

Postcolonial Reflections: A Study of *A Bend in the River* by V.S. Naipaul**Rakesh Sharma**PhD Research Scholar
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DDU Gorakhpur University**ABSTRACT:**

Postcolonial Literature is, in essence, a description of literature that followed the period of colonization and that describes the challenges faced by those who were previously colonized in relation to race and ethnicity. The language issue has been one of the most controversial topics in post-colonial literature. Post-colonial writers can be viewed as taking part in 'linguistic battle' mirroring cultural war. Since Western values were mainly transmitted to colonized communities through languages, writer's approach to language problem reveals their attitude to Western philosophy as well as colonialism. These writers try to begin an anti-colonial movement which at first had its roots from using colonial languages. During the colonial era, English was seen as important tool for being an official language, and used for colonization of indigenous peoples but authors during the post-colonial period took on a different role by using their mother tongues instead of English.

KEY WORDS: Hybridity, Alienation, Identity, Conflict, Mimicry**Theoretical Background**

In Western academia, Edward Said is cited as the initial point of reference for the research. Postcolonialism is widely recognized to have its roots in Said's Orientalism, which is considered a ground breaking concept across nearly all fields of study "Orientalism completely changed the agenda of the study of non-Western cultures and their literatures and pushed it in the direction of what we now call postcolonial theory" (Literary Theory: the Basics 203) . To begin with, Said emphasized the general power dynamics between the East and West. According to Said, 'orientalism' is an attempt to characterize the East, which has a unique place in European culture. While the West considers itself logical, it has portrayed the East as illogical. The East is seen as being undeveloped, whereas the West is seen as the forerunner of civilization. In order to legitimize the colonization of Eastern nations, Western colonial powers used new techniques, which Said explained through the concept of cultural stereotype. By the end of the 1800s, colonists saw colonization to be an extension of Western culture into the Eastern world, giving it a distinct meaning. Using these 'stereotypes reinforce the idea that these illogical eastern nations

must be subjugated by rational Europeans in order to maintain control over them, as European civilization is considered as the model for all other cultures. Said's book *Orientalism* concentrated on the ways that Western culture constructed the East as 'the other'.

No one will have failed to note how "East" has always signified danger and threat during this period, even as it has meant the traditional Orient as well as Russia. In the universities a growing establishment of area studies programs and institutes has made the scholarly study of the Orient a branch of national policy. Public affairs in this country include a healthy interest in the Orient, as much for its strategic and economic importance as for its traditional exoticism. If the world has become immediately accessible to a Western citizen living in the electronic age, the Orient too has drawn nearer to him, and is now less a myth perhaps than a place crisscrossed by Western, especially American, interests. (*Orientalism* 27)

INTRODUCTION: V.S. Naipaul is a prominent and prolific Caribbean writer who exploits postcolonial discourse in his works. *A Bend in the River* is a piece that effectively depicts colonial and post-colonial structures. Naipaul was born and reared in Trinidad, but his family roots are in India. Trinidad and India were colonized countries. In this regard, Naipaul accurately depicted the colonization process based on his previous experiences. Naipaul's imaginary world is based on the link between genuine external situations and private affairs. The people in his works live in the free world, attempting to resist oppression. In this sense, freedom gradually becomes an illusion. *A Bend in the River* depicts the realities in Third World countries after colonialism. This novel also provides a critical appraisal of the life of African colonial citizens. Naipaul describes the anarchy, violence, and turmoil caused by repressive rules that control countries once colonisation stops officially. He portrays these countries' inability to govern them and maintain peace and stability. In addition, the novel explores the life of immigrants, particularly Indians in Africa. Thus, Naipaul depicts these people's misery in their new country and their longing to find a home.

The setting and characters exemplify postcolonial themes such as hybridity, in-betweenness, and third space. Salim, the protagonist, is of Indian, Arab, and African heritage, resulting in a hybrid identity. Throughout the story, Salim fights with his personal identity as well as adjusting to a new environment after relocating to a new town in Africa. Like Salim, the majority of the characters live in that town due to career opportunities. Africa is shown as a marketplace for people from other parts of the world.

The story of the novel presents Salim as an allegory for African diaspora. Salim has no place in Africa because he is not a genuine African. He finds out that "the free-for-all of independence has come to an end". His perspective on his post-independence circumstances represents immigrants' roles during the transition era in their new country. Yet another instance of postcolonial hybrid identity in this story is Nazruddin, who, although not being European or African, learnt European manners in an African city. Despite being mocked by others, he is admired by those who view Western or European cultures as superior to indigenous ones. Indigenous people also perceive European-style schooling as luxurious, and they aspire to be like Western intellectuals. These are examples of mimicry, as described in postcolonial theories.

Salim's voyage from his homeland on Africa's east coast to Central Africa is the beginning of the narrative. Salim's family has a complex cultural past, influenced by both Islam and Hindu traditions, as they originated in India. They reside in East-Coast Africa under the European flag with Arabs, Indians, Persians, and Portuguese and consider themselves Africans, but they are aware that the true Africa is thousands of miles away, in the heart of the continent. We get a strange feeling as Salim starts telling us about his hometown. Salim worries about his family's future even if their day-to-day lives appear to be normal. He struggles to explain why his family feels disconnected from settled cultures, as if they are living in limbo. It appears that colonial powers wiped out the land's authentic culture, resulting in a soulless, decentralized trading hub that lacks the natural evolution process of settlement.

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 distinct from the Arabs and other Muslims of the coast; in our customs and attitudes we were closer to the Hindus of northwestern India, from which we had originally come. (*A Bend in the River* 8)

The narrative has a gloomy tone from the start, and the feelings of rootlessness, estrangement, otherness, and loss of identity persist until the end. Salim strives for a sense of belonging that he will never achieve. In this patch town, he lives on the outside of cultures, without seeing real life in Africa, without truly getting to know real Africans, and without even learning their language. . one acts exactly like a colonizer, ignoring the true inhabitants of that region, much like Father Huisman. He, too, neglected traditional African culture and took on the task of transforming this society with the magical touch of European civilization. Sadly, he was brutally killed. Salim and Yvette's connection is similar to that of the colonizer and the colonized. She presents herself as a friend capable of meeting his needs and wishes. Then one day, she vanishes, leaving him exploited physically and mentally, exactly like a colonizer would do to the colonized.

Salim is shown attempting to forge his own identity in the first section of the book, 'The Second Uprising,' as a prelude to the start of the second uprising in post-colonial Africa. The second chapter, 'The New Special Zone,' chronicles the continuation of the second rebellion while the country experienced an economic boom. This episode also features Salim's encounter with Indar, a friend who he made when residing on the East Coast, as well as Raymond and his spouse Yvette, a Belgian historian known as the 'White Man of the Big Man' who comes to deliver lectures in the town's designated 'special zone'. The specific area represents modern Africa.

By constructing colleges and universities in the Special Zone, European colonialists want to ingrain their own cultural values—rather than African nationalism—into the subjugated African society. In an attempt to become more like their colonial overlords, exploited societies are content. It is desirable to gain their masters' approval and to think like them. The

third chapter, "Big Man," explores the influence of the new African ruler's acts on social instability in the town.

The impact of the activities of the Big Man, the new native ruler of the African continent, is first felt forcefully in the third chapter, 'Big Man,' with the town experiencing rapid social turmoil. According to the President's "radicalization or expropriation" plan, everyone's property is seized by the state in the final stage, 'War.' As a result, Salim rides a riverboat to get away from the fighting and war environment in the town, where he survives in trying circumstances.

Another notable aspect of the novel's characters is that the majority of them are foreigners. There are relatively few African characters. Zabet and his son Ferdinand are African, Metty is a slave, Noimon is Greek, Father Huismans is European, Mahesh and Shoba are Indian, Indar and Nasreddin are Arab, and Raymond and Yvette are Belgian characters. The novel also has an Italian minority community. All of these minorities have banded together for a single objective. It is due to the high quality of sand being sold in Africa. Africa serves as the novel's equivalent of a market place. Salim is a trader looking to make money in this market. For outsiders, the town offers nothing more than financial gain. There are no social activities for the people there. The only reason foreigners reside in this town despite these conditions is because of the employment opportunities the nation provides. As a result of the economic expansion, the town is becoming a commodity trading center and housing market. .

After a nation is decolonized, dictatorships frequently take control of it. The novel depicts a tyrant named "Big Man" who issues nonsensical and conflicting commands and targets foreigners in the country, eventually executing them all. Salim's lone local friend, Ferdinand, who he has always avoided, assists him in getting away. Salim flees the danger, but he has nowhere to return, no roots whatsoever, and no place to belong, forcing him to live a life of hybrid identity. The novel by Naipaul contains a critique of colonialism. This type of critique manifests itself in the first sentences of the first chapter.

The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it. Nazruddin, who had sold me the shop cheap, didn't think I would have it easy when I took over. The country, like others in Africa, had had its troubles after independence. The town in the interior, at the bend in the great river, had almost ceased to exist; and Nazruddin said I would have to start from the beginning. (*A Bend in the River* 9)

Conclusion:

New kinds of domination emerged as the world order changed, i.e., after colonialism ended. The colonial governments eventually started to lose control over their colonies as a result of the moral and material destruction caused by the two world wars. The events that occurred, combined with the loss of control and other circumstances, allowed numerous countries to get independence. Racial inequality and economic exploitation were primary drivers of colonial uprisings. Freedom, independence, and equality are the fundamental values of postcolonial ideology.

For ages, Western colonists mercilessly conquered numerous regions and took full use of their resources. As they established themselves as superior to the locals, they cultivated a sense of dualism in the minds of the aboriginal people. They utilized scientific knowledge to subjugate

people. They led them to feel that they were backward, unethical, and uncivilized and that the colonists could teach and advance civilization in them. They gave the impression to the aboriginal people that their language, customs, and culture were outmoded, outdated, barbarous, and primitive, and that the colonists were superior. These colonized people experience a kind of social genocide. They are unable to use their native languages; even persons from two distinct ex-colonies use the languages of their colonizers rather than learning and conversing with one another. Colonizers create ill-functioning communities devoid of culture and identity. These locations provide just enough amenities to allow individuals to retain their lives and continue trade. Such places are home to people who have forgotten their identities, such as Salim and his family. They have no past, no future, and live their lives in a state of perpetual limbo.

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