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# A Postcolonial Analysis of a Bend in the River by V.S. Naipaul

## V.S. Naipaul'un Nehrin Dönemeci Adlı Eserinin Postkolonyal Analizi

Öz

Postkolonyal teori; edebiyat, antropoloji, tarih, psikoloji, sosyoloji gibi farklı disiplinlerden pek çok kavramı içinde barındıran eleştirel ve felsefi disiplinlerarası bir yapıdır. Edebiyat eleştirisinde postkolonyalizm, birçok toplumun ezildiği, görmezden geldiği, yozlaşmış sömürge döneminin uzun süreli etkilerini edebiyat eserlerinde ortaya koymaktadır. Sömürgecilik, Batılı olmayan kimlikler ve gelenekler için büyük bir küçümsemeye neden olmuş, sömürge sonrası eleştiri sömürge ülkelerdeki ezilen insanlar hakkında tartışmalara yol açmıştır. Sömürgecilikten sonra yazılan edebi metinler hem tarihsel bir dönemi hem de ideolojik bir bakış açısını ve sömürge karşıtı bir söylemi içermektedir. Diğer bir deyişle sömürge sonrası edebiyat eserleri, okuyucuların sömürge geçmişi olan ülkelerde yaşayan insanların mücadelelerini daha iyi anlayabildikleri çok boyutlu bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. *Nehrin Dönemeci* sömürge tarihi olan ülkelerde yaşayan, iç savaşlar, kültürel melezlik ve arada kalmışlık gibi ortak sorunları deneyimleyen insanların hikayelerinden oluşmaktadır. *Nehrin Dönemeci*, sömürge sonrası Afrika'nın acı gerçeklerini sunmaktadır. Yazar, ortak bir tarihle birleşen üçüncü dünya ülkelerinin koşullarını, sömürgeciliğin karanlığının ve bağımsızlık hareketinin meydan okuduğu bir geçmişi anlatmaktadır. Gelenekçilik ve Batıcılık arasındaki gerilim romanın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Post-kolonyal toplumlarda yaşanan çelişkiler, modern ve geleneksel, yeni ve eski yaşam biçimleri ve dolayısıyla Batı ve yerel kültürler ve değerler gibi kategoriler arasındaki çatışmalarda kendini göstermektedir. Naipaul, okuyucuya Afrika'nın bir bölümünün o kadar gerçek bir portresini sunmayı başarmıştır ki, okuyucu bu romanda yer alan sorunların nedeni gibi görünen sömürgeciliğin etkilerini net bir şekilde görebilmektedir. Naipaul'un sömürge sonrası Afrika'yı karmaşa, suç, savaş kabileleri, ırkçılık ve yoksulluk sahneleri ile tasvir etmesi, sömürgeleştirilmiş stereotipleri örneklemektedir. Postkolonyal bağlamda incelenecek olan bu roman, sömürgeciliğin, sömürülen insanlar ve kültürleri üzerindeki yıkıcı etkilerini gösteren hikayelerini içermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Nehrin Dönemeci, postkolonyalizm, sömürgecilik

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## Abstract

Postcolonial theory is a critical and philosophical interdisciplinary structure that has borrowed concepts from different disciplines such as literature, anthropology, history, psychology, sociology. In literary criticism postcolonialism represents the long-lasting effects of the corrupted colonial era in which many societies are oppressed and neglected. Colonialism caused utter disdain for non-western identities and traditions; postcolonial criticism sparks debate about the oppressed people in the colonized countries. Literary texts written after colonialism contain both a historical period and an ideological perspective and an anti-colonial discourse. In other words, postcolonial works of literature show a valuable multidimensional perspective through which readers can better understand the struggles of people living in countries with a colonial past. *A Bend in the River* by V.S Naipaul offers unique stories of people living in country with a colonial history, dealing with common issues such as civil war, cultural hybridity, and in-betweenness. *A Bend in the River* offers the grim realities of post-colonial Africa. The author describes the conditions of third-world countries united by a common history, a past challenged by colonialism's darkness and the independence movement. The tension between traditionalism and Westernism is at the core of the novel. Post-colonial societies' contradictions manifest themselves in conflicts between categories like modern and traditional, new and old modes of life, and thus between Western and local cultures and values. Naipaul has succeeded in giving the reader a picture of a part of Africa so realistic that the reader can easily recognize the effects of colonialism that appears to be the cause of the problems featured in this novel. The portrayal of Naipaul on Post-Colonial Africa with scenes of disorder, crime, tribes of war, racism, and poverty shows the colonized stereotypes. The novel that will be analyzed in terms of postcolonialism contain the stories which show devastating effects of colonization upon the colonized people and their culture.

**Keywords:** A Bend in the River, colonialism, postcolonialism.

## Introduction

**N**obel prize winning author and a post-colonial British writer of Indo-Caribbean descent, V. S. Naipaul has experienced colonialism. Naipaul rigorously reflects the plight of postcolonial people. As a displaced figure, Naipaul's experience of colonization is so constantly visible in his writing. He portrays colonialism's deep effects on postcolonial people who are continuously searching for their identity. He embodies the inconsistencies of the postcolonial societies in several ways. Eurocentrism, migration, alienation, ethnic disintegration, neo-colonialism, and other post-colonial themes are all visible in his novels.

This study aims to examine Africa in the light of postcolonial discourse. In this study, the ethnic divisions, migration, tribal conflicts, underdevelopment, colonizer-colonized oriented hegemony and otherness faced by Africa as a result of independence struggles will be discussed from a postcolonial perspective.

Postcolonialism has become as one of the most important schools of literary criticism. Although there is no exact date for the beginning of postcolonial theory, some critics argue that postcolonialism started after all former colonized societies gained their freedom, others argue that from the start of colonization it includes all interactions between the colonizers and colonized. In

a way, all postcolonial studies are concerned with the interactions between the oppressor and the oppressed, or, in other words, the colonizer and the colonized, and their relationship with the rest of the world.

Postcolonial studies are interdisciplinary; thus they enrich literary, anthropological, cultural, philosophic and historical studies. Post-colonial scholars, having various academic interests, typically base their criticism on the colonial world's Western-centered thought, and they thus aim to offer an alternative to Western-theorizing system. Seeing that postcolonialism embraces diversity the main aim of post-colonial scholars is to build place for multiple voices. This is particularly true for subalterns whose voices were silenced by dominant ideologies before.

As a postcolonial writer Naipul has employed many ways to present a postcolonial society. *A Bend in the River* takes place in a Central-African country of which name has not been given by the author deliberately, to emphasize the commonality of the colonial experience. This multi-ethnic country has just experienced a revolt by native Africans, which occurred after the country was given freedom by the colonial force. The protagonist Salim is a Muslim Indian from the East-Coast Africa who struggles to create an identity for himself. The story centers around the significant events in Salim's life that reflects his identity crisis and internal tensions because of the dramatic changes in his homeland.

### Theoretical Background

If the subject of attention is postcolonialism, it is undoubtedly a necessity to focus on colonialism. According to Ania Loomba:

Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. But colonialism in this sense is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards; it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history<sup>1</sup>.

The European colonization consists of two stages, according to British Marxist sociologist Tom Bottomore, the first is pre-capitalist and the second is modern capitalism. The latter is about the imperialism which goes back to the pre-capitalist era. Imperialism and colonialism are indistinguishable since imperialism is intricately interwoven with colonialism. Referring to the relationship between colonialism and imperialism, Albert Memmi states:

You go to a colony because jobs are guaranteed, wages high, careers more rapid and business more profitable. The young graduate is offered a position, the public servant a higher rank, the businessman substantially lower taxes, the industrialist raw materials and labor at attractive prices<sup>2</sup>.

This means that Europeans want to take charge of the markets of this territory, besides ensuring the raw materials, in other words, the administration of new land. The imperial powers started colonialism with the aim of discovering and conquering new places far from their own lands. The West, who explored the Eastern block for reasons such as geographical discoveries and wars, created a colonial order. While colonialism had the aim of conquering new lands at first, it also had the idea of destroying the social memory, assimilating an existing cultural heritage,

1 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 2015, p. 2.

2 Albert Memmi, *Colonizer and Colonized*, London: Viking, 1965, p. 4.

destroying language, culture, lifestyle, historical and sociological resources with capitalist tools. The old understanding of colonialism caused millions of people to forcibly leave their homeland to work as slaves and serve their colonial masters. Colonialism was applied to most of the world in three continents in the 19th and 20th centuries. The great powers used the economic resources of three continents and even used the indigenous people of these regions in their armies in their wars. Colonized people, on the other hand, left their own cultures and started to resemble colonists because of the assimilation practices.

Until the second half of the 20th century, the United Kingdom ruled the world economically and politically with its imperialist practices. For centuries, colonial powers like Britain have justified themselves for the invasion and economical and cultural exploitation of other countries by claiming their inferiority and their need for tutelage and education. As Barlow stated:

Britain was the dominant political power in the world from the late eighteenth century until the earlier twentieth century. Its influence was so great that even countries that were not under British sovereignty, such as those in Latin America, were subject to British economic dominance and imperialism<sup>3</sup>.

Colonialism has a multifaceted structure. Since the point it relies on most is material, it applies many different strategies. At the same time, one of the most effective strategies is education. Colonizer societies opened colonial schools in foreign lands and determined the teachers and academicians who would work in these schools. These intellectuals wanted to impose their own culture on students to serve their country's interests. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said referred to the colonial peoples imbued with the Western mentality as follows:

The great colonial schools, for example, taught generations of the native bourgeoisie important truths about history, science, culture. And out of that learning process millions grasped the fundamentals of modern life, yet remained subordinate dependents of an authority based elsewhere than in their lives. Since one of the purposes of colonial education was to promote the history of France or Britain, that same education also demoted the native history. There were always the Englands, Frances, Germanys, Hollands as distant repositories of the Word, for all the contradictions developed during the years of productive collaboration. Stephen Dedalus is a famous example of someone who discovers these facts with unusual force.<sup>4</sup>

Before the Second World War, Africa became a colonial nation and was decolonised as the third phase of the decolonization. Countries such as Canada, Australia and South Africa proclaimed independence in the first two parts. Africa gained independence as a result of locals' anti-colonialist attitudes and military struggles. Whilst the colonizer claimed to introduce civilization into Africa, the purpose was to conquer the land through the psychological, physical, economic, political and social transformation. Thus, the colonists created a new society as they intended. Colonizer societies have sought to subvert the national identities of the colonized societies gradually and to distance them from their own cultures, backgrounds and philosophies. With regard to the issue of literature and language, it is especially important to stress that colonizers in colonized countries forbid the use of the native language. Thus, the colonized peoples were made to forget their language and

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3 John Matthew Barlow, *Gale Researcher Guide for the British Colonial Empire*, New York: Cengage Learning, 2018, p. 59.

4 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Knopf, 1994, p. 75.

culture and lost their local identity.

Postcolonial literature essentially refers to literary trends in the aftermath of colonialism as well as the ways in which once colonized peoples struggle with the problems of race and ethnicity. One of the most highly debated topics in post-colonial literature is the language. Postcolonial writers might be supposed to step into a “linguistic struggle” reflecting the background of cultural wars<sup>5</sup>. Since Western ideals reached the foundations of colonized cultures primarily through languages, the way these writers handle linguistic issues reveals their stance on Western philosophies and colonialism. These authors are attempting to launch an anti-colonial movement stemming first through the use of colonial languages. In the colonial era, English was seen as an important tool being an official language, and a way to colonize the local peoples but authors in the post-colonial period played a different role in using their native languages. As Shands puts it, “literature is a place where subjective and collective truths can be voiced ... where elusive and complex issues of deep significance to us as human beings can be explored without the need to prove points, empirically or quantitatively<sup>6</sup>”. Literary texts therefore reflect not only the author’s personal experiences and sentiments, but also historical, political and cultural facts.

### Major figures in Postcolonial Studies

Within the Western academe Edward Said is pointed as the first reference point of the studies. Said’s work *Orientalism*, which is seen as a creative idea in almost all disciplines, is generally regarded as the founding work of postcolonialism. “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<sup>7</sup>”. Firstly, Said highlighted the overarching power relations between East and West. “Orientalism” for Said is an effort to define the East, which has a special place in the life of Europe. While the West sees itself as logical, it has touted the East as irrational. The West is considered a pioneer of civilization, while the East is characterized as underdeveloped.

Said developed the idea of cultural stereotype to explain how the Western colonial powers developed new strategies in order to justify the colonization of Eastern countries. At the end of the 19th century, colonization had a more particular meaning as the colonists considered it as an extension of civilization from West to the East. Given that European culture is seen as the standard for all other cultures, the use of these “stereotypes” supports the belief that these irrational eastern countries cannot control themselves, so that they have to be controlled by rational Europeans. In *Orientalism*, Said focused on how the East was created as “the other” in Western culture. He states:

*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*

5 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-91*, London: Vintage Books, 2010, 17.

6 Kerstin W Shands, “Neither East Nor West: From Orientalism to Postcoloniality,” in *Neither East Nor West: Postcolonial Essays on Literature, Culture and Religion*, ed. Kerstin W Shands, Södertörns Högskola, 2008, pp. 5-28.

7 Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: the Basics*, Routledge, 2013, p. 203.

*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<sup>8</sup>.*

Said was also interested in the relationship between the knowledge and power, inspired by Michel Foucault. Said argued that any knowledge of the East is the result of a discourse built by the west. The West categorizes the Eastern societies by examining their characteristics such as their literature, history and beliefs. It can be said that the East, which is described as exotic, has an undeniable effect on Western societies in reaching its present stage. Many researchers who followed Edward Said, the pioneer of postcolonialism, enabled postcolonialism to be a field of study and a method of criticism.

Orientalism is a significant criticism of how the Western texts have interpreted the East and, more precisely, the Islamic Middle East, over the ages but especially in the 19th century. According to Bertens, “Using works of literature, political tracts, journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philological studies, Said examines how these texts construct the Orient through novels, through journalistic reports and travel writings, and through histories, anthropological writings, and so on.”<sup>9</sup>

*The Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by Fanon, who was a witness to what happened during the colonial period, are important works for postcolonialism. Fanon initially focused on the discrimination in colonies which is based on racial identities between colonizer and colonized societies. Fanon seeks to propose some solutions to the colonial system. For Fanon, “colonialism forces the people it dominates to constantly ask themselves this question: In reality, who am I?”<sup>10</sup>

There has been considerable discussion about how to integrate the subaltern voice into social studies efficiently and equally. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s most influential work in this field is her article “Can Subordinate Speak?” Spivak focused on the term “subaltern” which includes the least disadvantaged groups of people within the colonized countries and inferred that they have never been allowed to speak for themselves because the colonized/powerful/dominant has always set their standards themselves and decided what best things for them were, disregarding their reality.

Spivak explained the colonized people and their predecessors after the colonial period, which she called as the new colonial period, with the concept of Subaltern. Spivak’s concept of subaltern is related to a tradition in India. It is this tradition that Hindu women sacrifice themselves after their dead husbands, and this is part of the Hindu tradition. There has been an ongoing discussion of modernity and tradition regarding this tradition. The legal abolition of this tradition by the British during the colonial period was shown by the West as “the white man saving the brown woman”. If we look from the perspective of subalternity, the British legitimized their colonial practices by removing this tradition. According to Spivak, colonial discourse and the construction of the identity of the subordinate is carried out by a dominant culture.

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8 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London: Penguin Books, 2019, p. 27.

9 Bertens, 203.

10 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 2004, p. 182.

Homi Bhabha is another name whose works are widely used in postcolonial literature. Bhabha claims that colonialism is not over and it continues. Bhabha began to problematize the scope of Orientalism by revising and expanding it. Bhabha first made reference to Said in his analysis, stating that the colonizer formed the identity of the colonizer during the colonial period. Bhabha puts it as:

*Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of minorities within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic normality to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the rationalizations of modernity<sup>11</sup>.*

The identity problems created by the devaluation of local minority cultures are expressed in the terminology of Bhabha through the concepts such as cultural hybridity, mimicry, in betweenness, ambivalence, and the third space.

Migration events that produced hybridity did not occur spontaneously. Because the difference between immigrants' home country and the host country complicates the cultural structure of immigrant societies. After the second world war, with the post-colonial period, multicultural and multidisciplinary societies emerged. This pushed the migrants struggling to survive in deep cultural conflicts and this multicultural environment led to hybridization.

Hybridity generally indicates the formation of intercultural forms after colonial contact. In addition, in postcolonial discourse, hybridity is also used as reciprocal cultural exchange. According to Homi Bhabha, hybridity is the integration of conflicting cultures within a third area and the formation of a new culture. The colonized, tried to imitate the colonizer, but failed, and had a hybrid culture and identity. For this reason, the concept of mimicry along with hybridity has also been an important method of analysis for Bhabha.

The ambiguous relationship between colonizer and colonized is defined by mimicry. Mimicry happens when people in a colonized country imitate and adopt the colonizers' culture. When a colonial rule urges the colonized subject to imitate the colonizer, the result is never a mere imitation of these characteristics, by following the cultural habit, perceptions, structures, and values of the colonizer. As Bhabha proposes via Lacan, "The effect of mimicry is camouflage...it is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background.<sup>12</sup>" The mimicry can seem to parody something it imitates. In a way, imitation symbolizes the colonial power.

As the colonized mimics the colonizer, new cultures appear and according to Bhabha, this is called the 'third space'. Theorized by Bhabha, the third space is where hybrids can be identified. According to Bhabha "it is the in between space that carries the burden and meaning of culture<sup>13</sup>." Bhabha claims that the interweaving of elements of the colonizer and colonized creates a new

11 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1997, 245.

12 Bhabha, p. 120.

13 Bhabha, p.119.

hybrid identity which calls into question the meaning and legitimacy of every cultural identity. This constructed identity exists between the colonizer and the colonized.

V.S. Naipaul is one of the most important figures and prolific Caribbean writers who employs a postcolonial discourse in his works. *A Bend in the River* is one of the works that best reflects colonial and post-colonial formations. Naipaul was born and raised in Trinidad; his family roots are in India. Trinidad and India are countries that had gone through the colonial process. In this respect, Naipaul reflected the colonization process very well, based his past life.

The fictional world of Naipaul depends on the relationship between actual external conditions and private affairs. The characters in his novels live in the free world, seeking to avoid oppression. Freedom becomes a gradual illusion in this sense. Naipaul portrayed his view of history as a dynamic interplay of circumstances with slaves, the exploiters, and oppressed people.

*A Bend in the River* reflects the conditions in Third World countries after the colonial period. This novel is also a critical assessment of the lives of the citizens of the African colonies. Naipaul writes of the anarchy, violence and turmoil that are the product of the dictatorial laws that control countries after colonialism ends officially. He portrays the incapacity of these countries to govern themselves and establish peace and stability. In addition, the novel is a description of immigrants' lives especially Indians in Africa. Thus, Naipaul illustrates the plight of these people in their new homeland and their desire to find a home.

### ***A Bend in the River: A Postcolonial Analysis***

Naipaul illustrates that alienation in the postcolonial world is inevitable by addressing to the terms such as displacement, migration, otherness and diaspora. This novel describes the plight of Indians as diasporic and oppressed people who are trying to migrate to another country. Naipaul describes the period in Africa after colonialism which leads to a tribal war and authoritarian dictators mimicking the colonizers to oppress their natives. The Indians are considered outsiders brought by colonialism. Although Africans are also colonial victims, they want to expel Indians who share the same fate with them from their countries.

The setting and characters are a prime example of the postcolonial concepts of hybridity, in-betweenness and third space. The protagonist Salim is of Indian, Arab and African descent which makes him an individual of hybrid identity. Throughout the novel, Salim struggles with his own identity as well as with adapting to a new environment after moving to a new town in the heart of Africa. Like Salim, most of the characters live in that town because of the job opportunities. Africa is depicted as a market environment for people from other parts of the world.

Salim is allegorically presented in the novel as a symbol of diasporic people in Africa. Since Salim is no real African, in Africa he has no place. He finds out that "the free-for-all of independence has come to an end<sup>14</sup>". His perspective on his post independent situation reflects the immigrants' role in the transitional period in the new homeland.

Another example of postcolonial hybrid identity in this novel is Nazruddin who despite being neither European nor African, learned European manners in a city of an African country. Even though other people around him mock him for this, they still admire him because anything Western



or European is considered as high class and better than local. Local people also regard European style education as luxurious and wish to resemble Western intellectuals. These are instances of what in postcolonial theory terms is mimicry.

The novel starts with the journey of Salim from his hometown on the east coast of Africa to Central Africa. Salim's family has a complicated cultural background due to their religion Islam, but their traditions mostly being taken from Hindu religion since they originally came from India. They live on East-Coast Africa under the European flag with Arabs, Indians, Persians, and Portuguese and feel themselves like the people of Africa but, they know that real Africa is miles away from them right at the centre of the continent. When Salim starts to tell us about his hometown, we feel something uncanny about it. Although everything looks normal in their daily life, Salim feels uneasy about the future of his family, but he cannot quite explain why. Probably deep down, he senses the rootlessness of his family stuck in a place disconnected from all the settled cultures, being neither Indian, nor African, nor European as if they were living in limbo. This place looks detached from African culture because it seems like colonial powers had wiped out the land's authentic culture and turned the place into a soulless, decentralized trading hub, which lacked the natural evolution process of a 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. When we had come no one could tell me. We were not that kind of people. We simply lived; we did what was expected of us, what we had seen the previous generation do. We never asked why; we never recorded. We felt in our bones that we were a very old people; but we seemed to have no means of gauging the passing of time. Neither my father nor my grandfather could put dates to their stories. Not because they had forgotten or were confused; the past was simply the past<sup>15</sup>.*

Salim starts a new life by moving into central Africa and settles down in a town located at a bend in the river. He opens the shop which he bought from Nazruddin back in his hometown and starts trading of many sorts of items that people living around the town would need. Salim works diligently to make this new life work. He realizes that the community in the town consists of foreigners, rather than local people. Local people live far deep inside the forest and drop by the town only to meet their requirements. Europeans' efforts to turn Africa into a marketplace become noticeable. Local people do not need Europeans there; they have been living in these lands for thousands of years by their own ways of living.

*From me she bought pencils and copybooks, razor blades, syringes, soap and toothpaste and toothbrushes, cloth, plastic toys, iron pots and aluminum pans, enamel plates and basins. These were some of the simple things Zabeth's fisherfolk needed from the outside world, and had been doing without during the troubles. Not essentials, not luxuries; but things that made ordinary life easier. The people here had many skills; they could get by on their own. They tanned leather, wove cloth, worked iron; they hollowed out large tree trunks into boats and smaller ones into kitchen mortars<sup>16</sup>.*

The town suffers from the aftermath of political unrest. It has always been like a ghost town because this is a place built by the colonizers on their attempt to penetrate the natives' land disregarding their customs, ways of life, traditions, and local people themselves. The colonial "lycee" in the town is a misfit against the local African culture and habitat. This town, built by the colonizers, like a patch next to real Africa, does not function.

The novel has a gloomy feeling right since the beginning, and the senses of rootlessness, estrangement, otherness, and lack of identity sustained until the end. Salim is aiming for something that he will never be able to capture for all his life, that is, to belong to somewhere. In this patch-town, he is living on the edge of cultures, without seeing the real-life in Africa, without getting to know real Africans genuinely, without even learning their language. As a colonized object himself, he does not act any different than a colonizer by ignoring the real habitants of that land, just like Father Huisman. He too ignored the customary African culture and undertook the role of fixing this brutal culture with a magical touch of European civilization. Unfortunately, he ended up in being killed brutally. The relationship Salim has with Yvette resembles the one between the colonizer and the colonized. She makes herself look like a friend, who can satisfy his needs and desires, on which he can count. Then one day, she disappears, leaving him exploited physically and mentally, just like a colonizer would do to the colonized.

In the first part of the novel, titled "The second Uprising", it is seen that Salim is trying to build his own identity in the process leading up to the outbreak of a second uprising in post-colonial Africa. The second chapter, titled "The New Special Zone", describes the period that was the continuation of the second uprising as the country faced an economic boom. In this episode, Salim also meets Indar, a friend of his while living with his family on the East Coast, and meets Raymond and his wife Yvette, a Belgian historian who is the "White Man of the Big Man", who comes to teach in schools in the "special zone" established in the town. The special region is the symbol of modern Africa. The people who live there are privileged and in contact with the world.

European colonialists try to instill their own cultural values instead of national values into the exploited African society by establishing high schools and universities in the Special Zone. Exploited societies are happy in the hope of resembling colonial masters. It is desirable to be accepted by their masters and to have their thoughts. In the third chapter titled "Big Man", the impact of the actions of the Big Man, the new native ruler of the African continent, begins to be felt strongly with the social unrest that immediately occurred in the town.

In the third chapter entitled “Big Man”, the impact of the actions of the Big Man, the new native ruler of the African continent, begins to be felt strongly with the social and social unrest that immediately occurred in the town. In the last section titled “War”, the state seizes everyone’s property as a result of the President’s “radicalization or expropriation” plan. As a result, Salim manages to escape from the fighting and war environment in the town under difficult conditions by getting on a steamboat that takes him away from the war environment.

Another feature to note about the characters in the novel is that most of them are foreigners. There are very 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, Raymond and Yvette are Belgian characters. Another minority group in the novel is the Italians. All these minorities have come together for one purpose. It is because of the goods and items to be sold in Africa. In a way, Africa functions as a market environment in the novel. Salim is a tradesman trying to make money in this market. The town does not offer anything other than material gain to foreigners. There is no social life activity for the people there. Despite these conditions, the only reason foreigners live in this town is the job opportunities the country offers. Hence, with the economic boom, the town is turning into a commodity warehouse and trading center. However, foreigners make fun of people who wear gold in African lands.

It is seen that foreign characters have such dilemmas throughout the narration. Another inconsistency is the problem of uniformity and safety. Safety problems are emphasized, especially in non-African characters. Because Africa is starting to be dangerous for foreigners living in the town. These characters are concerned and worried about the lack of safety of the African environment in which they live.

It is quite common that dictators get hold of a country after the decolonization process. In this novel, we see a dictator called “Big Man” who gives irrational and contradictory orders nationwide and suddenly targets foreigners in the country and decides to execute all the foreigners in the town. Salim’s only local acquaintance Ferdinand helps him to escape, from whom he always kept himself distant. Salim escapes the danger, but he has nowhere to return to, has no roots anywhere, he belongs nowhere and has to live a life with a hybrid identity. Naipaul makes a colonial criticism in his novel. This form of criticism reveals 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<sup>17</sup>.*

According to Said, Orientalism aims to convince the Eastern nations that the East does not have its own virtues, cannot govern itself, does not have the skills and abilities they need for this. According to him, there are Westerners and Easterners. Westerners are the dominant party. In this context, Western nations argued that they modernized their colonial lands, with the idea that “the East should be ruled”.

Salim characterizes indigenous African society as individuals who are corrupt and unable to move forward without the guidance of colonial society. Because of this, he believes that they deserve to be exploited in all circumstances. This novel takes place in a world of people especially those from the Third World that suffers from alienation, uncertainty and rootlessness. This novel not only criticizes African rulers and the hypocrisy of Western intellectuals who justify these rulers, and it is also a criticism for those who deny the opportunities of their civilization. This novel offers an observational perspective at western modernity traditions

### **Conclusion**

With the changing world order, that is, with the end of colonialism, new forms of domination began to emerge. Due to the material and moral devastation of the two world wars, the colonial countries inevitably began to lose control over their colonies. The events that took place along with the loss of control and other factors enabled many countries to gain their independence. Racial inequality and economic exploitation are major causes of colonial uprisings. Freedom, independence, and equality are the underlying ideals of postcolonial theory.

The novel tells the story of former colony of the United Kingdom full of frustration, suffering, destruction, rootlessness and futile search for identity. Naipaul deliberately kept places and national leaders anonymous in order to comment on the national situation in Africa. In his novel *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul describes how the failure of the national leader leads the people of this country to undergo an identity crisis. The novel represents the image of political crisis in Africa's decolonized states and stresses the need to reshape national leaders' and intellectuals' ideologies in order to lead Africa and its people to stability.

Western colonizers ruthlessly invaded many lands and exploited these lands' sources in every way possible for centuries. Once they settled in these lands, they created a sense of dichotomy in natives' minds, by positioning the natives as inferior and themselves as superior. They used the advantage of scientific knowledge as a tool for oppression against these people. They made them believe that they were uncivilized, undeveloped, and unethical and needed the guidance of the colonizers who could educate and civilize them. They made natives feel like their language, culture, and traditions were unnecessary, archaic, useless, barbaric and uncivilized and that they needed to replace all of these with the colonizers'. *A Bend in the River* by V.S.Naipaul shows us how rootless people of the ex-colonies feel. These colonized people suffer from a sort of social genocide. They cannot use their languages; even people from two different ex-colonies use their colonizers' languages instead of learning and communicating with one another's. Colonizers establish dysfunctional towns that lack any sort of identity and culture. These places offer just enough facilities to make people maintain their lives and keep on trading. Such places serve as dwellings for these lost-identities like Salim and his family. They spend their lives in a sort of limbo, having neither past nor future.

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