

Homi Bhabha's Hybridity and Unhomeliness in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*: A point of view

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Abstract:

This study investigates Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River*, which is an influencing example of Postcolonialism's effects including 'Hybridity' and 'Unhomeliness'. Naipaul argues that even if the natives have become exiles in their own nation, so unsettled are the impulses of the ruler. Actually, Naipaul is a representation of all postcolonial regimes. This work tries to show whether Naipaul's thoughts are racist and malicious for Western white liberals or not and to what extent. Homi Bhabha observes in his book *Of Mimicry and Man* that hybrid in possession of a "'partial' presence...almost the same, but not quite"(86). In *Locations of Culture*, Homi Bhabha portrays hybrid as a type of 'difference' which results from being at "the rim of an 'in-between' reality" (19). Thus, in *A Bend in the River*, African people cannot enable to administer themselves and can never be able to settle in their country. Essentially, The novel is set in an African state which is unspecified recently in the independent state is ruled and governed by 'Big Man' who calls for creating social and peace, but "The Big Man" is a dictatorial man who believes that the nationalization concerning emotional state belongs to western culture. The countries of African nations are confronted with the problem of selecting their traditional present or past.

Keywords: postcolonialism, hybridity, unhomeliness, African, nationalization

. Introduction

This study aims to analyze V.S. Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River* by adopting Homi Bhabha's perspective of 'Hybridity' and 'Unhomeliness'. Basically, this novel is written in 1979 by Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul and set in a town at the bend of a great river in a newly-independent African nation. Clearly, Naipaul wanted to emphasize the conflict between two

cultures – Western culture against African culture. In fact, the contradiction of the two cultures can lead to a miserable ending that made African people can never liberate from Western culture. The main assumptions of Postcolonialism will be discussed in this work including cultural cases, identity cases and so on by applying Postcolonialism to Homi Bhabha's concepts 'Hybridity' and 'Unhomeliness'.

This research scrutinizes the amount of applicability and practicality of Homi Bhabha's perspectives of 'Unhomeliness' and 'Hybridity' in the modern postcolonial literary context as its main objective. Homi Bhabha discusses that the theory of Hybridity is a new method for exploring the mixing of two different cultures; the colonized and the colonizer, to format a new form that decreases gaps and problems certainly brought about between them. As Homi Bhabha noted, "Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (159). For Bhabha, the concept of 'Unhomeliness' is "a state in which the boundaries normally separating private and public are erased"(119). Bhabha's *Location of Culture* that deals with his concept of unhomely. There, he argues Unhomeliness that "a paradigmatic colonial and postcolonial condition, it has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites" (13). In an unhomely situation the postcolonial issue neither belongs to his/her native traditional country culture nor is a native and first hand member of the new colonizer-western culture.

1 1.2. Statement of the Problem

This work investigates Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River*, which is an influencing example of Postcolonialism's effects including Hybridity and Unhomeliness. Naipaul argues that even if the natives have become exiles in their own nation, so unsettled are the impulses of the ruler. Actually, Naipaul is a representation of all postcolonial regimes. This study tries to show whether Naipaul's thoughts are racist and malicious for Western white liberals or not and to

what extent. Homi Bhabha observes in his book *Of Mimicry and Man* that hybrid in possession of a "partial" presence...almost the same, but not quite"(86). In *Locations of Culture*, Homi Bhabha portrays hybrid is a type of 'difference' which results from being at "the rim of an 'in-between' reality"(13). Thus, in *A Bend in the River*, African people cannot enable to administer themselves and can never be able to settle in their country. Essentially, The novel is set in African states which is unspecified recently in the independent state is ruled and governed by 'Big Man' who calls for creating social and peace, but "The Big Man" as a dictator man who believed that the nationalization concerning emotional state belong to western culture. The countries of African nations are confronted the problem of selecting their traditional present or past.

2 1.3. Approach and methodology

In *A Bend in the River*, Naipaul scrutinizes many motifs such as cultural conflict, loss of identity, alienation, and psychological crises. In addition, he depicts a specific society and the need for myth, history, and tradition as the visible points in order to make a real self. Naipaul insists on the definition of personal identity and its necessity in an individual's life. He argued various issues in the postcolonial period showing light on the conflict that arises when one culture is dominated by another. The research emphasizes the effect of Western culture on ex-colonized African nations and examined its effect on the characters' sense of Hybridity. Thus, the study depends on Bhabha's postcolonial theories of Hybridity. Actually, Homi Bhabha depicts these concepts as the main factors which symbolize one's culture and identity. It is worth mentioning that the Africans' exposure to Western values and thoughts caused them to have cultural Hybridity and identity crisis resulting in homesickness. So, *A Bend in the River* reflects the interaction between African and Western cultures. The novel showed the hybrid culture that the characters exhibit after their attachment with the European culture even after independence. Unquestionably, the work offered examples of which how the African identity

and culture have been distorted. Therefore, Naipaul's fiction presents determined characters to explore the concept of losing identity in different ways. Naipaul portrays Salim's life at *A Bend in the River* as a type of no-man's-land, to which come the European intellectual guides.

Actually, Postcolonial is undoubtedly difficult to understand V.S. Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River* without possessing a type of cultural and historical perspective comprehension of the reader and critic. In fact, Naipaul is considered a spokesman for colonialism and neo-colonialism. In fact, colonialism and neo-colonialism, as constituents of imperialism, are the assumption of the notability of the Western culture over the African culture. According to Naipaul, the individuals in Africa are in charge of the catastrophe in their lives. Salim believes that the world of postcolonialism has many individuals who can not able to tolerate any kind of challenges. As he noted, if these people face a challenge, they will fill with anger and the result will be absolute destruction. Thus, there is no wonder about Salim's decision to emigrate again. Though the colonial regime is the main reason for western culture, this responsibility is refused from the opening of Naipaul's 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" (4). From its beginning, Naipaul argues that African nations are nothing and they agree to convert nothing. Hence one can realize the repeated objective images and implications of 'Hybridity' and 'Unhomeliness' "all the fittings had been destroyed. The rage of the rebels [versus the Belgians] was like a rage against metal, machinery, wires, everything that was not of the forest and Africa" (Naipaul 49).

The harassment concerning exiles is examined by Naipaul by showing the sufferings of the imaginative character of an unnamed African nation. The recently independent unnamed African country can be the exemplification of the Third World. Salim is Naipaul's spokesman to represent an image that is designed for modern intellectuals within exile. From Salim's perspective, Naipaul treated the cases of the suffering concerning the Unhomeliness accurately

within the adopted nation. Through his characters such as Indar, Raymond and Salim, Naipaul expresses the conflict between the conditions in non-western positions. When it is a matter of cultural diversity, the belonging of the individuals from a similar country may not feel like being a citizen of the same land. Thus, these expatriates, migrants, or exiled people can be individuals with no state or homeless. Despite Salim and Indar having citizenship, they are not considered genuine and original citizens of the nation. Because of their cultural variation, They are exploited and harassed under various names. With the name of the 'nationalization' process, Salim's character is exploited by confiscating his property and confronting various dangers. Therefore, Salim finds his position completely insecure and his marginalized condition in the diaspora.

3 1.4. Significant of study

It aims to scrutinize the argument around Naipaul's perspectives toward African nation. Naipaul emphasizes the dominance of Western cultures over other cultures in his work *A Bend in the River*. Therefore, this novel fundamentally focused on the relationship between the colonial culture (Western) and the subaltern culture (Africa). The purpose of this study is to show how Naipaul succeeds to portray Africa as possessing a fake feeling of authority and liberty. Actually, this study will apply the main assumptions of Postcolonialism depending Bhabha's concepts: mimicry, ambivalence, Unhomeliness and Hybridity. In fact, postcolonial criticism examines understanding operations – politically, socially, and culturally– of colonialist and anticolonialist ideologies postcolonial. However, Homi Bhabha is trying to achieve a dynamic of equality between western and African nation in terms of Hybridity and Unhomeliness. As Bhabha claimed, he has exerted with his unique ideas of Mimicry, Unhomeliness, Ambivalence and Hybridity, cannot only challenge Western culture discursively but can also finally consolidated the situation of African culture, the intellectual of postcolonial. According to Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity and Unhomeliness, Hybridity is a

new method for exploring the mingling for two various cultures; the colonized and the colonizer, to format a new form which reduces gaps as well as obstacles inevitably got about between them. Clearly, in postcolonial/ colonial context, Hybridity "is the intermixing of cultures that has occurred as a result of colonialism" (Gyulay 636).

4 1.5. Literature Review

"Struggle for Power: *A Bend in the River*" is an article written by Dr. Firdous Azim in (2015). This article shows a struggle for power is visible throughout the novel *A Bend in the River*. Everyone tries to seek power as they have seen what happens when someone does not have power. Azim depicts the "Big Man" had the power to control Africa but he also failed in the end because he gave false hope and treated people as his tools. The only power which prevailed throughout the whole novel was the European power and domination, which was firstly dominated Africa Later the power shifted to the Africans and as the representative of Africa, the 'Big Man' chooses Raymond as his representative who is a Belgian white man. This shows that the 'Big Man' is still dependent on Europeans to take care of his country and he follows the European culture instead of African culture. Although Congo is free of the European regime it is still under the same power and condition it had been. The 'Big Man' never lay back when he had to off his power. His photos are everywhere which became a symbol of his powerful existence all over the country. Another misuse of power by him is his false promise to the young generation of new Africa.

"Demonizing Africa: *A Bend in the River* and Naipaul's Comprador Intellectuality" is an article written by Muhammad Afzal Faheem (2021). This article represented the negative portrayal of African civilization and suggests that it is on the verge of destruction. Naipaul portrays Africa as a place that is odd and cannot be governed by Africans "Sun and rain and bush had made the site look old, like the site of a dead civilization"(17). The difference between past and present makes Africa look in Naipaul's thoughts confused and Africans are

treated as strangers in their own country. The prevalent injustice to Africa and its inhabitants lays bare Naipaul's allegiance to western ideology. The masterfully woven plot of the novel, *A Bend in the River*, subtly unveils the incapacity of Africans to rule over their own country.

"Reading the Post-colony in the Center: V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*" is an article written by Masood Raja (2005). Actually, this article attempts to read Naipaul's own cultural specificity as well as to discuss his political works of representation in accordance with Spivak's famous conclusion, "representation has not withered away" (104). Naipaul provides an opportunity to step beyond the circumscribed and contested terrain of literary production to investigate the larger structures that affect and challenge the very possibilities of life in global circumstances.

"The Garden Trampled Or, the Liquidation of African Culture in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*" is an article written by Christopher Wise (1996). In fact, Naipaul is pessimistic about the value of preserving traditional culture within any modern context. He states his view that "there may be some parts of the world? Dead countries or secure and by-passed ones? Where men can appreciate the past and think of passing on their inheritors"(15).

"Location of Diaspora in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*" is an essay written by Dr Sanjay Kumar Mishra. Thus, the narrative highlights the predicament and location of expatriates who suffer from being split in themselves in the Third World during the transitional post-independent period. It shows the multifaceted experiences of a postcolonial world by dealing with contemporary human problems such as the disintegration of values, social institutions, and existential identity problems of the vulnerable diasporic populations. It argues that culture is the source of identity and the source of binding and dividing people. An individual who belongs to the same nation cannot feel like a citizen of their own nation when it is an issue of cultural differences. Therefore, these migrants, expatriates or exiled people, become homeless or citizens with no country in spite of being licensed with citizenship.

5 1.6. Research questions

- 1- Is the society created by Naipaul in *A Bend in the River* connecting with colonialism? How does it harmonize with our social understanding of Hybridity and Unhomeliness?
- 2- How is the concept of Hybridity reflected in African people?
- 3- How is the concept of Unhomeliness reflected in African people?
- 4- To what extent does the impact of Western culture have on African culture?
- 5- What are the causes and forms of postcolonialism in Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*?

6 1.7. Limitations and Delimitations

There are several limitations in this study as in other research studies; one of them is the time factor which makes it difficult to explore the whole novel by V .S Naipaul. Therefore, this paper adopted on Bhabha's perspective of postcolonialism including Hybridity and Unhomeliness. In addition, it is difficult to find necessary diverse references like critical books and dissertations on this novel, *A Bend in the River*. This study delimited and represented two methods. Firstly, in terms of the literary works and secondly, in terms of the approach that adaptation. This study analyses the amount of applicability and practicality of Homi Bhabha's perspectives of Unhomeliness and Hybridity in the modern postcolonial literary context as its main objective. However, the same approach, a critical evaluative approach to Bhabha's mentioned concepts, can be applied to various contemporary literary authors and their literary workings within postcolonial/ colonial settings.

7 1.7. Definitions of Key Terms

7.1 1.7.1. Postcolonialism

It is a critical academic revision for the economic legacy, cultural and political of imperialism and colonialism, showing to the effect of corruption and human control of

colonized people as well as their homelands. Clearly, Postcolonialism is a critical theory that scrutinizes of the history, discourse, culture, and literature of (European culture) imperial control. According to Homi Bhabha that postcolonial "forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres" (4). In fact, the postcolonial theory emphasizes the literature of cultures which extended to response to western colonial domination. Actually, postcolonial theory examines to depict the operations – culturally, socially, and, politically of colonialist and anticolonialist ideologies postcolonial. According to Dobie argues "Postcolonialism is concerned with what exists and happens after the end of colonial rule"(186).

7.2 1.7.2. Hybridity

The concept of Hybridity is considered one of the widely terms used in postcolonialism. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha introduces this concept as the main source of concern for the colonizer. He develops Hybridity's notion to portray the construction of identity and culture within situations of colonial injustice and antagonism. As Ashcroft et al noted, Hybridity is "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation" (118). According to Bhabha,

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure'and original identity of authority). (159)

An essential part concerning postcolonial studies can be provided by Bhabha's works such as mimicry, ambivalence, anticolonial agency, Hybridity, in betweenness, third space, and Unhomeliness. As Homi Bhabha noted, Hybridity can be "understood as cultural, not biological or racial. Cultural Hybridity is theorised as the result of the continual process of

translation which is internal to any culture, which in turn stems from an apprehension of cultural difference"(33).

7.3 1.7.3. Unhomeliness

For Bhabha, Unhomeliness is "a state in which the boundaries normally separating private and public are erased"(119). Bhabha 's *Location of Culture* that deals with his concept of unhomely. There, he defines Unhomeliness that "a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition, it has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites"(13). In an unhomely situation the postcolonial issue neither belongs to his/her native traditional country culture nor is a native and first hand member of the new colonizer-western culture.

8 1.8. Conclusion

This study deals with exploring postcolonialism's influence on African culture and identity. Naipaul shows the imposed power and its results on the African individual. When the African people are exposed to the Western culture, they fail to keep their social identities and cultural values. The lack of hope results from the lack of cultural history and traditions. Therefore, the Africans confront a problem concerning their identity and discover that they are at a crossway of cultures.

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