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Exile and Displacement in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Arjun Prasad Kaphle completed his dissertation entitled "Exile and Displacement in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*" under my supervision. He carried out his research from September 2013 to June 2014 and completed it successfully. I hereby recommend his dissertation be submitted for the viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This dissertation entitled "Exile and Displacement in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Arjun Prasad Kaphle has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

The dissertation tries to probe into post-colonial issues reflected in *A Bend in the River*. V.S. Naipaul in the fiction describes social and natural chaos and psychic anxiety of the people in post-colonial society. The effect of colonial system accounts for the social and psychological phenomena -- exile and displacement. The novel portrays characters from different strata of society, who are trapped in the so-called independent state. The Big Man's mimicry mainly serves his political drive and mass's mimicry aims to be approved by the new establishment. This mimicry gives rise to cultural hybridity, which is mainly embodied in Salim, Ferdinand and Indar, who have different cultural experiences. Automatic renouncement of one's their native culture bolsters colonial culture and the absence of resistant mechanism is responsible for cultural displacement. Thus, the novel mainly deals with such tissues as mimicry, hybridity and displacement, through which Naipaul reflects on post-colonial society. Only greed, consumptive desire, and backward cultural identities remain in Africa. Naipaul offers a displaced and fragmented society that lacks creative potential as the characters feel a sense exile even in their own country.

Content

Pages

Letter of Recommendation	
Letter of Approval	
Acknowledgements	
Abstract	
I. Displacement in V. S. Naipaul's Novels	1-11
II. Exile and Displacement in <i>A Bend in the River</i>	12-36
III. Hybridity in <i>A Bend in the River</i>	37-59
IV. Quest of Home and Belongingness in <i>A Bend in the River</i>	60-63

I. Displacement in V. S. Naipaul's Novels

This research attempts to interpret V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* from a postcolonial perspective, exploring imperial impact on African societies as they have been cultural displacement and a sense of exile. Although *A Bend in the River* shows the process of decolonization, it reflects the lingering imperial hangover in the aftermath of the so-called post independent Congo. The novel portrays characters from different strata of society, who are trapped in the newly so-called independent Congo. The novel is narrated by Salim, an Indian Muslim shopkeeper who lives in a small city. The story revolves around some of the important events in Salim's life projecting his identity crisis and inner conflicts due to imperial collision and the rapid changes that are taking place in Congo. Thus, the novel deals with how the individual lives are caught between imperial impact and the political changes in the country.

The present study, however, attempts to go beyond the surface level of postcolonial crises of disorder, homelessness, alienation and identity crisis. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* portrays the story of a diasporic individual Salim and his existential crisis in post-independent Congo. Though the crisis is shown in a personal level, Salim becomes an allegorical representation of the common people living in Congo. His identity crisis and dilemma reflects the crisis of other immigrants living in Africa in post-independent period.

The story of this novel is set in a particular historical period in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Belgian Congo got its independence in 1960 and Patrice Lumumba was chosen as the Prime Minister of Republic of Congo. But the secessionist struggles broke out between South Kasai and Katanga and these struggles gave rise to the political upheaval in Congo. Taking advantage of such a crisis, the Army Chief Joseph Mobutu, overthrew Lumumba and became the president in 1965

with the help of Belgium and the United States. Though the President in the novel remains anonymous and known through his title “Big Man”, it becomes clear from certain events in the novel that “Big Man” refers to General Mobutu.

In this novel, two stories are interwoven by Naipaul – one is the personal story of Salim and the other is the story of Congo with its post-independent political conflicts and economic disaster. On a personal level, Naipaul deals with the themes of alienation, identity crisis, loss of center and inner conflict of an individual. On the other hand, Naipaul deals with the themes of national importance - loss of history and culture, economic crisis, tribal disputes, political turmoil, division and racial intolerance in Congo which are the resultant factors of imperialism. Salim, during his existential quest for order and identity, encounters different characters: Indar, Mahesh, Shobha, Nazruddin, representing the old African civilization and history. All these characters allegorically represent the African nation, its people, its immigrants, its history, its culture, its racial conflicts and political upheavals.

Salim travels to the interior of the continent to take over a shop in a town at the bend of the river. By using Salim's point of view, Naipaul masterfully depicts pathetic realities in postcolonial Africa. Nationalism and independence does not bring stable politics and prosperous economy to the newly-emerging nations. Instead, more chaos and bloodshed have befallen the colonized people. The predicament of postcolonial Africa becomes the focus of Naipaul's attention in the novel. The ending of colonial order or system does not mean that the Western colonial power has relinquished control proving through the novel that there is still an adverse impact of imperialism.

The infiltration of Western ideology and culture takes the place of direct military aggression in the colonial era, which leads to the gradual disappearance of the

historical tradition and culture in Congo. The collision between two totally different civilizations results in a cultural displacement of the native people. Congo which lacks historical and cultural roots, cannot fit into the new environment. To achieve self-development, it turns to imitate advanced Western models in every aspect of the society: political, academic, technology. However, not considering its practical conditions, it only does some blind imitation, which leads to a series of social disasters. So, postcolonial Africa is in a sociopolitical turmoil. Lastly, the self-exile of modern African intellectuals, including the narrator Salim and his close friend Indar, reflects their active orientation in the seeking of their self-value in postcolonial Africa. However, they have to lead a wandering life for the contradictions in cultural problems and subversion of the past. The people in such a postcolonial society have no sense of safety. As a result of the imperial impact, the characters fall victim to colonial mimicry, which brings them the problems of cultural displacement.

Fragmentation, alienation, and exile are common terms associated with post-colonial literature. Needless to say, imperialism played a key role in bringing a sense of alienation and disorder to the countries where imperialists ruled. V.S. Naipaul, himself is a product of post-imperialist society. He is acclaimed as a great novelist of contemporary period. Naipaul is an expatriate from Trinidad whose primary business as a novelist is to project carefully the complex fate of individuals in a cross-cultural society. He has written extensively about different aspects of post-colonial society, but knowingly or unknowingly, whether he is writing a travelogue or a novel, he tends to end up dealing with the identity crisis of an individual. In an interview with Roland Bryden in 1973, Naipaul remarked, "all my works are really one. I am really writing one big book. I come to the conclusion that, considering the nature of the society I

came from, considering the nature of the world I have stepped into and the world I have to look at, I could not be a professional novelist in the old sense” (367).

Most of Naipaul characters are either uprooted migrants or alienated outsiders who are trapped in the labyrinth of displacement and multiple identities. The protagonists who are often in the guise of the writing about their 'self' are mostly members of marginalized communities whose colonial background, together with self-imposed exile or migration, have resulted in their uncertainties of 'place' and 'identity.' More so, for some ambitious ones like Naipaul himself, it is a journey from the “periphery to the center” (507) for a writing career and for a larger metropolitan audience.

Naipaul has written more than thirty books comprising of both fiction and non-fiction. His non-fictional writings are marked with significant fictional elements as he allows his characters to speak out their own stories. There are a number of Naipaul critics who designate his non-fictional works as non-fiction novel with elements of both fiction and journalism that became popular in the late twentieth century as a popular genre. It is worth mentioning that throughout his career, Naipaul has engaged himself in search of a proper form of writing. His early works display a West Indian style of English, a kind of creolized English — suitable for the theme, location and plot of those early works. But, since the late 70s, he has been experimenting on a different style which can be termed as fictional journalism in most of his travel writings.

There are plenty of scholarly works already done on Naipaul which mainly focus on his journey for the making of a writer, his exile and homelessness, and his quest for order and identity. One of the first critics of Naipaul, Landeg White, V. S. *Naipaul: A Critical Introduction* (1975), explores the development of a young writer

at his early forties whose whole career is centered on the uncertainties of his own position as a migrant in London, his struggle against the problems of displacement and homelessness. In another scholarly work *Naipaul's Truth: The Making of a Writer* (2001), Lillian Feder explores Naipaul's commitment as an author who delivers the 'truth' by writing extensively about the enduring economic, cultural and psychological effects of colonialism and its subsequent impact on human identity. N. Ramadevi, in her book *The Novels of V. S. Naipaul: Quest for Order and Identity* (1996), analyses Naipaul's quest for identity and order, mainly in his novels of colonial or 'Third World' setting. Her work also focuses on Naipaul's creative writing which traces the historical and psychological causes of futility, disorder and his quest for identity in the postcolonial world. In her seminal work *V. S. Naipaul* (1995), Fawzia Mustafa explores the major works of V. S. Naipaul, starting with *The Mystic Masseur* (1957) to *A Way in the World* (1994), where she addresses literary, historical, political and cultural issues. In this way, several critics have examined various postcolonial issues and introduced general debates about postcolonial literary production and its narrative techniques, language, gender, race, class and canon formation.

Naipaul's characters suffer a very painful, unproductive past. It could not create anything. Their future is confused and present is full of uncertainties. So the characters are disoriented. The inner world of dreams and outer world of socio-economic and political problems stretches the gap between original and ideal self. So an ideal self is not achieved and thus results in a stress, tension and anxiety. The characters get trapped in an exile, loneliness and schizophrenia. The typical post-colonial characters of Naipaul suffer from displacement, rootlessness and frustration. So they get disoriented on physical, social, familial, economic, political, intellectual,

psychological, moral and cultural levels and all these disorientations lead the character to fragment at the centre of its existence, that is, 'the self', which can be called 'disoriented self'.

The post-colonial Naipaulian characters do not have capacity to integrate contradictory aspects and tendencies into a coherent sense and view of themselves, in 'Mature' self, this is only possible at the price of repression of important wishes and possibilities for personal development. These characters lacked the capacity to establish coherent-self-concept. Instead, they adopt what could be called a 'Post-modernist' stance towards their life. Instead of repression, their means of defense consists in a temporal splitting of the self that excludes past and future as dimensions of object constancy, bonding, commitment, responsibility and guilt.

Nazua Idris analyzes *A Bend in the River* from the perspective of Jamesonian Third World National Allegory. He notes that the novel portrays the story of a diasporic individual Salim and his existential crisis in post-independent Congo. Idris says:

Though the crisis is shown in a personal level, Salim becomes an allegorical representation of the diasporic people living in Congo. His identity crisis and dilemma reflects the crisis of other immigrants living in Africa due to the socio-political changes in post-independent period. This novel can be considered as Jamesonian "Third World National Allegory" as the novel focuses upon the problems of private life that is deeply rooted in the national crisis, stemming from the nightmare of independence due to the failure of the national leaders. The inter-play of private life and public life and the allegorical representation of the

characters categorize this novel as a “Third World National Allegory” in Jamesonian sense. (171)

To put it differently, *A Bend in the River* consists of an intellectual medium that marks the confluence of Naipaul’s frame of reference and the value-systems of neo-colonial Europe that he has adopted and internalized over the years in so far as they manifest themselves in textual form. As the author of the text, Naipaul operates within the boundaries of the interpretive criteria for good literature imposed by that discourse community on its members through its ideological demands, especially the separation of Europeans from non-Europeans on the basis of the traditional opposition between civilization and barbarism.

Firstly, Naipaul’s autobiographical works concern themselves with the bitter knowledge that, for all its pretensions to the contrary, the English canon is an incarnation of English imperialism. Secondly, in his ethnographic and travel literature, Naipaul addresses the lie of the ‘civilizing mission’. In other words, closer examination reveals that, for all its apparent concern for the cultural and civilizational ‘betterment’ of its colonial subjects, the English empire was a profoundly narcissistic enterprise. And finally, in his rewriting of a familiar postcolonial trope, Naipaul battles with the discovery that the ‘real’ England bears little or no relation to the one imagined and constructed in the colonial periphery. The whole writing deals with Naipaul’s disclosure of his fraught relationship with the imperial metropolis, with a specific focus on his negotiations with the English canon. Describing the East and The West, Naipaul introduces the association between the British capital and the offshore spheres of its empire. Raymond Williams in his *The Country and the City* (1973) puts in the English pastoral as a generic evidence for the metropolis and the rural periphery and also reveals the pastoral underpinning of the colonialism. The oeuvres of

Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* (1964) and *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969), suggest, a similar ideology of the colonials in the East and the West for the setting on the English colonies and hence establish and the colonial identity. When Naipaul travelled India in desire of discovering his childhood memories, he found England in its place. Everywhere, he found this unwelcome surprise of 'Englished landscape'. Naipaul has reacted to such disparity colonialism in the East, where the literary history of the word 'British' from Austen to Forster, makes a swing from a geographical idea to a cultural ideal. 'Between the two uses of the word', as he writes, 'lie a hundred years of industrial and imperial power'. The West is the yet another overlooked plot for England's imperialism. Naipaul on himself describes it as a colonial aspect of the taste for pastoral'. It must be said that Naipaul skillfully transforms a beautiful description of the imperial justice into an influent narrative, which is more concerned with a struggle over the signification of Englishness. To such imperialism of the East and West, Naipaul denies forgiving the colonial world for its own uncontrolled defeat to the English myths; this theme is well described in *A Bend in the River* (1979). To put it briefly, Naipaul's studies of the East and the West bemoan the narcissism of colonial empire.

Critics see Naipaul, almost fit to claim this identity acquired into a new 'cultural hybridism' at once, on behalf of these facts: First, his childhood Trinidad being, a former British colony, he is a writer from 'a country with a history of colonialism'; second, he migrated from Trinidad to England for his education and to start and continue his career as a writer; and third, he is descendent of a migrant family, as his ancestors came to Trinidad from India as indentured labourers, all of these countries being former colonies of the British Empire.

Naipaul, in one of his text in a sequence, comments 'People come and go all the time; the world has always been in movement.' His composition *A Way in the World* (1994) inculcates a clustered but interwoven ideology. Now, he establishes himself into a community of travel writers whose expeditions are temporally wide-ranging from India to Trinidad to Oxford (London) as well as encompasses the three worlds of socio-cultural space. Naipaul declares in his 2001 Nobel lecture that his "aim has always been to fill out [his] world picture", and this travel writing is the greatest aid which extended technically, allowing him to take in a wider and more complex "world view" (Naipaul 183). These comments seem to support readings of his work as 'trans-spatial' and 'trans-cultural'. The relational process connects, without merging, his subjects positions at various phases of his life. Naipaul's worldwide visions and narratives of political affiliation, do intimate the possibility of associations beyond national, ethnic and cultural margins of the three worlds.

Naipaul, allegedly, remains free to animate the outdated diction of Imperial-empire. Joseph Epstein writes, 'It may be that among living writers only Naipaul is able to speak of 'barbarian peoples'; only he can say things that . . . in the mouths of others would straight away be declared racism' (qtd. in Nixon, 118). Nixon would argue, Naipaul's literary success in England, especially through the 1970's, accrues, in part, from his racially secured license to condemn the third-world. But Said, vetoes Naipaul from the postcolonial counter canon, and coins him as the most shameful variety of eurocentricism. He writes of him as a 'third-worlder' denouncing his own people, not because they are victims of imperialism, but because they have an innate flaw, which is that they are not English. Through the pages of Edward Said's "Orientalism," we learn that the non-West during 80's having been occupied with the Constructions and representations of imperialism, a new tendency hunts for a reversal

of the imperial gaze, with the colonized cultures and their 'travelling and writing figures' made of England and its empire, when they arrived as emigrants, expatriates, travellers, in the 'mother country'. Each of these perspectives, as we perceive, offers an alternative of Naipaul and his oeuvre. Albeit still incipient, it must be the shift in attitude and the changing nature of postcolonial critics who condemn Naipaul explicitly as an apologist for empire, a few recuperation reveals Naipaul as a man who is a 'casualty and victim' more than an associate of imperialism. But, viewing through the glass of colonial discourse analysis, Naipaul has emerged as a native colonial performer, conspiring opportunistically with imperialism and neo-imperialism reforms of the third world.

V.S. Naipaul is often described as a writer of the 'Colonial Literature', and with no other reference point than the British Empire. It is not to wonder, when the 'Literary Academicians' regard him as, 'the grand old man of British literature's. Above all, he has acquired done of the most contested literary reputations, of 'Contemporary Literature' (Walder 9). A few literary figures, in recent memory could excite such passionate admiration as he has. He has, all-time, remained among, the conscious literary writers and critics, as, "an extremely controversial personality" on account of which, the readers have been sharing his 'wealth of literary art' (Judith 21). This proves that Naipaul is a writer of great substance, who has explored the world of East and West in his fictional and non-fictional works. The following chapter analyzes the texts citing evidences.

The dissertation has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter is an introductory part which deals with the issue, argument and hypothesis of the project in particular and the theme of displacement in Naipaul's works in general. The second chapter makes the analysis of the text, *A Bend in the River* examining the issue of the

postcolonialism. Here, the evidences and extracts from the text in favour of the support of the argument, that is, the imperial remnants cause the displacement and exile in the novel. And finally, the third and last chapter presents the findings of the project – that even though the physical colonies have gone, there are vestiges of colonial effects in once-colonized Africa.

II. Exile and Displacement in *A Bend in the River*

This chapter analyzes the novel *A Bend in the River* from the perspective of postcolonialism. The characters in the novel are representative of postcolonial subjects. They are subject to the peculiar situations they find themselves born into. The two Indian characters in *A Bend in the River* suffer from exiled consciousness as they always feel outsiders in Africa, while at the same time are typical post-colonial subjects. Through them it can be understood that Naipaul's African society fails to reconcile the past and the present, and the new state that forms the setting of the work fails to understand itself or see any way forward. Thus, *A Bend in the River* becomes a powerful document of the tragic consequences that many post-colonial states were subject to in the 20th century

The story takes place in a town at the bend of a great river in a newly independent African nation which has just escaped from British's domination, and is narrated by the main character, Salim. The beginning line of the novel *A Bend in the River* "The World is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it" describes the pathetic condition of the colonized people in their own country (3). Though they are living in their nation, they feel a sense of non-belongingness as the diasporic condition is one that is claimed to question all notions of belonging. In the case of the present novel, the concept of nation is only disrupted. The people are living as diasporic characters. Salman Sayyid argues that diaspora questions or disrupts the concept of nation. As Sayyid says:

The diaspora is not the other of the nation simply because it is constructed from the antithetical elements of a nation, it is, rather, an anti-nation since it interrupts the closure of nation of a nation. The existence of a diaspora prevents the closure of the nation, since a

diaspora is by definition [also] located within another nation. (qtd. in Kalra et. al. 34)

So, diaspora disables the nation in its attempt at defining a homogeneous community having the same border with a territory.

Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* minutely discusses the aftermath of colonization in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Though the place remains anonymous in the novel, the events that the novel refers to, make it obvious to the readers that the novel is set in post-independent Congo. The novel portrays characters from different strata of society struck in the newly decolonized Congo. The novel is narrated by Salim, an Indian Muslim shopkeeper, living in a small city. The story revolves around some of the important events in Salim's life projecting his identity crisis and inner conflicts due to the rapid changes that are taking place in his "homeland", Congo. Along with Salim and other characters' lives, the novel deals with the national issues in Congo and shows how the individual lives are affected by the economic and political changes in the country. As a result, the characters feel a sense of exile and displacement.

Colonialism is a process whereby sovereignty over the colony is claimed by the metropolis and the social structure, government and economics of the colony are changed by colonist- people from the metropolis. Colonialism is a set of unequal relationship between the colonialist and the native people. In the book, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Osterhammel settles on a three sentences definition of colonialism:

Colonialism is a relationship between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that

are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule.

(1)

In this way, colonialism is the policy of acquiring and maintaining colonies especially for exploitation. Colonial rulers exploit the native people in the pursuit of fulfilling their interest. The novel, *A Bend in the River*, starts in the colonized regions and days of Africa where our novelist is aggressively pursuing his way socially and financially while tribal wars terrorize and attempt to liberate Africa in every aspect. Africa is being broken and built again in a similar fashion to the antagonist.

A lot of the criticism on West Indian literature in general, and Naipaul in particular is concerned with this exile-like situation, since even in their birth country West Indians are in what Helen Tiffin and Diana Brydon call "ancestral exile" (195). This novel *A Bend in the River* is taken as the result of Naipaul's real exiled and displaced situation.

In this novel, *A Bend in the River*, Belgian ruled over the African people. They accused that African people were passive, backward, sensual and illiterate though they have their own uniqueness to remain passive. Metty, an African character is presented as a man with "wild and unreliable nature" (33). Salim describes Ferdinand's mind as a kind of "tabula rasa" where, prior to his contact with Western civilization, nothing existed. Therefore, as nothing is proper to himself, he can possess no own identity and can only mimic the ideas and styles conveyed to him by his teachers. "Ferdinand will never completely understand all these things or race too far ahead of anyone since his mental capacities are limited. He does not understand irony" (52) and his mind is "a jumble, full of all kinds of junk" (54).

This novel evokes the history of Democratic republic of Congo when it was independent from Belgian Regime. Congo is the representative country of whole African country. The African people are taken as a slave by Europeans. They are inferiorized in their own country and compelled to work as the intention of the Europeans. The following lines by Salim in this book prove:

There was a stockade on the beach. The walls were of brick. It was a ruin when I was a boy, and in tropical Africa, land of impermanent building, it was like a rare piece of history, it was in this stockade that the slaves were kept after they had been marched down from the interior in the caravans. (13)

It shows that the African people had just been revived their right of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness from Europeans which was seized by them. In the colonial period there is the slave master relationship between African people and Europeans.

Most of the novels which are written on the theme of colonization revolves around the race. In other words, white domination over black Negroes is the major theme of the colonial novel. But, in *A Bend in the River*, the author does not emphasize the race. Instead, he enhanced the conflict and contradiction between cultures by portraying the African world. "Colonizers not only physically conquer territories but also practice cultural colonization by replacing the practices and beliefs of the native culture with their own values, law, and belief" (Dobie 187). The culture colonization was what the author wanted to show us. Although Africans did not rid of the physical domination of western people, they could never get away of spiritual one. "The subject matter of postcolonial literature is marked by its concern for the ambiguity and loss of identity" (187). It is just another name of colonialism.

Africa is presented as elemental, dangerous and otherworldly. The river and forest of the Africa are seen as darkness. This symbolizes the concept of Europeans who have taken African continent itself is dark in term of knowledge, civilization and culture. So, there is the strong need of the European presence to teach the Africans and give newness to the African region. The following lines from the book *A Bend in the River* are presented as the evidences:

In the darkness of river and forest you could be sure only of what you see- could and even on a moonlight night you could not see much, when you made noise- dipped a paddle in the water- you heard yourself as though you were another person. The river and the forest were like presences and much more powerful than you. You felt unprotected, an intruder. (8)

By these kinds of colonial suppression by the colonial ruler hurt the colonized people in their own land. So there anger changes into fury and started to resist. This novel *A Bend in the River* is a novel which presents the post-colonial Africa. Naipaul, a close disciple of Conrad, employs the same strategies as Conrad in his review of the relationship between his hero and his African environment. Although Salim is disillusioned with the non-native native communities of the coast, he believes that they are more civilized than the interior. Like Marlow in Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, therefore, Salim, while traveling from the coast to the town at the bend in the river in his Peugeot, imagines himself traveling from the present to the past. The African environment, including its trees, its animals, and its climate, symbolizes the African's supposed primitivism and barbarism:

As I got deeper into Africa—the scrub, the desert, the rocky climb up the mountains, the lakes, the rain in the afternoon, the mud, and then,

on the other, wetter side of the mountains, the fern forests and the gorilla forests—as I got deeper I thought; But this is madness. I am going in the wrong direction. There can't be a new life at the end of this. (4)

European colonizers present the land and people of colonized state as the barbaric and illiterate. In this novel, Africa is presented as a deserts and muddy. The above mentioned citation provides the same hints.

The colonizers were excess punishment, suffocation which brought turmoil and disturbance, physical pain and many other internal and external hurt in the people. Aime Cessaire claimed in his *Discourses on Colonialism* that between colonizers and colonized that there is "no human contact, but the relation of domination and submission which turn the colonizing men into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver and the indigenous man into an instrument of production" (81). They lost identity in their own homeland and compelled to live like a slave. The painful and traumatized situation turns into resistance because people had no any choice but to fight against them. So the movement of "Anti-colonialism" was started. The local is perceived to be fully corrigible and involved in inevitable process historical changes. In this connection, M. Crabal in his *Return to the Sources: Selected Speeches* notes that:

the working masses and in particular the peasant, who are usually illiterate and have never moved beyond the boundary of the village or their region, come into contact with other group and lose those complexes of their own that constricted them in their relationships with other ethnic and social groups. They realize their crucial role in the struggle; they break the bonds of the village universe. (10)

Here, Cabral's point is that when colonized people are excessively suffered from the colonizers. They have no need of other forces; they are encouraged by their own to go against such kinds of tyrannical rules.

From the very beginning of the novel, the narrator tells us the story of his fictional postcolony. Now, there is no doubt that the post independent African state have gone through violent uprisings, civil wars, and that they have more than often failed miserably in the democratizing process. Salim, the narrator, being a businessman, his main concerns is with stability. Independence, which obviously introduces new sociopolitical upheavals, does not seem to be that important in his imagination. In fact, his opening pre-independence Africa was better off, as it was much more inhabitable: "You could imagine the land being made ordinary; fit for men like yourself, a small part of it had been made ordinary, for a short while before independence – the very parts that were now in ruins" (9). This description of the land also places the novel within a certain tradition of African novels through association.

The colonizers had set up educational institutions and forcefully convinced the colonized people to send their children in the colonial school. They targeted the children mostly because the mind of a child was fragile and could be easily shaped. They wanted the colonial child to grow up with the ideologies of the colonizers and thus be their prisoner forever. After family, educational institutions served as one of the fundamental factors that curved the ideologies of a person. In the colonial schools children very basics, their building blocks grew up with the English ideologies of the colonizers. They were taught the culture of the West and enforced to follow them so that these children slowly move away and finally forget their own culture and traditions. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o writes "The most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture of how people

perceived themselves and their relationship to the world” (442). Thus a colonial child was “being made to stand outside himself to look at himself” (Thiong’o 443).

All these were done in a way which convinced the colonized people that whatever the colonizers were doing was for their own good. The colonizers had façade their own purpose behind all these and pretended to help the ‘uncivilized’ people. Salim’s narrative from *A Bend in the River* adds an insight to our understanding:

I fear the lies- black men assuming the lies of white men. Those of us who had been in that part of Africa before the Europeans had never lied about ourselves. Not because we were moral. We didn’t lie because we never assessed ourselves and didn’t think there was anything for us to lie about; we were people who simply did what we did. But the Europeans could do one thing and say something quite different. The Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else; but at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being an intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their powers, they could express both sides of their civilization; and they got both the slaves and the statues. (18-19)

It was easy for the colonizers to convince some, they were easy to convince because they found the colonizers way lucrative, luxurious, and rich and an elevation to power; while others rebelled. Thus the unity of the natives broke down and they became enemies to each other. The colonizers applied the ‘divide and rule’ system which made things even easier to be controlled.

In *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays: 1965-1987*, Chinua Achebe accuses Joseph Conrad and Naipaul of racism on the grounds that, in certain respects, "they use their remarkably powerful creative capabilities to perpetuate the myth of the African as pathologically primitive" (qtd. in Davis 13). An evaluation of *A Bend in the River* that seeks to clarify its ideological origins shows that Achebe does have a point when he accuses Naipaul of racism against Africans. Throughout the book, Salim, the narrator, functions primarily as a conduit for Naipaul's apparent belief that Africans are incapable of negotiating the transition from underdevelopment to modernity because their faults in that regard are inherent. Achebe's criticisms of Naipaul can be contested on two grounds.

First, Naipaul cannot be accused of the faults of his narrator, a constructed identity; the concrete and creative realms of existence are wholly independent of each other, with their own respective social formations, historical trajectories, and therefore reference points.

Secondly, Naipaul does not employ the medium of the book to endorse neo-colonialism. (qtd. in Davis 11)

In fact, Salim does the complete opposite, subjecting neocolonialism to considerable criticism by employing Salim's constricted frame of reference, and Salim's futile struggle to break beyond those boundaries, primarily to underscore the extent to which a particularly repressive form of colonialism can oppress a member of a minority group beyond measure—by incorporating him within the prevailing framework.

Furthermore, this novel talks about the European imperialism in African territory. In other words, there is a European lineage of literature about Africa, history and imperialism. Salim says:

All that I know of our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written by Europeans. If I say that our Arab in their time were great adventurers and writers...if I say these things it is because I have got them from European books. They formed no part of our knowledge or pride. Without Europeans, I feel all our past would have been washed away, like the scuff-marks of fishermen on the beach outside our town. (18)

Like many statements in Naipaul's novels this is ambiguous in its politics. It could point to the Eurocentric basis of colonial education, to the failure of non-Europeans to write realistic history or to the way the decolonized learned to become conscious of themselves through Western knowledge – analogous to the way nineteenth century Indian and African nationalists learned their Indianness or Africanness from European scholarship.

Naipaul's rewriting of the imperial novel rejects the English literary tradition, yet acknowledges a precursor and implies a relationship which modifies that tradition. In recalling the relationship of ancient Greece and Rome, of Indians, Arabs and Belgians to Africa, Naipaul's own vision, in which the bush, forests, rivers and tribal life are the natural Africa as opposed to the cities of the new African state, becomes part of a universal, timeless perspective of the rise and fall of human achievements. In this connection, Bruce King in his book *V S Naipaul* adds:

Pliny's *Semper Aliquid Novi*, the lycée's motto (a reference to Pliny's *Natural History* 8.16) is a common Greek saying claiming that something new always comes from Africa. The meaning, however, is not that Africa changes but that there is always something happening in Africa which is a topic of conversation. The consequences of

decolonization and African independence may make this week's newspaper headlines but Africa has always been there, in contact with other peoples and the scene of other empires. (124)

A quotation from Virgil reminds us that Africa has long been part of European consciousness, part of some imperialism and the literature of imperialism. From the opening sentences of the novel, with its anti-evolutionary 'The World is what it is', to the concluding scene of the passenger barge adrift, there is a vision of history as cyclical, of pointless repetitions, of empire being replaced by empire, of the strong conquering the weak and then themselves becoming weak and conquered by fresh blood, of a world of experience and suffering without purpose. The historical vision of meaningless change and decay rather than actual newness and improvement is made specific in the symbolism of the water hyacinths, the new thing which has appeared on the river and which could eventually bring transportation on the river to a halt, returning the villages to their former isolation.

Naipaul is also concerned with the role of writing and the writer to give coherence to, by making a narrative of, life. He sees this as a Western rather than an Islamic trait. Writing preserves and shapes. It is a defense against the waves of chaos, of extinction, the void or nothingness which haunted Shree Prasad Naipaul and which haunts his son. But it is also a clue or directional pointer as to how this novel might be read. *Bend* creates a space in literature and therefore in history for the East African Asiatics, primarily the Indians, who were driven from Africa in the aftermath of African independence and who have, once more uprooted, sought refuge in such foreign lands as England and Canada.

In this connection, in a more recent article, Ranu Samantraj asserts that "Naipaul's novel enacts an epistemology that locks in place the relationship of

colonizer and colonized even after the end of direct military occupation" (92). Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* addresses wide-ranging literary concerns within the context of interesting definitions of the concepts of post-coloniality, nation, post-independence, and so on. In their book:

In so far as colonialism is concerned, the Empire, on the one hand, and the colony, on the other, can be said to be two distinct discourse communities. The program of colonialism revolves around the production of forms of knowledge designed to advance the interests of the Empire beyond its borders within the context of international capitalism. The programs of independence and nation building, for their part, center on knowledge intended to recuperate the humanity of the colonized (or formerly colonized) person as the foundation for his social, economic, and political development. (63)

In post-colonial studies, the relationship between the colonizer and the native is given a great deal of attention. The colonizer is represented as the embodiment of the values of the Empire responsible for the invention of the colony. The native is represented as the physical and psychological manifestation of the scars inflicted on the colony by the Empire. For the most part, these discussions are carried out at the expense of another important participant in the development of the colony: the immigrant communities who either come to the colony of their own volition or are imported into the region from another part of the world by the colonial regime are generally overlooked. Yet they play an important role in shaping the nature and direction of colonial rule and therefore contribute considerably to the evolution of the colonial situation.

Here, for example, the similarity between Salim's narration and that of Conrad's Marlowe is quite striking:

In the darkness of river and forest you could be sure only of what you could see— and even on a moonlight night you couldn't see much. When you made a noise — dipped a paddle in the water— you heard yourself as though you were another person. The river and the forest were like presences, and much more powerful than you. You felt unprotected, an intruder. (8)

This amazing representation of Africa as elemental, dangerous, and otherworldly is not quite different from Conrad's Africa. Here is a brief excerpt from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*:

Going up the river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. . . . You lost your way on that river as you would in a desert and butted all day long against shoals trying to find the channel till you thought bewitched and cut off from forever from everything you had known once — somewhere — far away — in another existence perhaps. (35)

This similarity cannot just be coincidental, nor is Salim's account ironic: this is the way he sees the African reality. It is not surprising though: both Kurtz and Salim are, after all, businessmen, trying to make a living within (and from) the heart of Africa.

Salim, an Arab-African is the post-colonial subject in 'modern' African. Modern because the time of Africa in the novel was the time after Africa has gained its independence. Although Africa was free from the Europeans rule, it was not "free" in every sense of the word. Vincent in his article writes "the colonized peoples may

have destroyed the most visible symbols of the imperialist fantasy, but they cannot so easily get rid of the historical construct it-self” (Vincent 342). Salim states:

Europe no longer ruled us. But it still fed us in a hundred ways with its language and sent us its increasingly wonderful goods, things which, in the bush of Africa, added year by year to our idea of who we were, gave us that idea of our modernity and development, and made us aware of another Europe—the Europe of great cities, great stores, great buildings, great universities. To that Europe only the privileged or the gifted among us journeyed...When we wanted to speak of the doers and makers and the inventors, we all—whatever our race—said ‘they’.

(229)

Under the rule of the New President who was commonly known as the Big Man, there was unrest in Africa. The unrest was due to the inability of the African people to come up with the post-colonial situation, their frustration rose from their confusion, and lack of determination on how to live their lives. The novel describes the observation of a failing story of a Third world country struggling through post colonization; people were unable to adjust to the new ways of lifestyle. They were left behind with a lot of modern equipment from the Europeans but they did not know what to do with them. Lives of people in African depended on the whimsical decision of the President and the president only did what was beneficial to him and could not bother less about the betterment of his people. The President’s decisions were very contradictory. Where on one hand he had his “European” posters hung up at every corner of the country, on the other hand he was asking people to stop “running like children after things in imported tins and bottles...” (206). Therefore, the President’s flawed effort to the process of “Africanization” were all in vain and there was no such

thing as “true” Africa. On one hand, where the President’s “New Domain”, a city in it-self, was flourishing which only privileged those who had adopted the “modern” lifestyles, the people in the villages and in the town were completely unaware and deprived from all of it. Salim narrates “He was creating modern Africa. He was creating a miracle that would astound the rest of the world. He was by- passing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages, and creating something that would match anything that existed in other countries” (116). The villagers still wanted to go back to their ancestral ways of life. And thus, there formed a group of people who were against the President but were powerless in front of him. This created the uprising unrest which caused a lot of open and closed killing of innocent people. The President was blending the national and the native hopelessly as Salim mentions “The Domain had been built fast, and in the sun and the rain decay also came fast” (117). No one was safe under his rule, nor the natives neither the foreigners.

In this connection, by describing the writing technique of V S Naipaul, Samira Noor in her project “The Futile Struggle for Self- Determination in Naipaul’s Protagonists” tries to prove Naipaul as a postcolonial writer. She further adds that Naipaul tries to evoke the psychological damage of the people in the period of colonization. In her own words:

Naipaul writes his novels mostly based on the post-colonial situation of the once colonized land. It is not only enough to read and understand the physical destructions in Naipaul’s novel but it is utterly important to realize the psychological damage of people that has been made by colonization. Naipaul’s novels require a thorough reading of the psychoanalysis of the characters. (1)

Here, from the above discussion, it becomes clear that Naipaul the famous well-known writer who we know now had also suffered the pangs of colonization him-self, has been a colonial subject and had a tortured personal life.

Salim's experience with the colonial government stamps, to which he is exposed while a small boy growing up on the east African coast plays an important role in the development of his biased frame of reference and his subsequent estrangement from his coastal people. The stamps expose him to an important aspect of his culture. From the stamps he learns about his culture, but he does so exclusively from the point of view of the colonial master, through whose conceptual framework the message they carry is mediated to viewers. Therefore, in the course of appreciating the paintings, Salim is introduced to the hierarchical relationship established by the colonial situation between Europe and the rest of the world, particularly between Europe and African peoples. In comparison to the "liners and cargo ships" that routinely call at the harbor, the dhows on the stamps are "quaint" but reflect a relatively underdeveloped culture (15).

The stamp bearing the image of the dhow leaves a particularly deep impression upon Salim's mind because it addresses an aspect of non-native culture that he admires above all else—their love for the sea symbolized by the dhow. He recalls:

Without that stamp of the dhow I might have taken the dhows for granted. As it was, I learned to look at them. Whenever I saw them tied up at the waterfront I thought of them as something peculiar to our region, quaint, something the foreigner would remark on, something not quite modern, and certainly nothing like the liners and cargo ships that berthed in our own modern docks. (15)

The encounter with the stamps is crucial, again, because it establishes the foundation for his subsequent indoctrination into the prevailing neocolonial framework in its totality: for his prejudices toward Africans, for his estrangement from his coastal community, and for his struggle for escape through absorption within “European civilization.” His childhood fascination with the dhows and other “local scenes” depicted on the stamps matures into concern for his culture generally, while the frame of reference demarcated by the colonial artists who painted the scenes grows to incorporate the overall neo-colonial frame of reference. The result is that his subsequent education is wholly informed by the prevailing framework: his interest in his own culture grows, but his attempts to account for it are invariably hijacked by the medium of neo-colonialism; in the end, he is transformed into no more than a medium for colonialism. The problem is highlighted in the following passage:

All that I know about our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written by Europeans. If I say that our Arabs in their time were great adventurers and writers; that our sailors gave the Mediterranean the lateen sail that made the discovery of the Americas possible; that an Indian pilot led Vasco da Gama from East Africa to Calicut; that the very word *cheque* was first used by our Persian merchants—if I say these things it is because I have got them from European books. They formed no part of our knowledge or pride.

Without Europeans, I feel, all our past would have been washed away, like the scuff marks of fishermen on the beach outside our town. (12)

He sees his people exactly as the colonizer sees them. He brings to his culture exactly the same prejudices that the colonizer disseminates through the literature he produces regarding Arabia, India, and Africa.

The ending of colonial order created hopes and ambitions for the newly independent countries, but optimism was relatively short-lived. According to Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman the extent to which the Western colonial powers had not relinquished control became clear: "This continuing Western influence, located in flexible combinations of the economic, the political, the military, and the ideological is called neocolonialism" (3), which is another manifestation of imperialism. This is an important definition for understanding Naipaul's defense of neo-colonialism in terms of technology, business and industrialization, a defense that concludes that Third World peoples are not genuine and authentic human beings, like Europeans and Americans, because they do not produce bombs and machines, but rather only consume them.

"Postcolonialism is concerned with what exists and happens after the end of colonial rule" (Dobie, 186). This is what the situation Salim, the In this story, he was the only one who had the ability to observe things, moreover, it was the author who gave him this ability to make readers realize what Africa looks like. Joy Chung in this article said: "the back ground of a person was an important thing because it was a standard that decided one's fate, that is, to dominate or to be dominated" (2).

With this background, Salim has a nicer life than those natives and was respected by Europeans but he could not compete with them who were real dominators in African society. Salim said: "I was without the religious sense of my family. The insecurity I felt was due to my lack of true religion" (16). This show the readers one of the main problems of Africa- lost of identity which was another important part in post colonialism.

Place, displacement, identity, and authenticity are central notions in postcolonial theory, and these are important elements in this analysis since it is the

experience of displacement that is perhaps the most direct source of the special post-colonial crisis of identity. The sense of displacement results in alienation of vision and crisis in self -, image, and we see this in the narrators of *A Bend in the River*.

In postcolonial studies, 'mimicry' is considered as unsettling imitations that are characteristic of postcolonial cultures. It is a desire to sever the ties with 'self' in order to move towards 'other'. Salim, the hero of Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, expresses his penchant for colonial mimicry when he wishes to desert his roots. He says: "I wanted to break away. To break away from my family and community also meant breaking away from my unspoken commitment..." (31). For Homi K. Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). He is the foremost contemporary critic who has tried to unveil the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse in order to highlight the colonizer's *ambivalence* with respect to his attitude towards the colonized *Other* and vice versa. He continues: "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/ recognition of the colonial object" (126).

In this novel *A Bend in the River*, He has a binary view of African reality; post and pre-independence. In his imagination, while the colonial nation was ordered, the postcolony is still of chaos. But if we inundate the concept of time in the novel with the insights provided by Mbembe, then we can complicate the binary and disrupt it by introducing the specificity of African history as opposed to the meta-narrative of history as progress. Salim, of course, cannot have this view, for he is, after all, so embedded in the progressive narrative of capital that anything that does not point to the logic of capital is irrational. This is where some other insights by Mbembe can be

useful in complicating the reading and making the text a site to insert new knowledge into the discussion of African lived experience. In framing the reasons for the failure of the African states, Mbembe clearly foregrounds the impact of restructuring requirements forced on most of the African states. He asserts that as a result of these policies;

Having no more rights to give out or to honour, and little left to distribute, the state no longer has credit with the people. All it has left is control of the forces of coercion, in a context marked by material devastation, disorganization of credit and production circuits, and an abrupt collapse of notions of public good, general utility, and law and order. (76)

Hence, as the African state loses its means for self-legitimization, and as it fails in its distributive fictions, those exact fictions are privatized and appropriated by the regional elite, a phenomenon Mbembe calls the "private indirect government" (67-94). This failure of the centralized government results in militias, war lords and drug traffickers appropriating those same means of coercion. This aspect of the African state finds no voice in the novel. For Salim, the frequent uprisings of the people against the government are inexplicable, essentialized, and primitive. Also missing in the novel are references to the close connections between regional African militias and global financial networks. One such African big man, Liberia's Charles Taylor, could not have stayed in power without his global corporate parries" strategic financial links. According to Ted Fishman, before the sanctions were applied against Liberia, Charles Taylor had "pioneered the route from [war] booty to hard cash . . . diamond centers in Belgium, Britain, and New York absorbed all the loot Taylor

could supply." "In 1998, \$298 million worth of diamonds," adds Taylor, "made its way from Liberia to Belgium, the world's largest diamond center" (38).

Salim, however, does not see the complicity of the global market economy within the context of African violence. In fact, he cannot even understand the rage against the former symbols of oppression. To him the destruction of colonial symbols portrays an inexplicable "African rage" (26). Of course, to Salim this African rage is unfathomable: he, it seems, never suffered the kind of social degradation that African subjects suffered at the hands of the colonizers. He, being a businessman, actually profited from the system of slavery: he has no sympathy for the former slaves who must destroy the signs of their long degradation at the hands of the colonizers. He also lacks the deeper understanding of the historical and material reasons of this rage within the postcolony. Read through the insights provided by Mbembe, this rage, this implosion of the state is no longer a barbaric practice, but can be placed within the logic of the very capital and market which is being proffered as redemption of Africa as well as other parts of the global South.

Salim acknowledges the significance of powerful 'Other' for the denizens of decolonized African colony when he asserts:

When I was a child Europe ruled my world... Europe no longer ruled. But it still fed us in a hundred ways with its language and sent us its increasingly wonderful goods, things which, in the bush of Africa, added year by year to our idea of who we were, gave us that idea of our modernity and development, and made us aware of another Europe—the Europe of great cities, great stores, great buildings, great universities. To the Europe only the privileged or the gifted among us journeyed. (246-47)

Identity is the major issue emerging in the period of colonization. The identity of the colonized people put into threat by the colonizers. 'Identity' in the terms of, nationality, language, and the rights as a true citizen of the country one habitat and the culture- remains one of the most- urgent, as well as hotly disputed topics, in literary and cultural studies. For nearly two decades, it has been a central focus of debate for psychoanalytic, poststructuralist, and cultural materialist criticism. At the same moment it has been subjected to a searching critique. But, in the case of V.S Naipaul, especially, when they are viewed with a wider sense, neo-colonial view is not a controversial issue to him, but is paramount to changing people's perceptions. Thus, A humble effort has been made in this paper with the help of the intersection between 'diasporic' and 'postcolonial theories', to move beyond the assumptions, and offer a more differentiated and definite view, of what has too frequently been taken for granted, and hereby, proffer to substantiate V.S Naipaul as an 'epitome' and 'a front man' of the dominating culture: the 'Colonial culture' and explore the original themes prevalent in his novels and also, examine his advancement from a regional writer to one with more worldwide allure, whose novels are viewed as representing a turning point in his development and effectiveness as a colonial writer.

The strongest theme by far, however, is of a post-colonial Africa. The story opens with our main character, Salim, opening up shop in an interior African country, where an African leader has just taken control. Salim is an unassuming witness to the slowly changing nature of the country and its citizens. Like all countries that have freshly unburdened themselves, Salim watches as his country inexorably sheds itself of colonial origins and tries to re-assume an Africa identity. Naipaul skillfully attempts to define an African identity through the young character of Ferdinand, the son of Naipaul's African acquaintance. Ferdinand tries on a number of different

identities before settling into a role in the country's new bureaucracy. Like Ferdinand, the country itself struggles to establish a tangible identity separate from its colonialities.

The character Salim, himself, is cleverly portrayed as a Muslim, whose family has spent generations in Africa. Yet, Salim himself is considered a foreigner, or rather, not a true African. Salim struggles with his own identity as a Muslim, non-African, and a former slave-owner (who appears to be owned more by his slave, than the other way around). Naipaul presents Salim as a steady, relatively predictable man, something needed against the backdrop of an unsafe country with a number of brewing rebellions and revolutions. Somehow, through it all, Salim and his shop survive the turbulence and identity crisis within the novel. Indeed, until the last chapter, I did not think Salim would ever truly change or experience true danger.

In postcolonial studies 'mimicry' is considered as unsettling imitations that are characteristic of postcolonial cultures. It is a desire to sever the ties with 'self' in order to move towards 'other'. Salim, the hero of Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, expresses his penchant for colonial mimicry when he wishes to desert his roots. He says: "I wanted to break away. To break away from my family and community also meant breaking away from my unspoken commitment" (31). For Homi K. Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (122).

Most of the postcolonial critics agree that it is precisely mimicry that disrupts the colonial discourse by double vision, double articulation or the forked tongue. Bhabha finds mimicry to be characterized by indeterminacy and a sign of double articulation. The dichotomy between 'self' and 'Other' being most striking feature of colonial discourse, he justifies mimicry of the 'Other' because, for a colonial, 'Other'

visualizes power. Salim acknowledges the significance of powerful ‘Other’ for the denizens of decolonized African colony when he asserts:

When I was a child Europe ruled my world... Europe no longer ruled. But it still fed us in a hundred ways with its language and sent us its increasingly wonderful goods, things which, in the bush of Africa, added year by year to our idea of who we were, gave us that idea of our modernity and development, and made us aware of another Europe—the Europe of great cities, great stores, great buildings, great universities. To the Europe only the privileged or the gifted among us journeyed. (246-47)

It is in this context that Bhabha finds the simple presence of the colonized ‘*Other*’ within the colonial discourse as sufficient indication of the ambivalence of the colonial text— an ambivalence that destabilizes its claim for narcissistic authority through the repetitious slippage, excess or difference. Bill Ashcroft elaborates the destabilizing effect of postcolonial mimicry as: “The mimicry of the post-colonial subject is therefore always potentially destabilizing to colonial discourse, and locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance” (Ashcroft 142).

In Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*, Salim, the hero of the novel relies too much on the representation of the colony by the Europeans. Salim asserts: “All that I know of our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written by Europeans... without Europeans, I feel, all our past would have been washed away...” (18). Moreover, the introduction of a Europeanized institution named Domain in the African Colony with the motto discipline avanttout i.e. ‘Discipline Above All’. On the name of Domain with shoddy grandeur, the ambivalent President “... was creating

modern Africa ... He was bypassing real Africa ... wished to show us a new Africa” (110). With the mimicking ideology of the President, Africans were kept away from European atmosphere generated by Domain.

The perpetual distress and distrust prevailing among the colonial natives has made them become conscious of their eventual frustration. Salim rightly comments on the fate of the mimic men:

It was in the history of the land: here man had always been prey. You don't feel malice towards your prey. You set a trap for him. It fails ten times; but it is always the same trap you set. The people were malins because they lived with the knowledge of men as prey (62).

The first impressive character Ferdinand, an intellectual African Student, was the man who could represent hope of Africa. As a native, the basic assumption of post colonialism could all be seen in his life. He was arrogant and considered himself a more outstanding person than his friends because he could perfectly imitate the Western culture by joining the New Domain Project. On the other hand, he was afraid of losing his own culture, his identity and everything he had. He did not have a dependable model to teach him and help him and stable his self identity. He mimicked the different characters to convey that he was a special one in the town. At the beginning he mimicked Salim and then turned to those Europeans, but in his heart he could not find his position in his society. He always thought he has boundless prospect so that he looked down upon others. He did not know that his confidence and his prospects were composed of another culture which originally does not belong to him. This was exactly how other African felt; they were satisfied with some ridiculous thing with their narrow mind and they were also satisfied with living in their own world: a small world.

III. Hybridity in *A Bend in the River*

Naipaul makes an effort to resist the sense of insecurity and of uncertainty through his characters in postcolonial society. Like Naipaul, his characters make a desperate bid to arrive at a meaning and purpose of life. They are rootless individuals who yearn for a way of life. They experience a gap between desire and native character which is very much conditioned by their colonial moorings which tend to generate a sense of vacuum fatality and helplessness. They end up being hybridized mimic men. The failure of the colonial mimic men is further determined by 'hybridity', which according to Bhabha, subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures. Though the ambivalence marks the lives of all colonials, hybridity and multicultural locale adds to its intensity. Ferdinand, 'an unprotected boy full of ambition' and a native of mixed heritage in *A Bend in the River* feels even more insecure as he has no cultural group where he can feel associated. Salim finds that Ferdinand's ambivalence is twice agonizing and his "affectations were more than affectations ... his personality had become fluid" (55).

Indar, from *A Bend in the River* was one such character who chose to embrace the Euro-American colonizers life-style and education "failing to understand the homogeneity of Western culture" (Wise 66). With the urge to become something he went to pursue his studies in England, "thus language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds" (Thiong'o 439). He came back to Africa with failure and disappointment. Naipaul quotes from *A Bend in the River* the frustration of Indar as he says:

The Committee was meant to put English boys in English jobs; it wasn't meant for me. I found myself growing false to myself, acting to myself, convincing myself of my rightness for whatever was being

described. And this is where I suppose life ends for most people, who stiffen in the attitudes they adopt to make themselves suitable for the jobs and lives that other people have laid out for them. (166-168)

The final hit that the colonizers made was to attack on the native language. The purpose of colonial education was to build up an environment where English would be the only medium of communication.

The characters in the novel are forced into two parts as Robert J. C. Young notes that hybridity means "forcing of a single entity into two or more parts, a severing of a single object into two, turning sameness into difference" in the once-colonized Congo (24). They become neither African nor European.

Contrarily, V.S. Naipaul captures the colonial natives distributing pamphlets with a passionate appeal to condemn the initiative to affect the purity of African culture:

By ENEMY we mean the powers of imperialism, the multi-nationals and the puppet powers that be, the false gods, the capitalists, the priests and teachers who give false interpretations. The law encourages crime. The schools teach ignorance and people practice ignorance in preference to their true culture. (228- 29)

The distress of the African natives in *A Bend in the River*, perhaps lies in their insistence on the intactness of their culture as observed by Salim who comments: "Once the Arabs had ruled here; then the Europeans had come; now the Europeans were about to go away. But little had changed in the manners or minds of men" (18).

In this way, the concept of Post-colonialism deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies. The term as originally used by historians after the Second World War such as 'post-colonial state', where 'post-colonial' had a

clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period. However, from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization. Although the study of the controlling power of representation in the colonized societies had begun in the late 1970s with the text such as Said's *Orientalism*, and led to the development of what came to be called 'Colonialist Discourse Theory' in the work of critics such as Spivak and Bhabha, the actual term 'post-colonial' was not employed in these early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape the form and opinion and policies in the colony and metropolis. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly observes:

Post-colonialism is not merely a chronological label referring to the period after the demise of empires. It is ideologically an emancipatory concept particularly for the students of literature outside the Western world, because it makes us interrogate many concepts of the study of literature that we were made to take for granted, enabling us not only to read our own texts in our own terms, but also to re-interpret some of the old canonical texts from Europe from the perspective of our specific historical and geographical location (3-4).

It seems that Postcolonial theory emerged from the colonized peoples' frustrations, their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture, and their fears, hopes and dreams about their future and their own identities. How the colonized respond to changes in the language, curricular matters in education, race differences, and a host of other discourses, including the act of writing become the context and the theories of postcolonialism.

The notion of Africa as a new land, the wave of the future, the start of a postcolonial order, is thus treated with skepticism and irony. Little is found to be new.

Whereas slavery has come to be the symbol of European injustice to Africa, an injustice so great as to explain all the subsequent problems of Africa and of the descendants of the Africans in the Americas, *Bend* recalls the long history of slavery within Africa, the history of Arabs using African slaves, the privileged position of house slaves, the way slaves might feel more secure with a foreign master than freed among Africans of other tribes, the way as people interbred with their slaves they became indistinguishable from the slaves, until the former masters now indigenized became prey for the next strong conqueror who entered the scene. This vision, an essentially amoral concept of life as achievement and of the strong and weak, runs throughout Naipaul's work where it is often in contrast to the classical Indian – Hindu and Buddhist – notion of life as illusion, a place of suffering and experience. After his disillusionment with Yvette, Salim has an epiphany which seems the reverse of Camus's notion of life as intensity of experience. It, significantly, occurs 'with the coming of the light' at dawn, when 'the night had become part of the past':

It seemed to me that men were born only to grow old, to live out their span, to acquire experience. Men lived to acquire experience; the quality of the experience was immaterial; pleasure and pain – and above all, pain – had no meaning; to possess pain was as meaningless as to chase pleasure. And even when the illumination vanished, became as thin and half nonsensical as a dream, I remembered that I had had it, that knowledge about the illusion of pain. (229)

Before leaving London, Salim recalls this vision which now becomes an "illumination of men lost in space and time, but dreadfully, pointlessly busy" (248). Later, however, he compares "That illumination I held on to, about the unity of experience and the illusion of pain" to Indar's sudden nostalgia for a home that no longer exists and calls

it an Indian or Asiatic way of feeling, the basis of an older way of life which they supposedly rejected, to which there was no way of going back. Instead he vows to trample on the past: "We had become what the world outside had made us; we had to live in the world as it existed" (252). If Indar and Salim learn to seize the day, and if, in the Hobbesian world of social contracts, man makes himself through power, ruthlessness and achievement, there is always the possibility that this too is an illusion and all activity is needless vanity. The three rebellions in the novel may not be solely examples of an African rage to return to an imagined former racial and tribal purity, they may be part of an endless process of meaningless, illusory history. In contrast to this there is also the human instinct to achieve, to leave a mark in history, to be, in the vocabulary of the novel, a man. Yet, as Indar learns by comparing himself to the wealthy American, and as is shown by the contrast between London and the capital of the African state, or as is shown by the limitations reality imposes on Mr. Biswas's attempted rebellion, a person's ability to accomplish and leave a mark on history is limited by environment, the past and the culture. The existential is circumscribed by the material. Besides the three rebellions and such recurring symbols as dark and light, houses and the water hyacinth, the contrasts between the two national capitals, there are numerous parallels, analogies, contrasts and structured ironies. In the parallels Naipaul's imagination can be seen as not only finding ironies but also attempting to examine the major themes and problems from different perspectives. Indar (like Naipaul himself) flees from a threatened Indian community to a famous university in England and attempts to become a self-made man, a cosmopolitan, international expert and advisor on the problems of emerging nations, an intellectual independent of others. This is contrasted to Salim's quest for self-creation as a businessman, ironically the traditional role of Asiatics in the diaspora, in the heart of

Africa. But Indar is found to be dependent on American foundations and wealth, and nostalgic for the now vanished home he fled. At the point Indar seems defeated by his awareness of his dependency, Salim's quest for independence and security takes him to London in another attempt to create a new life. There he finds many people like himself, aliens from former colonies, including Indians selling cigarettes on street corners (as the poor do in India and Africa). How are we to 'read' Salim's engagement in London to Kareisha, Nazruddin's daughter? While this fits into the Virgilian parallel, the foreordained marriage at the conclusion of the voyage upon which Rome will be built, it is the kind of pre-arranged marriage within the East African Indian community from which Salim had originally fled.

In the end of the book, Salim escaped from the town because of the war, left everything, he could not do anything but run away. Through Salim's narration, I saw the disquiet of Africa, through Ferdinand's eyes. I saw the self esteem and frustration of Africans; through Mahesh's eyes, I saw the limitation of African's world and thought. This book let me see how people kept living after the invader's left. Salim's situation is more complex. At the beginning of *A Bend in the River* he describes his background:

Africa was my home, had been the home of my family for centuries. But we came from the east coast, and that made the difference. The coast was not truly African. It was an Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, and we who lived there were really people of the Indian Ocean. True Africa was at our back. Many miles of scrub or desert separated us from the upcountry people; we looked east to the lands with which we traded. Arabia, India, Persia. These were also the lands of our ancestors. But we could no longer say that we were Arabians or

Indians or Persians; when we compared ourselves with these people, we felt like people of Africa. My family was Muslim. But we were a special group. We were closer to the Hindus of north-western India.

(11)

Salim and his family belong to a small Indian community on the east coast, who has been living there for centuries without losing their Indian roots and beliefs. The process of identification is a difficult one, however, since in comparison with real Indians he feels like someone of Africa, whereas to Africans he will infallibly appear as someone from the Indian Ocean. The issue of identity is rendered even more complicated by Salim's move to a country in the centre of the African continent. Salim's description illustrates the hybrid nature of his background and of many societies in the modern world: His home is an "Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, when he comes to London he finds it full of migrants .out of places you've never heard of" (234) and in the African town at the bend in the river where he has his little shop, there are European teachers, businessmen and settlers and an Indian community. Naipaul is one such cultural informant whose works have had to negotiate this perilous demand of the metropolitan market and the burden of representation. Naipaul critics, depending on their disciplinary training and critical choices, either find Naipaul and his works to be orientalist or a true representation of postcolonial realities. Such an approach to Naipaul and his works, thus, ends up privileging the text and authorial intention over the possibility of using a text to explore the larger structures within which it is produced. In this connection, Masood Raja in his article "Reading the Postcolony in the Center: V.S. Naipaul's A Bend in the River" writes:

The critical reception of A Bend in the River easily finds itself equally addressed by Naipaul's apologists and detractors. Most of the earlier

readings of *A Bend in the River* suggest that Naipaul adopts the transitional and binaristic view of history privileging the traditional / colonialist hierarchies of the West. Hence, in such a representation, the West's other becomes a product of narcissistic reflection and the dark madness of the African subject, leading to a distinct Conradian vision of history. (225)

Likewise, another critic Christopher Wise suggests that in *A Bend in the River* Naipaul "too quickly dismisses the cultural products of Africa as dying or hopelessly reified objects" (72), asserting that Naipaul does not understand the larger economic structures that control the construction of African reality.

The protagonist and narrator of *A Bend in the River* describe his qualities as an observer with the following words: "So from an early age I developed the habit of looking, detaching myself from a familiar scene and trying to consider it as from a distance. It was from this habit of looking that the idea came to me that as a community we had fallen behind" (15-16). Detachment from one's surroundings thus seems to be a prerequisite for a realistic evaluation of one's own position in the world. Salim remains detached from the society he lives in throughout the whole text. In the town at the bend in the river he has nothing "like a social life" (27) and he and the other Indians are outsiders, but neither settlers nor visitors, just people with nowhere better to go (85).

The Africans have not only suffered under both European and Arabian colonial rule but also from tribal conflicts with other Africans. These ancient conflicts are at the bottom of many wars in post-colonial Africa.

The Africans' violence has also another dimension, however. This novel *A Bend in the River* also tries to reflect the history of Congo after its independence from

Belgian colonizers. After an uprising by the Congolese people, Belgium granted the Congo independence in 1960. However, the Congo was left unstable because tribal leaders had more power than the central government. Africa is presented as a forest. It is:

Like a forest fire that goes underground and burns unseen along the roots of trees it has already destroyed and then erupts in scorched land where it has little to feed on, so in the middle of destruction and with the wish to destroy flared up again. (67)

This description reveals African rage as something elemental; a hidden force which can erupt at any time. This already brings it closer to being an essentially African characteristic. On another occasion, Salim remarks that in the history of this land "men had always been prey" (55). He concludes that the people here "were *malins* the way a dog chasing a lizard was *malin*, or a cat chasing a bird. The people were *malins* because they lived with the knowledge of men as prey (56). The animal imagery is important in this connection since it "conveys the mindless, inhuman cruelty inherent in African personality, the lack of appreciation or understanding of other people as human beings" (Pyne-Timothy 256). The description reduces Africans to an inferior, animal-like status. The assumption seems to be that as many Africans are still living in small forest villages, they are living in accord with the laws of nature. The people of the region of the town at the bend in the river are mostly small and slightly built.

Yet, as though to make up for their puniness in that immensity of river and forest, they liked to wound with their hands. . . . More than once, at night, outside a bar or little dance hall, I saw what looked like a drunken pushing or shoving [.] turn to methodical murder, as though the first wound and the first spurt of blood had made the victim

something less than a man, and compelled the wounder to take the act of destruction to the end. (56)

Salim has his own inter-racial affair with Yvette, the wife of an important Belgian historian. It is his first sexual experience with someone other than a prostitute, and to a great degree his fascination with this affair derives from the new perspectives he obtain from it. Yvette and her husband live in the Domain, which is a world completely different from what Salim has ever experienced. It is due to this affair that he closes his eyes to the changes happening around him, however, and even neglects his business. King states that the implication here is that "[i]nvolvement with women of other communities prevents a man from following his own destiny" (King124). Salim should have drawn the consequences of the country's deteriorating situation and nationalistic politics much earlier and gone somewhere else.

The novel's central mixed character is Metty whose name derives from "the French word *métis*, someone of mixed race"(33). His whole life he has been the slave of Salim's family on the east coast, and shortly after Salim leaves for the town at the bend in the river, Metty decides to join him. Though they get on very well, Salim is convinced from the beginning of Metty's "wild and unreliable nature" (33). Despite his reliability in matters concerning Salim's shop, Metty is unreliable in that he completely conceals his private life. In the town he lives a second, separate life and has an African family. Notwithstanding his supposed unreliability, Metty remains a sympathetic character and in the end it is Salim who proves to be undependable; leaving Metty behind in the misery and chaos of the town. The general impression remains, however: the mingling of peoples is not desirable and creates many problems.

Ferdinand is probably the most closely depicted African character in Naipaul's texts. He is Zabeth's son, and when he enters the town's lycée, the sorceress asks Salim to keep an eye on him. Therefore, Ferdinand comes regularly to Salim's shop, where Salim can observe his development from a young lycée boy to a university student. He has no easy time with his ward and from the beginning he detects "something distant and slightly mocking in his eyes" (36). For Salim, Ferdinand is a typical African in whose face he can see "the starting point of certain African masks, in which features were simplified and strengthened" (37). For Ferdinand the situation is not easy either and soon he does not know which role to play:

He was of mixed tribal heritage, and in this part of the country he was a stranger. He had no group that was really his own, and he had no one to model himself on. He didn't know what was expected of him. He wanted to find out, and he needed me to practice on. I could see him now trying on various characters, attempting different kinds of manners. His range was limited. He would pretend to be my business associate Then he might become the young African on the way up. (46-47)

Ferdinand assumes different roles because he has no clear idea of his identity.

Although his predicament is worsened by the fact that he is a stranger in this part of the country, his problems can be considered to be symptomatic of many Africans.

Throughout the whole text Africans are depicted as characters who can only mimic different styles and attitudes without understanding them completely. One possible explanation for this phenomenon may lie in the loss of their old way of life which has not been replaced by something else (Updike 45).

The reading is offered by Salim, who traces Ferdinand's development with the words:

You took a boy out of the bush and built a polytechnic and you sent him there. It seemed as easy as that, if you came late to the world and found ready-made those things that other countries and people had taken so long to arrive at writing, printing, universities, books, knowledge. The rest of us had to take things in stages. [.]Ferdinand, starting from nothing, had with one step made himself free, and was ready to race ahead of us. (102-103)

In this passage Salim clearly clings to the conception of Africans as having no proper knowledge and culture. Pyne-Timothy remarks that the narrator conveys the idea that "Africans have truly dwelt for centuries in darkness where no societal organization, no cultural continuity has been etched on their minds" (257).

In compliance with the rhetoric of negation, Salim describes Ferdinand's mind as a kind of "tabula rasa" where, prior to his contact with Western civilization, nothing existed. Therefore, as nothing is proper to himself, he can possess no own identity and can only mimic the ideas and styles conveyed to him by his teachers. "Ferdinand will never completely understand all these things or race too far ahead of anyone since his mental capacities are limited. He does not understand irony" (52) and his mind is "a jumble, full of all kinds of junk" (54). Although he sees himself as one of the new men of Africa, he is unable to comprehend the world he is living in:

Ferdinand could only tell me that the world outside Africa was going down and Africa was rising. When I asked in what way the world outside was going down, he couldn't say. And when I pushed him past

the stage where he could repeat bits of what he had heard at the lycée, I found that the ideas of the school discussion had in his mind become jumbled and simplified. Ideas of the past were confused with ideas of the present. (48)

He is a confused young man who can neither repeat the school discussions correctly nor think for himself. Even some years later at university, complex issues have to be simplified since, among the students, complex is a word of disapproval. The quoted passage also alludes to the kind of issues discussed in African schools and universities. The ideas he gets about an Africa on the rise are clearly contradicted by the events in the novel and in real history. Consequently, they must be seen as a part of the ideological indoctrination in support of the Big Man's political ambitions and doctrines.

Salim is worried by his ward's development. His fear derives from the fact that Ferdinand's personality had become fluid. "I began to feel that there was nothing there, and the thought of a lycée full of Ferdinands made me nervous" (48). There is nothing behind the poses and attitudes Ferdinand assumes, no firm identity, just mimicry without a solid base. Salim's fear is increased by Ferdinand's "idea of his importance. It unsettled me. There wasn't going to be security for anyone in the country" (48). Ferdinand is one of the new men of Africa and his prospects are good, since he will one day be a government official.

It is significant, then, that the relationship between the Big Man and the people is unrealistic: A relationship that can never lead to prosperity. Hence, the economic boom the country witnesses as a result of the selling of copper easily collapses. It is a relationship that does not take into account the level of the people who never produce what they consume, according to the narrator. The new Africa the President is trying

to construct is only an ideal place that has nothing to do with the "Africa of bush and villages." Raymond, the president's Belgian adviser, is the character who represents the ideal European intellectual "Africanist" and thus affects the President's views:

His subject was an event in Africa, but he might have been writing about Europe or a place he had never been He had made Africa his subject. He had devoted his years to those boxes of documents in his study Perhaps he had made Africa his subject because he had come to Africa and because he was a scholar, used to working with papers, and had found this place full of newspapers" (181).

That is why Raymond's, and the Big Man's, Africa is different from the real one the narrator is familiar with, i.e., Africa of the bush, poverty and ignorance. So it seems, then, that the narrator, Salim, is the only "realistic" character who has the ability to observe things objectively: "So from an early age I developed the habit of looking, detaching myself from a familiar scene and trying to consider it as from a distance" (15). He is the only one who survives the onslaught, and realizes what is happening and decides that the situation is hopeless.

Here, all the description and detail of the place are given by this astute observer who is introduced to us as an immigrant from an East African Muslim Indian family. He moves into the interior, to Zaire, where the newly independent state is ruled by the Big Man, and where there is a site of severe conflict between the past and the present. The detailed description we are given exemplifies his existential world-view. He introduces himself from the beginning: "My own pessimism, my insecurity, was a more terrestrial affair. I was without the religious sense of my family. The insecurity I felt was due to my lack of true religion" (16) and by rejecting his fate, like Camus' outsider, Salim is confronted with the same existential questions to which he -

- as an individual -- tries to find answers; he is left alone with "no family, no flag, no fetish." It is his own choice: "I could be master of my fate only if I stood alone." That is, he does not accept his fate: "I could no longer submit to fate. My wish was not to be good in the way of our tradition, but to make good" (20).

The combination of all these factors, the fluidity of his character, the idea of his importance, and the ideological indoctrination he receives at the lycée make him dangerous. While these aspects all relate to Ferdinand's background and the kind of education he receives, something else contributes to Salim's fears. When he scolds Ferdinand for having stolen a book at the lycée, Salim observes a special expression on Ferdinand's face and thinks: "This is how he will look when he sees his victim's blood, when he watches his enemy being killed" (59). Salim is afraid of the violence he detects in Ferdinand's eyes, which he regards as a specifically African characteristic. Although it is Ferdinand who rescues Salim at the end of the novel, the general developments in this African country seem to support this perception. Even though Ferdinand has leapt centuries, he and the rest of the students are at least potentially dangerous.

Based on the Western model, the Domain is the symbol of "modern Africa"; it is supposed to by-pass "real Africa" and to "astound the rest of the world" (100). The people who live there are privileged and in touch with the world. Among the more characters like Raymond, who is the Big Man's white man and the only historian whose books the president reads, and Salim's friend Indar, who is employed as a lecturer. Several miles separate the Domain from the town at the bend in the river, but the gap between the people living there and the actual life in the town is even bigger. In fact, a passage between those two places seems to correspond to a journey between two different worlds.

On a larger scale, the reduction of cultures to nothingness has to do with their level of energy. Salim illustrates this with reference to the history of the Arabs on the east coast. There the Arabian race of the master has disappeared in the native population:

Once, great explorers and warriors, the Arabs had ruled. They had pushed far into the interior and had built towns and planted orchards in the forest. Then their power had been broken by Europe. They ceased to be driven on by their idea of their position in the world, and their energy was lost; they forgot who they were and where they had come from. They knew only that they were Muslims; and in the Muslim way they needed wives and more wives. But they were cut off from their roots in Arabia and could only find their wives among the African women who had once been their slaves. Soon, therefore, the Arabs, or the people who called themselves Arabs, had become indistinguishable from Africans. They barely had an idea of their original civilization.

...The authority of the Arabs was only a matter of custom. It could be blown away at any time. The world is what it is. (12-13)

Due to their mixing with the local population, the Arabs lose the idea of their place in the world and their energy. The world is what it is. The Arabs have allowed themselves to become indistinguishable from the Africans and are consequently reduced to nothingness. In this model the Europeans are the culture which disposes of the highest amount of energy:

The Europeans could do one thing and say something quite different; and they could act in this way because they had an idea of what they owed to their civilization. It was their great advantage over us. The

Europeans wanted gold and slaves, like everybody else; but at the same time they wanted statues put up to themselves as people who had done good things for the slaves. Being an intelligent and energetic people, and at the peak of their powers, they could express both sides of their civilization; and they got both the slaves and the statues. (17)

Again, the idea of one's own civilization and of one's own place in the world is the essential criterion that determines the amount of energy cultures are equipped with. This energy seems to manifest itself primarily in the ability to conquer other countries and to achieve one's aims - slaves, gold and statues. While the Europeans dispose of a very high degree of energy, the Arabs and the members of the Indian community have lost their completely. Just like the Arabs, the latter group was once supported by their idea of their high traditions but now they were empty in Africa, and unprotected, with nothing to fall back on. They had begun to rot. Therefore, tides of history can easily wash them away. The energy level is changeable and cultures, who have crossed the peak of their powers can easily be reduced to nothingness. This introduces the idea of the rise and fall of empires and accounts for a cyclical element in this model of history. The model is, however, also deterministic and linear since it insists that it is impossible to go against the tides of history without the loss of one's cultural energy and since the change involved in this model always also implies progress.

Concerning the country's future, *A Bend in the River* predicts the completion of another destructive cycle. Ferdinand, who frees Salim from his imprisonment, has no hope at all and suggests to him to leave the country immediately. He tells him:

They were going to kill everybody who can read and write, everybody who ever put on a jacket and tieThey were going to kill all the masters and all the servants. When they were finished nobody will

know there was a place like this here. They were going to kill and kill
(275).

At the end of this killing another cycle will be completed. Just as it has no real history, Africa can have no future. At the end of the novel, Salim leaves the town on board of the steamer. After the steamer has been attacked, the lights are turned off. The steamer continues its journey in utter darkness.

The colonizers imposed their culture, and literature on the colonized people through various means. Said tries to show that West was wrong to treat the East as inferior both culturally and intellectually. Said argues that Western views of the Orient are not based on what is observed to exist in Oriental lands but often results from the West's dream, fantasies and assumptions about what this radically different place contains. For Said, who would debar the author entirely from the postcolonial counter canon, Naipaul betrays the most shameful variety of eurocentricism, viz., that of "a third-worlder denouncing his own people, not because they are victims of imperialism, but because they have an innate flaw, which is that they are not whites" (79).

Salim's character was also a fraudulent one. Salim had double visions who did not connect himself with life in the bush the *A Bend in the River*, nor could he fit into the New English Domain though he was attracted by the 'richness' of the Domain and its culture. The basic reason Salim's decolonization was impossible because Salim did not even understand the true concept of the word. Meaning, in order to de-colonize, Salim had to move away from everything that colonized him. But he did the complete opposite. Instead Salim chose 'whiteness' the very color which colonized him, through Yvette in order to secure a position for him in the society, ultimately blocking all the ways of de-colonizing himself. Therefore in the end, Salim does not find a

place for him-self. He keeps on floating and an outsider. He becomes the emblems of a man Naipaul describes as he starts the novel “The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to be nothing, have no place in it” (3).

This novel is basically about the corruptibility of mankind. The story is set in a fictional country fashioned after Zaire or Uganda. Salim, the narrator, is an Indian Muslim trader whose family has lived in Africa for many generations. Salim sets up a shop in a town on the bend of the river and attains some success, but is doomed to fail in the oppressive environment of the decolonization aftermath. In this connection, Devi Bhushan in his article "An Empirical Study on the Visualization and Veracity of India from the Revelation of V. S. Naipaul" asserts:

Again Naipaul's protagonist is an outsider, who realizes that his style of life is at its end and that he must give it up to survive. Recurrent themes in Naipaul's works are the damaging effects of colonialism, added to skepticism about the imported ideas of revolutionaries or the possibility of the former colonies to avoid mistakes made by the Western societies. In this regard, he has been compared to Joseph Conrad due to similar pessimistic portrayal of human nature and the themes of alienation and exile. (10)

In *A Bend in the River*, Mahesh represents the “national bourgeoisie” business class for whom making profit is the chief concern. While “Big Man” is trying to “de-Westernize” his country by uprooting the Colonial monuments, Mahesh is implanting “Big Burger”, a Western food chain franchise for making profits. He willingly gives up to the lure of profit, provided by the Europeans to the national business middle class, so that the Europeans can continue their economic colonization even after the decolonization. To make money, people like Mahesh, knowingly gobbles up the

“poisoned sweets” (106) from Europeans as making personal profit is more important for them. “Mahesh was looking for the wonderful imported thing which he would own exclusively, the simple thing which would provide a short cut to power and money” (105). Like Mahesh, “Everybody is only talking about money [in Africa].” (Naipaul 25). There is no trace of idealism or no concern for removing the plights of poverty-stricken and uneducated people in African villages.

Not being able to relate one-self to any of the two worlds gave Naipaul’s protagonist as Bhabha describes it, a “partial presence” (126) in both worlds. They neither completely belonged in the English world nor could they relate them-selves with their own native lands. They were in the middle of nowhere. Thus, for the colonial subjects “not only is it difficult to fulfill oneself-it is even impossible to understand oneself, to be true to oneself” (Lewis 104).

The political and social disorder is reflected in the novel with its short, episodic, hurried movement. Nothing feels settled, nothing complete, final, reflected upon. Sentences are joined by and start with ‘and’ and ‘but’.⁴⁴ Stories are taken up and dropped, characters die early or disappear, homes and businesses change hands, motivation is not fully developed or explained, everything is in movement. People keep coming, going and disappearing. Father Huismans (representative of those with a humanistic, larger, optimistic view of African history and traditional culture) looks down on the other foreigners; but he is killed and beheaded on a trip and no one knows who killed him or why. Salim comments that the Father’s idea of civilization was his ‘vanity’ and he ‘paid for it’ (87). Salim suddenly returns to using prostitutes; Yvette – the only woman about whom he was passionate – betrays him, he becomes engaged to the daughter of an older Indian friend in London.

A Bend in the River is a novel by V. S. Naipaul based on the post-colonial theme that implies the domination of the colonizers prevailing although they departed from Africa long ago. The President, Big Man's activities bear the testimony of a coloniser although he is an African. His ambivalent attitude makes him a completed character in the novel. He is responsible for all the chaos, disorders and corruption in the life of the innocent Africans.

After the independence of Africa, the Big Man, comes into power and becomes the President of Africa in a dishonest way. Soon after that, he decides to drive away all the non-African inhabitants from Africa to rebuild a new one. So according to his desire, there is a decree to vandalize all the monuments, pedestals, roads, floodlights that bear the evidence of the colonizers and the names of all the main streets are removed. The purpose of such vandalism lies in the line below: "The wish had only been to get rid of the old, to wipe out the memory of the intruder" (98). It is a foolish act on his part. Afterwards, the site looks like the site of a dead civilization. As soon as the drive of Africanisation commences, all the diasporic characters of the novel become very worried about their future and much concerned about safe staying there in Africa.

Ambivalence is a term that implies a continual fluctuation between wanting one and wanting its opposite. However, the Big Man is very ambivalent in his attitude. He openly says that he hates the colonizers but he is just following them keenly to educate the Africans. To serve the purpose, he has created the New Domain, a university city and a research centre facilitated with all the modern equipment. He thinks that he is creating a miracle that would astound the rest of the world and therefore, for the institution, he appoints researchers, professors, lecturers, engineers

and educationists from Europe. That is to say, without Europe neither the Big Man nor Africa would be able to survive.

The Big Man is a president of different kind. He expects his picture to be larger in size. So when there are magazines and posters printed in Europe, his picture towers all other people among them and all the pictures of his subordinates must be printed in smaller size. It symbolizes that he is superior to all other people in Africa but the readers know that he is corrupt.

Indar makes a magnificent speech towards the centre of the novel about the need for self-creation and trampling on the past; but he is soon stymied by the unpredictability of the local airlines and is forced to leave the African town for the capital in uncomfortable, humiliating circumstances on the steamer (a foreshadowing of Salim's own departure) and when we hear of him again he has, like King Lear and Mr. Biswas, through an inflated notion of self-importance, become crushed, dispossessed, dreaming of a lost past, a lost home to which he can never return. In a further irony it is Salim who takes up Indar's credo of trampling on the past and remaking oneself. But his attempts to become economically independent so that he can leave Africa soon lead to imprisonment and his becoming victim of the African police.

Salim might be regarded as a Camusian rebel, an alienated outsider who, unwilling to accept fate, attempts to live fully. His rebellion begins with consciousness of the weakness and unprotectedness of the Asians of Africa in the face of the struggles for power which will follow the withdrawal of the imperial order. Ironically, however, like Naipaul's early years in London, his life in central Africa is even more narrow and endangered than the small, restricted society he has fled; his only contacts are with a few other aliens, Indians living enclosed, self-centered lives

of their own, cut off from the African world which surrounds them. He is friends with an Indian couple who, having made a love match across caste lines, fear family retaliation and live only for themselves, obsessed with the romance of their marriage and the woman's beauty.

Zabeth, an African trader from one of the villages along the river, wants her son Ferdinand to become educated and part of the modern African state. Ferdinand, whose father is from another tribe, represents the new African elite upon which the resources of the state are lavished to provide higher education enabling them to assume upper-level positions in the bureaucracy. But without the secure community life of the bush, and because of his tribally mixed parentage, Ferdinand is at the mercy of the new political order as well as being confused by notions of authenticity no longer valid for himself.

To sum up, the analysis of Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* reveals more about the writer's view on Africa than an evaluation based on political expectations derived from the author's biography or a critique which regards every critical commentator as a detractor. Taken together, Naipaul's texts present an Africa that is a dreamlike and threatening place conveying a sense of nightmare. While his descriptions are obviously influenced by the books of literary forerunners like Conrad and Stanley, the major difference between these works is Naipaul's utter pessimism. This notion is strengthened by the author's belief in certain innate African flaws which render any progress impossible. Therefore, Naipaul presents an Africa that is dark and will remain dark for an unforeseeable time.

IV. Quest of Home and Belongingness in *A Bend in the River*

This study on *A Bend in the River* examines how the characters such as Salim have internalized European civilization as they lead their life in in-between space between African tradition and colonial legacy in the aftermath of colonialism in Africa. Their lives are totally influenced by European values. This situation makes them exiled and displaced even after the independence in Africa. They rely on European books to explore the history of his people and, therefore, lack the attachment to Africa.

Even though Salim does not feel attachment towards Africa as a land where he was born, he fears that Africans could inherit the duplicity from the Europeans, “black men assuming the lies of white men. The postcolonial state in which modern cities are erected in jungles and when children become university-trained intellectuals exemplifies the falseness of the independent Africa. The new world has no past and no future, it is full of lies and violence where every person is dangling and there is no escape. The position of Salim as an outsider is especially perilous.

The novel *A Bend in the River* starts in the colonized regions and days of Africa where our novelist is aggressively pursuing his way socially and financially while tribal wars terrorize and attempt to liberate Africa in every aspect. Africa is being broken and built again in a similar fashion to the antagonist. The present researcher has found that Africa lose its property value as the violence of war envelopes the coastal region where the book is set. Salim, though born in Africa feels the tension as an outsider inside a divided caste system in part due to his Arabic background which composes a large, distinctive part of Africa. Salim is indifferent to the struggles of slavery. He keeps slaves yet gives them the choice to be free yet they stay with him. He takes no part in any slavery uprising. It is not his hate for Africans

that he keeps “slaves” but his love for what he feels are his people and gives them chances to progress and be housed in a society where the insubordinate are dying, struggling, and squatting. Though he chooses no role politically, he finds himself caught at times in the crossfire of the seemingly never ending coup. Finally slavery is abolished and a black man, part military, part tribal becomes president. Property value goes up and Salim finds himself gaining the successes he dreamed of. His tiny store quadruples in price. During this history lesson of the colonization of Africa and the era immediately following we get a descriptive look at a world so far from our own.

As a post-colonial text, *A Bend in the River* never opens up new possibilities for the future. It is a kind of complicit postcolonialism that justifies colonialism by seeing only the civilizing values of modernity, which Naipaul sees as imperialism's positive, reconstructive and basically human face. Such artists, in denying the existence of other cultures, can never create new ways of seeing and experiencing reality except the colonial Western way. It is a way of rewriting imperialism that does not look, like oppositional post-colonial and resistance writings, towards an alternative future. Narrating European imperialism from a European perspective is not in any way different from Naipaul's narration of the modernization of the developing countries. *A Bend* seems to be mainly dedicated to a White/Western reader who reads in English, and sees things only in white, but never black. Naipaul's anti-evolutionary solution -- if we can call it a solution -- is the product of his pessimistic outlook. In other words, it is a reflection of his ideological orientation that cannot cope with the qualitative historical change the whole colonized world passed through. The colonial Western dimension in *A Bend*, which never sees a positive quality in Africans, is the product of the accumulation of a racist colonial mentality that has shaped the Western mind since 1492, i.e., the beginning of colonialism.

A Bend in the River describes post-independence struggles of an unnamed African country whose experiences are in many ways similar to those of other newly independent nations irrespective of their geographical location. The process of creating a new, post-colonial identity is central to such nations. Naipaul realizes that the only way of analyzing the workings of identity formation is from a distance. This is why the first-person narrator of this story, Salim, is a perennial outsider in all communities he inhabits. As an onlooker, Salim is in the position to notice and analyze identity-related issues better than others. This capacity, however, results in his marginalization.

Similar to most of the colonialist European writings on Africa and the East, *A Bend* is full of descriptions and stereotypes about the Africans and Arabs, and the notion of handing over civilization to primitive peoples. The world Salim sees is ugliness and backwardness; he never understands that African nations have culture with integrities different from those of the technological Western cultures. Despite Father Huisman's attempts to educate the Africans, they kill him. This is a mind-deadened Third World nation with no culture, no history and if there is anything to describe, it is corrupt, degenerate and irredeemable. Nothing is mentioned about the crimes and violence committed by the Belgian colonialism; that is simply called time of peace. Nothing is mentioned about the fact that European modernity and progress brought with it the blood and dead bodies of the oppressed colonized masses.

Naipaul's attack on the post-colonial world for its nationalist fundamentalism and degenerate politics in *A Bend in the River* can only be understood as a part of a Western disenchantment with the Third World that overtook many Oriental intellectuals. What Salim could not understand is the nature of nationalist revolution, which is the first phase of liberation, a phase that is characterized by the competence

of different nationalist powers to reclaim the state from the colonizer. The solution that Salim and Indar could not find is the subsequent stage of national victory, i.e., social revolution.

In this way, like the novelist, Naipaul, all his major protagonists suffer the tragedy of displacement and separation from their land even after the end of colonialism. Thus they search for belongingness, for 'home' in alien environment. Naipaul through his great sensibility portrays his own quest and a search for 'home' and 'root' through his characters. Through his protagonists, he symbolizes the agony of the homeless, rootless exiled people leading a nomadic life on this Earth. Undoubtedly, the loss of identity and a quest for home happens to be the recurring issue of Naipaul's works.

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