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Demonizing Africa: A Bend in the River and Naipaul's Comprador Intellectuality

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History: Accepted 30 May 2021 Available Online June 2021	<i>This paper establishes V.S. Naipaul's position as a comprador intellectual for his essentialist representation of Africa in A Bend in the River. The position (of comprador intellectual) has been ascribed by Hamid Dabashi to the array of highly feted non-Western writers who justify the Western orientalist (mis)appropriation of the East. The unrelenting orientalist bashing of the imperialized world (Africa in this case) legitimizes the civilizational responsibility of the West to mend the situation of the supposedly inferior Africans. The violent colonial intervention to provide order and stability to the place shows Naipaul's orientalist world view regarding the colonized Africans. The alleged, all-pervading darkness of Africans can thus be illuminated by the White colonizer's masterful exercise of power. Naipaul, as an author, functions as a comprador intellectual who appears serving the colonial commercial interest. The West needs to destroy all the cultures that may be potential sites of resistance, so, Naipaul offers a systematic denigration of African culture to sabotage the potential culture of resistance. The narrative of African demonization justifies the colonial machinery and its exercise of violence against the natives. The paper, therefore, calls into question Naipaul's role as a cultural intermediary, since his 'point of enunciation' (a concept given by Stuart Hall) seems to be resting on an overtly colonial trajectory of the West.</i>
Keywords: Representation; Orientalist; Essentialist; Demonize; Comprador Intellectual	
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1. Introduction

The celebrated postcolonial novel, *A Bend in the River*, offers a most demonizing picture of Africa and its inhabitants. The colonizer, who considers it his civilizational responsibility to improve the lives of the supposedly miserable native Africans, is projected as a savior. Naipaul conveniently overlooks the atrocities committed in the guise of White man's burden, which makes him a

comprador intellectual in the light of Hamid Dabashi's criticism. The resistance offered by the natives of the place for reclaiming their land wins out, though the Black African President seems to be ill-equipped to run the administrative matters as depicted by Naipaul. The post-independence Africa is a dystopia where the native culture is in shambles. The President-for-lifetime takes Africa back to primitivism. At the same time, a European-modeled school, State Domain, is set up to indoctrinate the natives. It indicates that the only way to run Africa is to follow the European socio-political models. All the key slots in the administration are held by the people who have received education from the State Domain. So, the nationalist struggle for independence proves to be a sham, as Africans are unable to come up with any indigenous model of governance.

This paper investigates Naipaul's position as a cultural intermediary with the assumption that his authorial genius implicates into comprador intellectuality. The principal objective of the comprador intellectual is to provide justification for European colonization. For Dabashi, "Any native servant in the service of a colonial commercial interest", who systematically downplays the native culture is a comprador intellectual (39). Comprador intellectuals are a "relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery" (Ibid). So, Naipaul masterfully upholds the grand narrative that perpetuates the orientalist inferiority of Africans, thus legitimizing the civilizational mission of the colonizer. Therefore, he is "at the service of the predatory empire" (Dabashi 47) that furthers its agenda by masterfully downplaying the natives' resistance, their struggle for independence, and their ability to govern the land.

A comprador intellectual is installed to 'destroy all communities and cultures that may be the potential sites of resistance to what Max Weber calls "predatory capitalism"' (62). He is the native informer who is "equally stateless, homeless, characterless and cultureless, and a "citizen of a portable world"(63). Naipaul's position as an authentic voice on Africa is called into question, as his representation of the African locale and its people is compounded with the long-standing Western orientalist (mis)appropriation of the East. Edward Said is highly critical of the Western colonial enterprise and asserts that "[T]he main issue for contention was whether things in the Third World hadn't in fact declined after the colonies had been emancipated" (24). The post-independence Africa in *A Bend in the River* is appalling; Africans although attained independence from the Empire, yet they could not reclaim their sovereignty fully. Africa descends into primitivism under the control of an African President, who proves to be a surrogate colonizer on account of his West-inspired handling of the local state of affairs.

2. Review of Related Literature

In his article "Reading the Postcolony in the Center: V.S Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*", Raja accuses Naipaul of giving a biased representation of African history. He considers Naipaul an apologist of colonialism. Although Naipaul gives adequate representation to both the sides, Africa and the West, he gives advantage to the European version of reality: "Naipaul adopts the transitional and binaristic view of history privileging the traditional/ colonialist hierarchies of the West" (Raja 225). Naipaul ridicules African continent by highlighting its backwardness: "As I (Salim) got deeper [into Africa] 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" (Naipaul 4). He depicts Africa as a place that unsettles Salim's sense of direction. Salim feels bewildered in Africa. Nevertheless, a mature re-reading of the lines suggests that Naipaul actually exposes the hollowness of the European narrative. Europeans launched a colonizing mission in Africa in the guise of a civilizing mission. The European colonial enterprise

leaves Africa devastated: “But 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” (Naipaul 11). Since there is a clear dichotomy between what Europe professes and what it actually practices in Africa, therefore, Naipaul criticizes Europe for her double standards. Europe puts on a deceptive persona of being the upholder of African values to invade Africa.

Naipaul misrepresents the reality as a device to make Europe appear innocent in the deterioration of Africa. Mustafa challenges Naipaul’s representation of reality in *A Bend in the River*. In the article “Gurnah and Naipaul: intersections of Paradise and A Bend in the River”, the emphasis is on Naipaul’s biased style of representation: “Naipaul has always had little concern for historical accuracy per se . . . As Edward Said famously put it, Naipaul 'specializes in the thesis . . . that we ‘non-Whites’ are the cause of all our problems, not the overly maligned imperialists’ ” (Mustafa 5). Mustafa posits that Africans are the architects of their cultural room, and ripping into the Empire for committing imperial sins is a flawed approach. He also believes that Salim observes events from a dispassionate perspective and he does not act as the spokesperson for Muslims, Africans, Europeans or any other community. His feeling of homelessness, which is the result of persistent marginalization, gives more credence to his narrative: “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” (Naipaul 11). In opposition to the position taken by Mustafa, the author feels that Africans are not the architects of their destruction, while the Empire assumed an imperial character to dispossess the Africans in their own hometown.

Salim’s ideological alignment with Europe shows that he is intellectually impressionable. He lives in a fantasy world of his own. Western scholarship plays a key role in shaping his worldview. Salim develops fascination for Europe, as he is trained to look at the world from the optics of the Empire. In the article “The Non-Native Native in V.S.Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*”, Salim’s intellectual leanings towards Europe have been impeached: “Although he has never lived among Europeans, having acquired access to “European civilization” primarily through books, he has so identified himself with Europe that he imagines himself to be a European” (Walunywa 17). Consequently, Salim looks down on African culture. His inability to probe the heart of affairs highlights his naiveté; he believes in the European accounts: “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” (Naipaul 9). The knowledge coming from Europe indoctrinates Salim and makes him believe that Europe can give Africans back the sense of their history.

Demonizing African customs helps in projecting Europe as intellectually enlightened. Europe pretends to be doing a great service to Africa, so that the resistance from Africans can be forestalled. It is instilled into the minds of African natives that challenging Europe’s supremacy would lead to Africa’s destruction. It is an attempt to blindfold Africans, so that Europe can justify and extend the exercise of African colonization. In the article “Claiming the Burden: Naipaul’s Africa”, the attempts by Africans to regain sovereignty are undermined and considered destructive: “If Europe is the epitome of social evolution, then movement away from it is always a step backward in history and maturity” (Samantrai 60). If Africans regain their voice, then Europe’s colonization will come to an end. Therefore, Europe threatens Africans against staging any uprising against the status quo. Samantrai’s point of view seems valid, as Naipaul expresses his passionate hatred for Africa in *A Bend in the River*, though this portrayal can be examined from another perspective; Naipaul might

be highlighting the negatives to expose the legacy of colonialism. The uncanny portrayal of Africa makes Salim lose his sense of time. Subjecting Africa to tremendous ridicule justifies the exercise of colonialism. Africa is a place that is grotesquely 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. The ruins, spreading over so many acres, seemed to speak of a final catastrophe" (Naipaul 17). The negative portrayal of African civilization suggests that it is on the verge of destruction. The intermingling of past, present and future makes Africa look horrific.

3. Naipaul's Comprador Intellectuality and the (Mis)Representation of Africa

The central character of *A Bend in the River*, Salim, faces identity crisis on account of his hybrid origins. Africans mistrust Salim as he has an Arab background, and the English reject him for being an African. So, Salim is perpetually in two worlds having a sense of homelessness. This persistent marginalization of Salim is followed by meticulously-orchestrated demonization of Africa. Naipaul ridicules Africa by constantly painting it as an antithesis to civilization. Behind the smoke screen of development, Africa is actually retrograding in terms of development. Loss of life in Africa is considered an ordinary occurrence. As Africans come to power, they exhibit their destructive tendencies by plundering the town. This is a tacit way of justifying the colonial takeover. As a result of ideological indoctrination through newspapers, Africans look down on local cultural artifacts, and give central place to European paintings. Africans are treated as strangers in their own country. Despite all the political instability, Africans believe that the President has steered the country towards progression. Salim grows disheartened with African civilization and the colonial machinery for being unable to get acceptance throughout his life.

Salim suffers marginalization in Africa on ethnic grounds: "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" (Naipaul 8). Salim's Arab background causes massive problems for him; Africans doubt his credibility. Therefore, Salim is treated as an outsider in his hometown. As Salim relocates to England to avoid becoming a victim of racism in Africa, he is othered due to his African background. This establishes that Salim is a perpetual outcast who cannot assimilate into any culture, which further deepens his identity crisis. Salim strives to blend in with Africans, though he is categorically cast off as a foreigner. He tries to integrate with the culture of England, but here too he faces rejection for being an African. This is an unending crisis with the result that "Salim is a personal outsider in all communities, he inhabits. As an onlooker, Salim is in position to notice and analyze the identity related issues better than others. This capacity however results in his marginalization" (Singh 455).

Salim's sense of otherness is awakened by Indar's insensitive remark: "There is no place for you here. There is no place here for the homeless . . . He [Indar] had always made me feel so backward" (Naipaul 67). The racially charged remark makes him feel unsettled. On account of Salim's mixed ancestry, he has to face strong resistance from the natives who believe that he is not originally a black African. He does not feel deflated; he resolves to achieve recognition in Africa by the virtue of his superior survival instincts: "The colossal experiment of the British Empire has left vast migrant populations; entire cultures are on the move, physically displaced, psychologically bewildered" (Surajprasad 359). The colonial hegemony renders the subalterns ideologically unstable. Despite this stifling situation, Salim has an overwhelming urge to get settled in Africa and to win over the hearts of Africans.

The initial unfavourable impression of Africa is reinforced when Africa is described as a place

of madness. Salim's mental turmoil shows that Africa is a place that poses a challenge to one's sanity. He loses his sense of direction. "As I got deeper into Africa . . . 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" (Naipaul 4). It is difficult for Salim to battle his way through this situation; he feels completely bewildered. Pessimism prevails at the end as there is no possibility of a new life in Africa; the description shows Naipaul's bias against Africa: "To arrive at this sense of a country trapped and static, eternally vulnerable, is to begin to have something of the African sense of void. It is to begin to fall, in the African way, into a dream of a past" (Nixon 103). Africa is apparently stagnant, while it is difficult for Africans to come out of this political morass. They seek solace in the past which implies returning to the colonial rule. The only way forward is to accept the slavery of the past which is projected as a dream time in the timeframe of the colonizer.

Hall's notion of the "places of enunciation" seems pertinent here: "Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write – the positions of enunciation" (222). Hall, furthermore, argues that the recent theories on enunciation validate that the speaker and the subject (who is spoken of) "are never identical, never exactly in the same place" (Ibid). The persistent demonization of Africa speaks of Naipaul's imperial leanings and his tendency to blatantly disregard the African traditions, places, and the people. Naipaul caricatures the African continent by showing its backwardness. The post-independence Africa gives a facade of development, though a closer look at things reveals lack of progress. This place retains an aura of mystery; night dispels the entire positive outlook by transporting the reader to a primitive world: "But at night, if you were on the river, it was another thing. You felt the land taking you back to something that was familiar, something you had known at some time but had forgotten or ignored" (Naipaul 7). It is a mild way of having a dig at the African culture; it means no matter how hard the President tries to modernize Africa, it will always remain a picture of roughness. It also indicates that the observer might be deceived in the daytime, though the night removes all the doubts about African reality. Africa stands for primitivism and retrogression in the light of Naipaul's portrayal.

Naipaul's representation of Africa is both essentializing and homogenizing – a practice initiated by the West which has been kept in continuum by authors from both the West and the East (Ishaque 2). For Ali (201), texts that draw on representational politics are not free of the "risk" of reinforcing the Western hegemonic discourses. Dabashi (2011) is, therefore, critical of the writers from the East who have been lauded for their undaunted show of dissent within their places/cultures of origin. Dabashi, furthermore, questions the role of such writers as cultural intermediaries, since "their literary and intellectual output justifies the demonization and dehumanization of Arab world in particular and Muslim world in general" (Ishaque 2). Dabashi's notion of "comprador intellectual" thus impeaches the position of such authors owing to their essentialist representation of the East. Naipaul's caricaturing of Africa arguably ascribes normative value to the West's bashing of the non-Western (or the Eastern) cultures and lifestyles. The systematic denigration of Africa implicates Naipaul in perpetuating colonization: "I saw a disordered future for the country. No one was going to be secure here" (Naipaul 63). Naipaul skillfully speaks through the central character, Salim, about the grim future of Africa. Africa is shown as an inherent contradiction where the local Africans are full of insecurities in their own hometown. Africa is permanently stagnant, as it features the stillness that "seemed without further human promise" (Naipaul 58). Apparently, Africa is fixed in the timeframe; the stereotypical representation of Africans as culturally inferior to Europeans is perpetuated, "Not only, in Said's 'Orientalist' sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West - - they had the power to make us see and

experience ourselves as ‘Other’” (Hall 225). The construction of Africa as the cultural other projects Europe as the center of excellence – a feat only comprador intellectuals can efficiently pull off in the literary realm.

Naipaul’s demonization of Africa strikingly reminds one of Joseph Conrad’s caricaturing of Congo in his *Heart of Darkness* (1899). The outrageously subhuman depiction of Africans exposes the colonial leanings of Conrad, who skillfully knits together a plot of systematic demonization of Africa: “They were dying slowly--it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now-- nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom”(Conrad 26). Conrad denies human qualities to Africans and blackens their dignity on account of their skin color. For Hall, therefore, “The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalization” (225). Conrad reduces Africans to the status of shadows, so that the struggle for independence emerging from local Africans against the exercise of colonization can be played down. The representation of Africans in a negative light is deliberately done to make them look inferior: “We should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation” (Hall 222). Naipaul and Conrad are, therefore, in the same intellectual league in setting up Africa as a foil for the enlightened Europe.

The lifeless portrayal of Africa shows Naipaul’s contempt for Africa. The disapproving depiction of Africa as a “dead civilization” (Naipaul 17) implies that it cannot have a cultural revival. “We must not collude with the West which, precisely, normalizes and appropriates Africa by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive, unchanging past” (Hall 231). Africa possesses a mysterious aura; evokes a creepy feeling in Salim. The imagery employed is supernatural; man starts feeling like a ghost in Africa. The conventional perception of reality is shattered, as man loses control over his self in Africa. The uncanny portrayal of Africa makes Salim lose his sense of time. Subjecting Africa to tremendous ridicule justifies the exercise of colonialism. Africa is a place that is grotesquely odd and cannot be governed by Africans. The intermingling of the past, present and future makes Africa look horrific: “Sun and rain and bush had made the site look old, like the site of a dead civilization. The ruins, spreading over so many acres, seemed to speak of a final catastrophe . . . You felt like a ghost, not from the past, but from the future” (Naipaul 17).

Naipaul makes a statement on Africa’s decadence by highlighting the prevalence of sexual perversion in the town. Salim comes to realize that men can violate any woman’s virginity at will, which explains the plight of African women. Stripping the dignity of women in Africa is not going to arouse any emotional reaction, as it is considered an ordinary occurrence. Africa is mistreated by invaders; similarly, African women are also mistreated by sexual assailants. Widespread moral corruption in Africa shows that people are in pursuit of physical pleasures. The moral decline of African civilization can be seen by the attitude of Africans towards sexual activity. Mahesh harbours sexual designs on Shoba, which shows the dissipation of his soul: “A man could knock on any woman’s door and sleep with her. Mahesh didn’t tell me this with any excitement or approval . . . To Mahesh the sexual casualness was part of the chaos and corruption of the place” (Naipaul 24). Africans are, therefore, in pursuit of sexual gratification all the time.

4. Africa as an Antithesis to European Civilization

The term ‘African’ assumes negative connotations in Africa, which saddens Salim to the core.

Africans are ashamed of their own identity, while the people studying in the State Domain – a Western-modeled school – are taught to look at things from the optics of the Empire. This clearly brings forth the ideological indoctrination of Africans: “In the town ‘African’ could be a word of abuse or disregard; in the Domain it was a bigger word. An ‘African’ there was a new man whom everybody was busy making” (Naipaul 7). As a result of this brainwashing, the students glorify European civilization and downplay the local African traditions. Naipaul’s position as a reliable voice on Africa should be called into question, as he (mis)represents Africa as a strategy to validate the exercise of colonialism.

The placement of European painting at the center puts Africans on the periphery of the power structure. The glorification of European civilization is evident by Africans’ attitude. As a result of living under European influence for years, Africans look up to Europe for intellectual enlightenment. A European painting is an object of reverence that should be given central place in the home. Calling African art ‘junk’ is a gibe at African culture. It shows Africans’ intense scorn for the local culture and admiration for the European art. The pro-European slant of Africans is a disgrace to everything that African culture stands for: “On the white wall at the end of the room was a large oil painting of a European port . . . She had given it pride of place in her main room” (Naipaul 26). In order to appear sophisticated, Africans express their fondness for European culture and art. In the post-independence phase, Africans are ideologically stumped. They are unable to construct an individual identity for themselves. Naipaul, therefore, foregrounds the mental imprisonment of Africans.

The gullibility of Africans is emphasized as they fall into the trap set by the Empire. Africans never dispute the narratives told to them in European magazines. It indicates that Africans have lost the ability to discern the reality. Instead of giving projection to African values, they keep paying tribute to European civilization: “For these tall men of the forest there had always been European admiration. Ever since I could remember there had been articles about them in the magazines these Africans who cared nothing about planting or trade and looked down, almost as much as Europeans, on other Africans” (Naipaul 33). This tendency of glorifying European values shows that Africans have turned a blind eye to the atrocities they had faced during the colonial rule. For Hall, “Africa was a case of the unspoken, Europe was a case of that which is endlessly speaking – and endlessly speaking us” (232). The perceptual triumph of Western narrative is evident, since the Africans themselves look down on their cultural traditions. The African psyche remains colonized, as the natives revere Europeans who brutalized them and took away their individuality. The ideological indoctrination of Africans through newspapers, that serve the Empire’s cause, blurs the boundaries of reality and fantasy.

African newspapers present tailored reality to promote the colonial agenda. In order to change the public perception about Africa, the newspapers deliberately highlight the dark side of African society. Operating on behalf of the colonizer, the newspapers downgrade the local traditions. By downplaying all the anti-government movements, the newspapers discourage the idea of African independence. Newspapers are, therefore, selective about choosing their content. The most important thing is the way newspaper writers establish relationships with the government officials. They openly display allegiance to the high- ranking government officials, while they actually work against the African cause of independence. Together, all this compounds the problems of Africans: “I couldn’t get over that, because from my experience on the coast I knew that newspapers in small colonial places told a special kind of truth. They didn’t lie, but they were formal . . . They left out a lot of important things--often essential things-- that local people would know and gossip about”

(Naipaul 109). The newspapers thus play a critical role in subjugating the African community. Instead of remaining faithful to the truth, they show fidelity to the Empire's narrative.

A device of colonial machinery, Father Huismans, has a static view of African reality. He believes that Africa will always be a foil for European civilization. The State Domain, a Europeanized school, plays a key role in robbing Africans of their critical faculties. Father Huismans spectacularly fools the African masses by putting on the persona of Africa lover and collects masks. Apparently, he exudes utmost love for the African way of life, though he is not worried about the well-being of the place and its people: "That was strange, that a Christian priest should have had such regard for African beliefs . . . he seemed indifferent to the state of the country. I envied him the indifference; and I thought, after I left him that day, that his Africa, of bush and river, was different from mine" (Naipaul 38). Father Huismans believes that Africans can never experience modernity. He always keeps a static view of the African reality. He would be little everything associated with Africa. Africans' inability to judge the true character of Father Huismans is emphasized. Since Father Huismans is an agent of colonial machinery, he believes that Africa will always remain culturally inferior.

Embracing the primitive ways of violence underscores Africans' barbaric self. In the same vein, Africa's depiction as a dystopia serves Naipaul's agenda of subtly upholding the imperialist position. The loss of life does not affect anyone in the town. Killing of citizens is commonplace. Although Father Huismans gives a false impression of sincerity with African culture, his death does not cause any stir in the town. The portrayal of Father Huismans' death is degrading; he is killed in a shameless manner. He gets his body parts damaged after the death: "It was during these early days of the peace that Father Huismans went out on one of his trips and was killed . . . His body had been mutilated, his head cut off and spiked. He was buried quickly, with the minimum of ceremony" (Naipaul 50). Father Huismans is denied a proper burial; this indicates the insensitivity of Africans towards a dead body. Father Huismans' betrayal to African idea of independence might have provoked Africans, though his unceremonious killing is a statement on the moral corruption of Africa. They are uncivil to the alive and dead alike as the description of Father Huismans brings out. So, Naipaul has endowed Africans with wicked qualities to invite the hatred of the postcolonial reader.

Monopolizing the system of representation in favour of the colonial machinery makes Naipaul depict Africa as an antithesis to Europe. Allured by the outward glamour that surrounds the President's life, Salim looks down on the real Africa. Africa is portrayed as a place that is worthy of contempt. Salim is attracted to the beauty surrounding the President's life, as he too wants to have a prosperous life. The "rubbish dumps, bad roads, tricky officials, shanty towns" (Naipaul 110) of Africa reveal President's vision of the place. Salim develops a feeling of revulsion for the real Africa, as he looks at the world from the perspective of the President. The President fails to provide Africa educational excellence, cultural advancement, economic prosperity, and political stability. His chief focus is on constructing buildings that give an artificial impression of boom in Africa to the world around. In the post-independence phase, Africans have been unable to cope with transition to modernity. In view of the pessimistic reality of Africa, Salim temporarily feels attached to President's retrogressive vision of Africa, "I had been thrilled to feel so close to the highest power in the land . . . Power, and the life around the President in the capital, had seemed to be what was real and essential about the country" (Naipaul 113). Salim is momentarily transported to delight, as he puts on the President's spectacles to assess the African reality. The rose-tinted glasses project the

African reality as something grand to Salim.

Salim examines the deplorable state of affairs in Africa in the wake of attaining independence. With the President in command, Africa's political reality becomes unstable. Africans appear to be clueless; they do not have any goals to achieve. As a nation, Africans are in a limbo, "but in the town, where all was arbitrary and the law was what it was, all our lives were fluid. We none of us had certainties of any kind . . . In the end we couldn't say where we stood. We stood for ourselves. We all had to survive . . . 'It isn't that there's no right and wrong here. There's no right.' " (Naipaul 116). There are two possibilities in the political equation of any country: goodness and evil, though only one prevails at a time. In Africa's case, goodness does not exist at all as "The inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms" (Hall 226). Africans are robbed of their reasoning faculty by the colonizer. They are assessing the reality of Africa from the European spectacle. Therefore, they seem to be disgruntled with everything taking place in Africa. Local Africans taking a gibe at Africa all the time show the bias of the author and victory of the colonial project. The local Africans appear to be under the influence of the narratives conveyed to them through local newspapers of Africa. On the other hand, foreigners have virtually taken over Africa's control: "They're going to kill everybody who can read and write" (Naipaul 166). Africans are at the mercy of foreigners. The same painful reality is conveyed to Salim: "You must go right away. There's nothing here for you" (Naipaul 164). Salim's life is in jeopardy as long as he is in Africa, and he has to leave the place in order to secure his life.

Africa's slide into anarchy after independence is a masterfully executed masterstroke of Naipaul to promote the imperial agenda. Africans live through colossal marginalization at the hands of foreigners. The locals of Africa are treated as strangers in their own country. The arrival of foreigners in the town adds to the affliction of the natives. The foreigners are so assertive in their attitude that it seems as if they have taken over the town: "We began to receive visitors from a dozen countries, teachers, students, helpers in this and that, people who behaved like discoverers of Africa, were happy with everything they found, and looked down quite a bit on foreigners like ourselves who had been living there. The collection began to be pillaged" (Naipaul 51)? Instead of learning African traditions from local Africans, the foreigners pretend to be in love with the African way of life. In the guise of cultural assimilation, the foreigners rob the town of its cultural symbols. Africans do not resist the cultural onslaught, as the President gives prime importance to foreigners in Africa. Resultantly, foreigners take advantage of the situation and plunder the resources of the place. It shows that foreigners can mock or even destroy any African object at will. For Dabashi, "Plotting the enemy in a narrative of demonization and de-narrating a nation from its historical claim to authority both pave the way for the advance of the colonial combat battalion" (73). Africans are systemically represented as bereft of governing abilities and Africa is painted as a place of madness to validate the civilizing mission of the Empire. The principal task of the comprador intellectual is to "destroy all communities and cultures that may be the potential sites of resistance" (62). Africa is sliding into complete anarchy as the local black President assumes the power. It points to the inability of Africans to govern Africa – a subtle yet explicit way of depicting the superiority of the Empire that establishes the comprador intellectuality of Naipaul.

5. Conclusion

Naipaul's biased representation calls into question his authenticity as a cultural critic and a reliable voice on Africa. The all-pervading darkness ascribed to Africa and its inhabitants lays bare Naipaul's ideological allegiance to the Empire. The masterfully woven plot of the novel, *A Bend in the River*, subtly unveils the incapacity of Africans to rule over their own country. The anti-colonial and

nationalist struggle, and the post-independence Africa exhibit the meaninglessness of natives' resistance against the West. In order to validate the exercise of colonial intervention in Africa, it is necessary to demonize Africa and shape readers' perception in the favor of colonial West. However, the imperialist narrative establishes Naipaul as a comprador intellectual, who upholds the grand narrative making the West appear blameless in the political retrogression, cultural plundering, and stiff marginalization of Africans. A comprador intellectual is, therefore, installed to "destroy all communities and cultures that may be the potential sites of resistance to what Max Weber called "predatory capitalism"" (62).

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