemen,

Fishbelly's fainting was a source of fun, because they had not yet seen a nigger fainting. So when they reached the police station and barred Tony and Fishbelly in the prison cell, once again the tall policeman frightened Fishbelly. And he fainted like a hypnotized rabbit. It amused all the policemen and their lieutenant. In the end, he was forced for the third time; and as he couldn't faint the Captain of police said that the 'nigger' was fooling them.

The mental torture inflicted on him was beyond his control. He was stretched to a high pitch of terror that devastated him emotionally. Now Fishbelly was guilty of his deed. The attraction of the white waitress had led him toward guilt and fear of death. It was not possible for him to get rid of this fear. This trait 'to fear the whites' became a part of his personality forever. Tyree met him in jail and warned him :

"Obey 'em !" Don't dispute 'em ! Don't talk back to 'em ! Don't give 'em no excuse for nothing ! Hear ? " ...Say 'Yessir' and 'nawsir' to 'em. And when they talking, keep your mouth  
shit ! "15

Throughout his life Tyree was preaching him, warning him to be weak and obedient before the whites. Indirectly Tyree had killed the 'human-spirit' of Fishbelly. Fishbelly had seen his father's double role : At home his father was brave, bold and courageous but before whites a weak and powerless person. It



made Fishbelly hate his father. He thought that no black man is true to his nature. His father was a pretender before whites, and was forcing his son to step into his own shoes. For a moment, he glimpsed his future and tried not to think of it. Although he was born free, he was not allowed to behave freely, to have his own way of life. Therefore he hated his father. He thought that he belonged to an alien shore, to a distant land. 'He was all alone, that was it. He did not really have a father!'<sup>16</sup>

Tyree succeeded in getting Tony and Fishbelly out of prison as early as possible, because he knew the chief of police personally. The prison-cell-experiences altered his looks. While returning home he was seriously thinking of the ill-treatment given to him, and of his fainting before the whites. He had warned Tony not to talk about it to anybody. Still he felt ashamed of it. An engulfing shame drowned him into the world of inferiority complex. Somehow he wanted to get rid of it. They were walking toward the black belt. After sometime, they said good bye to each other. Now each of them was going home alone. Soon Fishbelly heard the plaintive whining of a dog near the road in the wood-grass. He saw a dog whose back was broken probably by a 'car-hit', and he was unable to walk. He was continuously emitting unbearable plaintive sounds. He decides to stop that endless suffering. In the end, he kills the dog with a broken glass bottle of whisky that was lying in the grass.

Fishbelly found his own image in the dog. Like him the dog was suffering endlessly. He hated that kind of life. So he killed him. Actually, the bad treatment given to him by the police had made him violent. In him had evolved a desire to kill. He had suppressed it for a long time. He knew that he couldn't be violent before the mighty whites. Now he had found a suitable outlet for his suppressed desire. But instead of challenging the oppressor, he killed the helpless creature. Thus, Fishbelly had displaced his hatred and anger of the whites to the dog.

Hardly he was gone a few steps ahead when he saw a whiteman dying under a smashed car. The dying man was requesting Fishbelly to lift the door of the car if possible. Deeply wounded and bleeding as he was, he was unable to speak loudly. To Fishbelly's great surprise, though the man was fainting momentarily he called him 'nigger'. Therefore Fishbelly determined not to help him. Before a few minutes, he had relieved a worthless dog from his suffering; and now he was leaving behind a wounded whiteman unnoticed only because he was white. His racial hatred made him repulsive toward the whiteman.

For the first time, Fishbelly thinks of himself :

"I ain't done nothing...why they  
act like that ? I can't help it  
if I'm black..."  
"If I'm wrong 'cause I'm black,  
then I don't want to be black...."<sup>17</sup>

The above soliloquy is important from the Psychological point of view. According to C.G.Jung, the characters are either 'introvert' or 'extravert'.<sup>18</sup> Fishbelly falls back upon his inner source; he introspects and reflects on his own self very often. Therefore he is an introvert person. He realizes his self but rejects it as worthless because he was black. He thinks this way. He looks down upon his own self. His racial inferiority is at its bottom.

The person who badly affected Fishbelly's personality is his father. His behaviour was conditioned by his father's preaching. When he came from the prison into his father's undertaking establishment, he was given a full dose of advice. Tyree pretended to be omnipotent and omniscient before his son :

"You see, Fish, these goddamned crazy white folks respect me,"..."I know how to handle these white folks." "Fish, I know these goddamn white folks better'n they know themselves. There ain't nothing I couldn't git from 'em if I tried. Son, you just lissen to your papa who brought you into the world and you'll never go wrong. I know and I know I know !...I'll show you how to twist these no good white folks,...Son, don't let these white folks git you down.<sup>19</sup>

He again said to him :

I ain't your mama or your teacher;  
I'm your father, son, a man like  
you going to be, the only man in  
the world you can trust.<sup>20</sup>

He then compelled Fishbelly to join him in the shop .After  
the school hours, and said :

"You study your lessons here. I'm  
taking charge of you. Now, go easy  
on your mama. Just say 'yes' and  
humor her along, see ? That's the  
way to deal with women, Fish. Arguing  
with 'em is a waste of time. They  
just don't understand these things.  
I know; you at the age when too  
much sap's rising up in you and  
you don't know how to git rid of  
it. I'll show you what to do and  
the right way to do it. It ain't  
hard, Fish." "Fish, the only  
way to git along with white folks  
is to grin in their goddamn faces  
and make 'em feel good and then  
do what the hell you want to behind  
their goddamn blacks ! And I'm  
going to show you how to do it.

I'll show you everything...<sup>21</sup>

Tyree told Fishbelly that the whites out numbered the blacks.  
So, he had to grin to be alive and to blackmail them to prosper.  
However , when Fishbelly remarked that he had no desire to  
do it, Tyree sounded :

"Be quite, son, you gitting excited  
'cause you don't understand. Lissen,  
my business is burying folks and half  
the black folks I bury was crazy enough  
to try to win against odds. Now don't  
you go and be a fool like that".<sup>22</sup>

However, Fishbelly was curious to know whether there was no other way except grinning and crying before the whites. He just wanted to know it. But Tyree had no answer to his question. It seems that Fishbelly was initiated into his self. So he wanted to have his own way while facing the white world. He understood the weakness of his father. He thought that his father was already castrated so there was no need to recastrate him. When Fishbelly couldn't help crying, Tyree responded :

"Yeah, I know, They scared you and it was the first time. But it ain't nothing. You'll git used to it and think nothing of it...."

Fishbelly lifted his wet eyes to Tyree's face. "You mean if the white folks hang me often enough, I'll git so I won't mind no more ?" he asked with soft irony. Tyree blinked and stepped back. "What in hell you saying, Fish ? stop talking like that.... you trying to make fun of me or something ?"

"Nawsir, But you said-"

"Shut up. Fish !" Tyree shouted<sup>23</sup>

The above dialogues between them throws light on their true nature. At last Tyree realized that he had no answer to Fishbelly's question. He said :

"I wanted to keep all his from you, Fish, But how could I? It's life, son. We all have to face it. No use crying about it. We

have to be men and take it."<sup>24</sup>

Fishbelly realized that he was being deceived by his father. He wept for a loss of father. He revealed a truth by calling his father 'coward' on his face. Hence Tyree sounded :

"I got to break your goddamn spirit or you'll git killed, sure as hell ! where you git such crazy notions ? Boy, look at what I done with my life ! I'm black, but do you hear me whining about it ? Hell, now ! I'm a man ! I got a business, a home, property, money in the bank.... Is my life bad ?"  
 "Nawsir. It ain't bad; it's just hopless, papa."<sup>25</sup>

Tyree thought that Fishbelly was changing due to his reading. But now he was determined to conquer his son. so he slapped him and kept his mouth shut. Fishbelly thus was forced to accept his father's every word. The conversation between Fishbelly and his father reveals Fishbelly's self-consciousness and confusion about parental authority. The development of his self and his independent thinking was blocked by his timid father. There is no doubt that Fishbelly's father had ruined his self.

Tyree's approach to his life was grossly irrational. 'Tyree had been hoping that a baptism of his' (Fishbelly's) senses would wash away any appeal that the white world had made to him.'<sup>26</sup> So on the very day of Fishbelly's release from the jail, he took him to the Bowman street-flats which

he owned. Fishbelly was purposely allowed to enjoy a black girl. On their way to the whore house, Tyree was preaching him. He said again and again that there was no difference between a white woman and a black one. He had stamped the white ladies as 'lazy'. Because he himself feared them and the result of relationship with them. He wanted his son to be far away from such an adventure. Therefore, he had shown Chris's dead body to Fishbelly. A black father had led his only son to the whore house where he might go at any moment and satisfy his senses, least caring for the strife among the blacks and whites. But the more Fishbelly was kept away from the white ladies, the more attracted he was toward them. Something was challenging him :

you are nothing because you are  
black, and the proof of your being  
nothing is that if you touch a  
white woman, you'll be killed !<sup>27</sup>

Fishbelly knew that he was surely somebody. That is why the whites were threatening him. Even his father was indirectly doing the same.

Tyree's efforts to divert Fishbelly's attention were useless for Fishbelly had preferred Gladys who was a white-looking girl, a bastard, the illegitimate child of 'black and white' relations. Fishbelly's friendship with Gladys shows that he was suffering from the inferiority complex.

The Grove fire incident makes Fishbelly acutely conscious of his own life in the black belt. One day when he was as usual near the Grove-another whore house in Clintonville black belt, it blazed up and turned into ashes. The fire had swallowed some forty-two black people including some whores and the whore-house-dwellers. And the worst thing was the death of Gladys in it. The Grove fire incident had exploded some secrets. He was stunned to know that his father owned the Grove and Dr. Bruce assisted him. His father was bribing the chief of police-Gerald Cantley so that he could smoothly run the Grove. As Tyree was now responsible for the death of forty-two blackpeople, there was no escape for him. The state's Attorney was to prosecute him. And the chief was not to help Tyree for he himself was involved in the matter. Fishbelly felt alone. He thought that the whole white world was against his father. When he reflected on the money that came to Tyree, he was ashamed of his life. The whores were paying to Tyree; and a part of the amount he spent was coming from Gladys too. He was guilty because his father was exploiting the girl he loved.

After the Grove fire, for many days almost every incident that happened in Fishbelly's life brought fear for the whites. His father was about to go to jail, and the chief was demanding the cheques by which he had received the amount of bribe from Tyree. On the other hand, Tyree had kept those cheques with



him and was not to return them. Instead of it, he was to use them as a weapon to defend himself in the case. Fishbelly had witnessed the chief's threatening his father. His father was playing the role of a coward before the chief. Tyree's meetings with the chief and Mayor Wakefied had created tremendous tension and fear in him. In addition to it, Tyree had given Fishbelly his own testament and will. It was suggestive. Fishbelly feared too much. He was now carrying a paper in which his father had suggested what to do, and how to deal with his property and business, after his death.

A bleak future was now ahead of Fishbelly. He sank into loneliness. He felt emotionally vacant. He was now being left alone by the man who had moulded his life in the black belt. He couldn't imagine leading a lonely life.

Fishbelly almost collapsed when the chief and his men killed Tyree. He had received a severe shock. He had lost the only shelter in the black belt. Soon he became sensitive enough to see the changing people around him. There was a sudden change in his mother's behaviour. When Tyree was alive, she dared not to speak a word before him. But now she had her new plans with Tyree's servant-Jim. When Fishbelly saw Jim with his mother at home, he became angry. The person who was getting his daily bread from Tyree was now advising him. Moreover, his mother's association with Jim made him furious. Jim and Emma advised

him but he payed no attention to their words. It was no good teaching him good lessons when he was burning with anger.

All his life, his father had been dictating him. And as soon as he was no more, his mother claimed her right to preach him. Fishbelly was now tired of his handicapped life. He had no freedom to feel and say. By all means he was to get it.

But his mother disturbed him seriously. He wanted her to be a reserved woman weeping in silence for the loss of her husband. On the contrary, she was blaming her husband and calling him a fool eventhough he was not yet buried. And now she was ordering Fishbelly : "Don't touch a thing in the house 'less I say so."<sup>28</sup> Fishbelly was disappointed. The dialogues between Jim and Fishbelly in his home is again interesting.

"See you at the office in the morning, Jim", Fishbelly said.

"Wait, Fish," Jim called. "I'm coming with you".

"I said I'd see you at the office in the morning !" Fishbelly screamed and went through the front door and slammed it so hard that the upper pane shattered.<sup>29</sup>

In the light of Freudian Psychology, Fishbelly's hatred for Jim is the result of the oedipus complex. He understands his mother's new role and becomes a black Hamlet.

Tyree's death had given a new turn to Fishbelly's life. As Tyree was a victim of the chief's intrigue, Dr. Bruce and Gloria, who had been the intimates of Tyree, fled to Memphis. Fishbelly helped them in getting out of clintonville safe and secure. The people in whose company he felt safe were out of clintonville. His Gladys and Tyree were no more. Nor was he attached to his mother any longer.

And the police chief was now after him, consistently demanding those cancelled cheques. Fishbelly feared the chief who was death incarnate. Although the chief cross-examined him about those cheques, Fishbelly told a lie that he was totally ignorant of them. Actually Fishbelly had stepped into his father's shoes. However, his mother did not want him to continue his father's business. Once she tried her best to divert him. She wanted him to join the school. She offered him 'fifty dollars' per week. But it was of no use now. Just after his mother's departure from his shop he is lost in soliloquy.

"What they think I am ?"...He closed his eyes and whimpered : "Papa, there ain't nothing else for me to do ! you left something that's marked me ! It's like it's in my blood ! I can't live with it here !" He opened his eyes, but he did not see the room; he shouted : "My Papa's papa, and my papa's papa's papa, look what you done to me !" <sup>30</sup>

This soliloquy throws light on Fishbelly's disintegrated identity. The path of life that Tyree had showed him was too difficult to tread. As he was a minor, he couldn't run his shop independently. Again his father was a corrupt, cunning and shrewd blackman but he was not. However, Tyree had left his foot prints behind. He had conditioned the hopes and desires and activities of Fishbelly. This is a golden moment in his life for he sees the entirety of his life full of limitations and conditioning. The spoilt Fishbelly is conscious of his black tradition that taught him no good principle. He realized that he was devoid of human character; human spirit and the courage to live in the world. Instead of it, the black belt had given him shame, hatred, guilt, fear, anxiety and insecurity. Really it was Tyree who was punishing his only son. Had Tyree not preached him slavery and self delusion, he would have been a man of different mould. He might have been like Tony and Zeke. But Fishbelly couldn't help being like his father who had spoiled him. He felt emotionally and spiritually sterilized in his social surrounding.

The bleak future was awaiting Fishbelly. The police chief succeeded in plotting against him who was imprisoned for six months in a 'rape case'. Tyree had sown the seeds and innocent Fishbelly was reaping the field. Fishbelly knew that he was purposely imprisoned to get those cancelled cheques.

But he had hidden them behind a brick near the fire- place of his own flat in the Bowman Street. He hadn't told about them to his lawyer McWilliams for he was white. He knew that he was blameless in the rape case but he couldn't prove it. He was living in the world where the destinies of the blacks were ruled by the whites. Fishbelly lay brooding over his futile life in the prison cell.

Fortunately he gets a letter from Zeke who had been serving in the Army in France. Zeke leads Fishbelly, for a moment, into a distant world where there is no race problem ; no ugly superiority in the name of the skin colour; no discrimination as such; no lynching and no mass exploitation of the blacks by the whites. Fishbelly longed for such a kind of life. He decided to visit Paris- a land of so many promises. Zeke's letter opens new vistas of life for this South American suffocating soul. Now Fishbelly's desire to leave the South got wings. But he had to wait for sometime.

One day Fishbelly beats Bert Anderson a Negro who comes in his cell to spy on him. His punishment, therefore, was prolonged.

One significant incident separates Fishbelly from his people and leaves him alone and alienated. It is his meeting with Emma and Jim. One morning he was taken to the visitor's

room in prison where his mother and Jim were awaiting him. They inquired him of his prolonged punishment and advised him to take easy. Jim asked him about his future plans while Emma didn't blush to say :

"We love each other, Son,  
I don't want to be alone. Me  
and Jim git along together."<sup>31</sup>

How frail she was ! she was to remarry just after the death of her husband least caring for her only son who lay cooped up in the prison cell. He wanted not to listen a single word from them. From the bottom of his heart, he rejected their every decision but he pretended. He forcibly controls his raging heart and obeys them. Though he wanted to slap his mother, he said, "I hope you-all'll be happy"<sup>32</sup>

He was repressing his anger but was alarmed with Jim's saying :

"Fish, I know how you were  
brought up. But we'll get along.  
I think I understand you. I  
want to be a good stepfather  
to you."<sup>33</sup>

All his life, his father had dictated his actions. And now his mother and Jim were about to do the same once he was out of jail. He was never allowed to be on his own. He was miles away from his true nature. Anyhow, he was not going to be led by others now.

There rose in him a strong desire to say good bye to his unpleasant Mississippi world. He was eager to have a new world of his own, new places and new faces that were not to tell him to do this and not to do that. He decided to leave his town forever. But he kept mum and bid farewell to his 'new parents'.

As soon as he was released from the Prison, he left for Memphis with those cancelled cheques. Before leaving his shop he said, " Papa, I'm leaving,...I can't make it here."<sup>34</sup> Well, he had already forgotten his mother but it was highly impossible for him to wipe out 'Papa' from his mind.

A week later, Fishbelly was in the aeroplane going to Paris. He was seated in the coach and the white air hostess was showing him how to fit the strap. In front of him was a white lady but he could hardly see her. Although he was out of Mississippi, the Mississippi atmosphere was still working on him. It had conditioned his behaviour. Left to him was a white young man who wanted a 'lighter' to smoke. Fishbelly lit his cigar and spoke to him about his Southern atmosphere because his neighbour was desirous to know more about the 'bloody racial atmosphere' in the Mississippi State.

Fishbelly didnot want to be a target of human sympathy. And though he was running away from Mississippi, he told his neighbour a lie; for lying was not a new thing for him. He said

that his men neglected those sings 'for colored ' and 'for whites,' and the racial tinge was slowly shedding its colour.

It is interesting to observe Fishbelly's behaviour in the aeroplane. After some time his white neighbour was fast asleep in his own coach. Fishbelly looked at him from the corners of his eyes. The white man's white hand was just four inches apart from him. And fishbelly quickly pulled back his black left hand and covered his right hand with it. Fishbelly had instinctively contracted. He now avoided looking at his neighbour. Though he was out of Mississippi, he was still fearing the whites. Fishbelly had acted unconsciously. It was a kind of 'reflex action'. Fear of the whites had been a part of his life. He decides not to fear them thenafter.

In the plane, he writes a letter to his white lawyer McWilliams. He was sending those cheques to him so that he may prosecute the chief for corruption in the city. Fishbelly pours his racial hatred in the letter in a restrained manner.

For the first time in his life he felt free from the clutches of the Mississippi whites. Before him were now new people and new principles of life that were unknown to his Mississippi people. He was overjoyed when he realized that he was free for the rest of his life. He could now lead a new life, put on new dress, walk on new ground and destroy all his past. He had discovered



his self. Fishbelly was not nothing now. His life had gained a meaning.

Then the air hostess asks him sympathetically. She just wanted to know whether he liked coffee or tea with his dinner. But the 'racial stuff' was still in his mind. He quickly said that he needed no dinner. She was surprised and asked him if he was sick.

Really Fishbelly was sick all his life. Through out his life he had simply seen dreams not reality. And the reality he knew in the white South was distorted by the overwhelming fear of the whites. He now knew that the world was too much around him-~~a~~ brighter world than the Mississippi South.

Fishbelly now remembered that he was nodding his head while speaking with the air hostess; and his speech was still carrying the 'nigger intonation.' He decides to get rid of them; to forget to speak 'no'm' and 'yessum', or 'nawsir' and 'yessir.'

Fishbelly's inferiority complex was slowly dissolving under the impact of a foreign atmosphere. He was now far away from that Mississippi mud. He was in a world that valued free development of all individuals. There was not damned discrimination in the name of colour. He was to embrace a new world with a new identity.

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