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Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Revisited: A Study of V.S.Naipaul's Use of Intertextuality in *A Bend in The River*

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INTRODUCTION

P.Lal in his essay *Myth and the Indian Writer in English* says: “.....no Indian writer, in English or any other Indian languages – should commit pen to paper until he has spent ten years of his adult life carefully pondering the Indian Classics, learning the Indian tradition, and absorbing the Indian myth.” (p.18) No other writer with Indian diaspora as his background observes this stipulation more than V.S.Naipaul. *A Bend in the River* is a brief analysis of Naipaul's treatment of myth and its various aspects and acts as a pointer in that direction. Though it seems the present novel is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* revisited, still the readers can find Naipaul's conceptual similarities also with Virgil's *Aeneid* and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

John J. White in his stimulating book *Mythology in the Modern Novel* classifies mythological fiction into four types:

1. “the complete re-narration of a classical myth,
2. a juxtaposition of sections narrating a myth and others concerning with the contemporary world.
3. a novel, set in the modern world, which contain a pattern of references to mythology running through the work, and
4. a novel in which a mythological motif prefigures a part of the narrative, but without running consistently through the whole narrative.”

One distinctive feature of all these four types is that all of them refer to some traditional mythology and carry with them the dogmatic belief attached to them. However, White's approach is very cautious. From the very outset he distinguishes a mythological work from what is called a mythical one and maintains that a mythical novel is one which is commonly associated with a dynamic quality, a “mana” seldom present in work that he describes as mythological. Being divested of this kind of religious connotation mythology becomes an equivalent of any ordinary allusion and this is further reinforced by his use of the term “pre-figuration” instead of myth. He considers the use of myth as a technique and explains that a myth introduced into a novel can prefigure and anticipate the plot in several possible ways.

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Ordinarily the term “pre-figuration” means “coming before” and it offers a system of comments on modern events. Liberally extending the term he maintains that even these pre-figurations include literary plot “pre-figurations” such as Shakespeare’s plays in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Chekhov’s *The Seagull* in Macdonald Harris’s *Trepleff*. As it is well known, many novels refer to other works and discourses. As a genre, the novel consciously gives space to other works. This is what nowadays goes by the name of intertextuality and this is a feature which Bakhtin appreciated in the novel. Going back to the middle ages; it was often seen, the relationship to another’s word was equally ambiguous and complex. The thin separation between one’s own speech and someone else’s speech were ambiguous, flexible, confusing and often deliberately distorted. Certain texts were constructed like patchwork from others text. The term intertextuality writes Pramod K. Nayar, “refers to the allusions, references to other works, echoes, quotes and citations and even plagiarized sections of a work”. (p.30)

Intertextuality, it seems, has come to stay as a feasible method of influencing not only literature but also other works of art. *Casablanca*, a film by Michael Curtiz is a brilliant example. A reading of the book and a visit to the film make it amply clear that it is not true that works are created by their authors. Umberto Eco feels that “works are created by works, texts are created by texts, altogether they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors. A cult movie is the proof that, as literature comes from literature, cinema comes from cinema”.(p.413) When in an inter-textual collage the author does not know what to do with the story, he puts a stereotype situation in it because he expects that they will work as they have already worked elsewhere. So powerful is the influence of stereotypes that without any reason whatsoever Laszlo, a man with ascetic temper orders something to drink and he changes his choice of drink at least four times. Obviously, Michael Curtiz was unconsciously quoting similar situations in certain other movies. At times *Casablanca* the film is compared with the play *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. It is really interesting to know what T.S. Eliot said about the play. Umberto Eco writes:

He viewed *Hamlet* the result of an unsuccessful fusion of several earlier versions of the story, and so the puzzling ambiguity of the main character was due to the author’s difficulty in putting together different topoi. So both public and critics find *Hamlet* beautiful because it is interesting, but believe it is interesting because it is beautiful. (p.415)

THEORY

Much like Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, *A Bend in the River* is a novel which represents insanity, “compulsive-obsessive behaviour” at a higher level. Salim, Naipaul’s narrator in the present novel gives a clear picture of the African dweller’s past, present and future. They got a president of their clan, of their living standard (a son of a restaurant waitress) and had great expectation of him, it is there they failed. The Big man respected them by addressing “citoyens” and “citoyennes”, taught them how to dream; but he became the reason behind the shattering of their dreams. It made them land on the ground realities and were “again at the beginning”. These people just had started leading a life of peace by getting acquainted with their condition, when the president came into power and introduced bribery. This became fatal for them physically and monetarily, as they were checked, cross-checked and over-checked for the documents. And this practice became rampant. Their business was taken away by the “state trustees” (who were neither experienced nor qualified). Among the entire race only few were benefited, even they had to pay a great price. Ferdinand was one among them who became Commissioner and was targeted by both the parties. During this Mobutu, the president was busy in raising the government status to international level, in self-publicity, and also in raising his status.

The Big man’s back-to-Africa campaign and his deep rooted African nativity should have a genuine African rage in blood, but as per Salim, “The rage of the rebels was like a rage against *metal, machinery, wires*, everything that was not of the forest and Africa”.(p.81) He gave importance to his publicity by putting on his pictures, of different size i.e. small, life-size and more than life-size; with different looks

like, holding “chief’s stick”, army uniform, sometimes with “chief’s leopard-skin cap, short-sleeved jacket and a polka-dotted cravat” at different places such as every shop including the Big-burger shops, the Domain, the roadsides, etc. But at the same time native people were starving, they were made to work at their shop for the “state trustees” (Radicalization). The president believes himself to be Omnipresent (through his pictures), Omniscient (through his intelligence) and Omnipotent (as the provider of the Congo group). And the notion becomes clearer from the public opinion.

That was, of course, before the Big man came along and made us all *citoyens* and *citoyennes* which was all right for a while, until the lies he started making us all live made the people confused and frightened and, when a fetish stronger than his was found, made them decide to put an end to it all and go back again to the beginning. (p.7)

DISCUSSION

1. Conrad’s influence on *A Bend in the River*

1.1 President- Mobutu

Like Mobutu, Conrad’s president of *Heart of Darkness* had similar kind of thought, as he practices human-sacrifice. The Africans who worked for him days together were fed with “half-cooked dough, of a dirty lavender colour, they kept.....for any serious purpose of sustenance.”(p.59) And as per Conrad’s narrator “it didn’t look eatable in the least” but they had it to live and serve, whereas, Marlow and his teammates were “fed out of tin”. These slaves’ land, body and soul were ruled by the president, who remote-controlled Mr Kurtz and Marlow against the Congo culture. In Naipaul’s work Raymond, Indar and Ferdinand did the same for their president. Raymond even wrote a history book for the satisfaction of president’s wish, Indar campaigned for him at polytechnic, and Ferdinand worked against his wish in order to please him. Serafin Roldan-Santiago states that Naipaul has drawn the ideologies and the character: “The president, the Big Man, perhaps the late Mobutu, has many aspiration and dreams” from his *In a Free State*(1971) and *A New King*; and his trip to Africa in his early life. It may be mentioned here that the creation of the character of Mobutu is a pre-figuration and the representation of his ideologies in the novel can be termed as intertextuality.

The Big man planned to build the Domain in the model of Europe in Africa, and it is the key to the problem. He proposed a unique combination of European “progress” along with “back to the African roots” for his dream project “State Domain”. The repetition in the naming of the character as “Mobutu” in both the books i.e. *A New King* and *A Bend in the River* is indeed remarkable. Even the characters in both the books share the same set of belongings, cap and stick. His fascination for putting up his photographs everywhere, the little green book, the radicalization, the presidential domain, “the cabine de luxe”, the streamer, the university, are some of the things that are found in common. Like, Mobutu of *A Bend in the River*, who without understanding the real necessity of the Africans’ desires to create an artificial European city in the heart of the dark jungle. And his preferences and wishes are like that of the end of twentieth century East European leaders, who desired to end opposition by all means. Sometimes, this may result in murder, violence, rape, ethnic cleansing or religious purgation amounting to butchering and torturing the so called infidel. The net consequence of this activity is the negation of real Africa, the Africa of bush and villages, and creation of something similar to what exists in other countries.

1.2 The Condition of the Native

These poor Africans worked day and night for Kurtz and his community rather than their own. In the *Heart of Darkness* the Africans were treated the way the common people of *A Bend in the River* suffered, starved and served their president. During war time the density of their population was decreasing in both the novels, slightly affecting the ruling class. They were the one who lost their kith and kin, belongings

and stature in the war; besides when they start to re-live they were sucked by different ways. The presidents in both the cases tried to come up with their innovation to make them suffer and serve. It can be said that Naipaul being a great mind has thought just like Joseph Conrad. Thus, V.S.Naipaul in his early writing career has shared Conrad's experience, and this makes him same with his predecessor in thought and person. As per Fawzia Mustafa, he knowingly concentrates on a particular literary tradition and "its singular preoccupation with its own canon." Santiago also highlights that, like Conrad, Naipaul was also misunderstood by many young critics who were against the way of representation of colonialism in their respective works.

Not only these, but also the war scenes (life before, after and during war) make its reader visualize it. David N. Elkins names it as primitive forms of science and mythology. The picture of the African culture, their environment and life-style are the study of African myth. Ferdinand out of his cultural instinct goes down on his knees in front of Salim as a gesture of respect and this is what children of bush did to show respect for older persons. It's not all, he also converse less and behaves in a very formal manner with Salim even though he is neither his master nor his teacher nor even a family member. Another character, Metty though treated as a friend and a family member by Salim, never forgets to address him "master" and maintains distance with him. Ferdinand, a Lycee boy without being friendly with Salim (educated business executive) rather prefers the companionship of Metty, the African maid. It is very much clear from the early remarks of Salim that he like his African friends believes in tradition (myth) and never questioned it: "We simply lived; we did what was expected of us, what we had seen the previous generation do."(p.12) It is apt to mention another instance from the same book, when the visitors tried to take snaps of the fishermen but for them it was like they were trying to "rob them of the souls", and this would make them annoyed and murderous. Even these fishermen traditionally believed it to be a good luck to paint large eyes on their bows.

1.3 The African Scenic Beauty

The African scenic beauty exhibited by both the authors in their respective work is at par. Naipaul's present novel shows a greater influence of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* while discussing the scenic beauty of the Congo culture. Conrad has given a vivid description of the culture, the river, the river-side forest, its people and so on; and Naipaul has dealt with similar topics in more realistic manner. Naipaul's Father Huisman, head of Lycee having knack for African cultural past describes the scenic beauty of Africa magnificently. He was a travel loving man, who had a habit of picking up some special goods and preserving them in his Lycee museum; and later sharing his experience with the visitors. Father's that small, hot, dark museum with the mask smells, consisted of different masks and carvings of a hundred or thousand years old. And they were very carefully dated by him. This European teacher narrated the story of the culture, nature and their future while showing it to his visitors. The other spokesperson of nature was Salim, who by seeing the approach of heavy rainfall and departure of Zabeth, the village merchant beautifully narrates the situation. He nicely explains how the dark grey clouds turn to hot silver because of thunder and lightning, how the "unsurfaced streets ran red with mud", and how some of the dwellers enjoy the moment with beer glasses in their hand while the fishermen's net were "buried among the rocks at the edge of the river".(pp.51-2)

Naipaul has deliberately used water hyacinths to give an apt symbol of temporal stagnation. Like the stems of the plant which are clogged with debris, the society and culture are also equally clogged. It is as if time has stopped and gone back to "the primordial stew of the past". The water hyacinths were like dark islands floating on the river for miles and miles together. And in these dark rainy days the dark grey clouds and the dark islands made the distance immeasurable and invisible. This above idea is very beautifully dealt with by Naipaul. These watery plants form an important imagery of the present African culture where there is no hope and no future, only stagnation. The multiple attempts by the villagers at uprooting these water hyacinths prove to be in vain, like the attempts of the new world leaders to bring

the “town into history”. Naipaul writes, it is the “hyacinth-choked” river’s flow which represents the passage of time and “cultural stagnation”, only after Heraclitus. Going through the following lines from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* the influence of Naipaul’s predecessor on him and his novel is made clear.

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair.....(p.24)

Both the authors’ scenic representation is serious and horrifying, rather than humorous. The literal meaning of *Heart of Darkness* may suggest it to be mocking at the African society, but in reality he pities them. His images are fearful, horrifying and inferno-like, like John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*; but his intentions are very pleasing and sympathetic for the natives. This is how he is misunderstood by his readers and critics. Conrad may not be soothing to the sense organs but gives the real picture of the African experience. Unlike Naipaul he has used more deadly and ghastly imageries, but his intentions are clear and friendly like Naipaul. Conrad never considered them as “enemies”, “criminals” or unearthly rather as “shadows of disease and starvation”. This may sound harsh on his part but there is nothing untrue about it. These horrifying African imageries used by Conrad in his novels are not his own rather borrowed from the western imagination which he presented in a new packet. It can be stated that, the “grim sense” of Conrad is very much found in Naipaul’s writing and usage of serious imagery and caricature has proved fruitful for him too. Not only as per subject matter, but also because of usage of ghastly imageries, style and serious tone, both the authors have affinity with each other in their style and approach. *A Bend in the River* is the best example to show the influence of Joseph Conrad and his *Heart of Darkness* over V.S.Naipaul. *A Bend in the River* presents the same serious, sombre tone and use of caricature as that of *Heart of Darkness*.

1.4 European Buddha- Marlow

Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* is described as a “European Buddha without a lotus” by C.P.Sarvan. For him Marlow resembles the idol, Buddha, and like him he claims to be far away from lies. But in the novel at least twice he lied because of the dominance of the superior European Colonialism. Hence, he is European Buddha influenced by European culture. In this novel we find the “European Buddha without a lotus” is sympathizing and showing pity on the conditions of the Africans, who are waiting to die but in the next moment he confesses that he “respected his collars”, being indifferent to the surrounding of death and despair as he is in duty. Once again Marlow had lied to Kurtz’s ladylove about Kurtz’s last words before death. He said that Mr Kurtz took her name as last words of his life. This lie was for a good cause, so that she could spend her remaining life remembering and loving Kurtz, as her love. This gives a clear picture of Marlow – the European Buddha, who changes his words time to time as per the requirements of the situation. Marlow admires Kurtz as a source of inspiration for his co-workers, and in the land of “great demoralisation” “he kept up his appearance.” Even he himself kept up his “appearance” by rightly differentiating appearance from reality, assumption from fact, and illusion from truth, like a wise man – European Buddha. Marlow sticks to his principle of unbiased judgment which prevails throughout the novel.

Mario Curreli while agreeing with C.P.Sarvan addresses Marlow as “oracular Gautama Buddha”, who preaches his fire sermon (borrowed the idea from T.S.Eliot) to his readers nothing more than a voice as it’s the heart of darkest Africa. And this immense darkness hanging over the river Thames makes Marlow look worn out and hollow. The deep dark African jungle does not leave anyone without creating hollowness within them. Marlow, the European Gautama Buddha also becomes the member of the hollow world. Even Garrett Stewart feels the plot of the *Heart of Darkness* to be partially “a political autopsy of imperialist myths.” He considers usage of lies as imperialist myth which Conrad uses to rule over.

Marlow, the most important character of Conrad is also compared with the mythical Ulysses and the Ancient Mariner by Curreli. For him Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* is no less than Lord Jim and other anonymous captains of *The Secret Sharer* and *The Shadow-Line*; who even could not manage completely to explain about the ordeals of their adventures to themselves. The experience and the difficulties of their young days could not be resisted without continual reference being given. This we find clearly in the works of Conrad, where his mythical heroes share their feelings and adventurous experience. Conrad's narrator, Marlow shares his adventurous journey and its ordeals with his readers. And the author's ability of hybridization of different genres is also reflected through his matured narrator in the *Heart of Darkness*, who simultaneously admires and condemns the potentials of Kurtz. *Heart of Darkness* is like the waiting-room of hell for Marlow, where he experiences isolation and inability to communicate in the darkest forest of Africa. The way to this forest, as well the return journey gave him hellish experience. Like the other heroes of myth, he shared his ghastly, deadly and inferno-like experience impulsively. In his narration Marlow navigates the African coast like Dante's Ulysses, "sempreacquistando dal latomancio" which means moving towards left. In the narration Marlow uses contrastive imageries to navigate through the "stream of death in life", whose banks and waters were "rotting into mud" and "thickened into slime". These imageries give a picture of "a weary pilgrimage" which "almost hints for nightmares". Dante says, "I turned and descended to the *left*" after witnessing the devil of violence, greed and evil desire, which Marlow too experienced at the end. And it was "gloomy circle of some Inferno" for him. Both Dante's Ulysses and Conrad's Marlow navigate towards left and on their journey they meet a lot of ordeals which was like the experience of hell's waiting-room. This inferno-like adventure was faced by many other mythical figures including the two mentioned above. In fact these experiences of theirs helped them to be the part of the myth.

1.5 Gold and Ivory

Gold and ivory business re-entered the African market during Mobutu, as the president, and it was going back to old days of Africa where butchering, slaughtering and sacrificing of animals and human beings were practiced. The president brought the old Africa for its dwellers i.e. people and animals. Human race for the sake of money and luxurious life style poached the elephants for ivory. Mahesh of *A Bend in the River* like a kid gulped the "poisoned sweets" which was offered to him, but he was well aware that "the sweets were poisoned". Mahesh's changed life style was reflected in his food habits, living style, friend circle, etc. The ivory and gold business proved fatal, when his age-old friend Salim got separated, he had to lie, and had to escape from others in the day light. Though Salim was not in favour of this ivory and gold transaction at the beginning, he also got addicted and met the same fate as that of Mahesh. When the narrator got into the addiction, he got stuck up with the concept of "Burying ivory" which he could not accept so very easily. He himself did the same to have a smooth business. "Ivory" the precious object needs to be buried which has been used for generations for carving decorative objects and jewelleryes. "What age were we living in?" is the question of Salim. He could not accept it even though he is involved. For earning better livelihood human beings have turned inhuman, they are butchering other living creatures and burying the ivory deep down the earth. Salim knowing the risk involved in dealing with ivory, "brought", "stored", "sold" and "shipped on" only for percentage.

Sir Vidia not only used ivory and gold notions in his novel but also his personal boyhood fantasy of the idea "France in Africa" made him choose the "Ivory Coast" in *A Bend in the River*. Fawzia Mustafa mentions that the boyhood fantasy of Naipaul, which he acknowledged is "closely parallel to Conrad's" and Conrad had incorporated it through Marlow's narrative at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*. Naipaul's introduction of fantasy in the novel makes him fantasize Africa, Africans and their soothing life style. He has tried its best to give it a realistic approach in his work. The author has also discussed widely about his and Joseph Conrad's difficult relationship in his essay *Conrad's Darkness*, where he openly accepts the great influence of Conrad on him. Conrad's ideas have not only motivated Naipaul for writing

fictions but also non-fictions, to which he shifted in the later phase of his career. He even acknowledges his indebtedness to Conrad and we can find a mention to it by NamrataRathoreMahanta. Naipaul writes,

Conrad's value to me is that he is someone who sixty to seventy years ago meditated on my world, a world I recognize today. I feel this about no other writer of the century.(p.60)

Joseph Conrad deals mostly with gold and ivory in *Heart of Darkness*, in fact that is the central ideology of the novel around which the characters and the plot revolve. The westerners have come to Africa only in search of gold and ivory, and slaves. Africans were made to work for them in amassing these expensive items and remained themselves deprived of small doses of happiness. They were being fooled by their masters as they made them carry (Africans') their own goods to Europe, the masters' land. The president and his peoples' need was gold and ivory only, they came to Africa with a single motto of "staying", "amassing" and "carrying" these valuables to "their land". Kurtz was one of their most successful masters as he could win the hearts of Africans and also make his land richer with "gold" and "ivory". This made his competitors feel jealous of him, and he achieved the title of "ivory-obsessed automata".

The word "ivory" and the possession of it is the idea to which these ruling class people can "bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to". According to Francis B. Singh, in *Heart of Darkness* the narrator "uses the rhetoric of religion to justify colonialism". He also highlights how Marlow compares his group mates with the pilgrims and how the word "ivory" plays the role of the Ultimate Destination for them. Like a thousand of "faithless pilgrims" they wandered place to place with their "long staves in their hands" in search of Ultimate truth – ivory. The expression "faithless pilgrims" is used by Conrad. After searching God for years at every nook and corner of the world they were not successful in reaching their Ultimate Destination. And unlike them these white agents of the Belgian trading Company which is operating in the Congo are in search of materialistic pleasure, accomplishment of which is also equally painful. Finally, "The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed."(p.33) Their intention was only for collecting, storing and carrying the valuable to their native place, thereby fulfilling their wishes.

Marlow saw these white men, each of them holding a stick in their hands strolling aimlessly in the sunshine, around the Central Station like a group of "faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence". And they went on uttering the word ivory again and again, sometimes in a whispering tone and at times with a loud pitch, as if they were chanting prayers to please their ivory god. Marlow believes, even though the surrounding is neither attractive nor soothing, they get enchanted by the end product (Ultimate Destination). For the sake of this they passed through all the testing – hunger, roofless, thorny path; only to meet the Ultimate Truth. The narrator has used the term "pilgrims" ironically after witnessing the White agents' greediness. They unlike the pilgrims were chanting the word "ivory" in different style only to get their selfish, greedy instinct fulfilled. Like the real pilgrims, these spiritually empty agents have also chosen difficult path to achieve their destination i.e. through the land, and at times the watery route of deep dark Africa. They preferred to stay and deal with the Savage Africans, who for them belonged to the slave class. The situation for them was like, "inside a rotten fence", which they only preferred for ivory. And this hunger of theirs compelled Marlow to describe the manager's spy as "papier – mache Mephistopheles" which means a man with genuinely devilish characteristic but is hollow from within. Kurtz once – civilized European individual became the colonial agent in the Congo region. In the dark African jungle once he is stripped of his artificial European sophistication, he becomes "an ivory-obsessed automata", who had adopted the ghastly tribal customs and was found to be one of them. Kurtz was the name quoted by his officers for getting into the Congo culture, for amassing the ivory in larger quantity and transporting it to his native place. He is a man completely ruled by his will and desire for ivory. He can also change his social identification to bring profit to his employers and keep the ivory flowing. In order to satiate his desire he is neither concerned for the Congo clan nor the women of the same clan who were physically related to him, and also he had little concern for the Europeans around

him. When he died he was found horrifyingly “serene”, “quite”, “satisfied” with his deed (possession of a huge amount of ivory). It would not be wrong, if we call Kurtz the priest for the god ivory, as the other colonial agents are the pilgrims for the narrator.

Marlow, like Conrad feels colonialism in religion and uses the religious terms like “belief”, “worship”, “sacrifice”, “pilgrims” and so on to legitimize his idea. Though this idea of praying for and achievement of ivory is not present in Conrad’s remark, still the significance of the fact that Marlow saw, felt and spoke on behalf of Conrad does not lose its intensity. It can be concluded that Marlow visualized and presented what Conrad just imagined.

1.6 Marlow, Kurtz – Salim, Mahesh

Gold and ivory have the same significance in both the novels may it be *A Bend in the River* or *Heart of Darkness*. Similar, is the mind-set of the non-native people in the novel i.e. greedy, selfish and determined. Their determination to accomplish their wish of possessing gold and ivory is found in both the cases. Naipaul’s Salim, Mahesh and other traders behaved similarly as that of Conrad’s Marlow, Kurtz and other Western agents. Neither have they thought of the Africans nor about the nature and its gifts. They as Marlow’s “pilgrims” have done everything to accomplish their desire, and for them there is no difference between day and night, summer and winter. Trading in gold and ivory also made their friends their foes, like the cordial relationship of Mahesh and Salim turning to that of strangers; Kurtz and other officers’ respectable relationship yielded place to jealousy. After knowing everything they wanted to be ignorant, and were busy in fulfilling their desires. And this desire of ivory created hollowness within and outside the White agents. Mario Curreli rightly points out that there is a lot of resemblance of Conradian passages with *The Waste land* of T.S.Eliot by the use of the expression “hollow places” for Africa, where these Westerners moved in search of ivory enlightenment. The word “hollow” is abundantly used with reference to the African culture and its dwellers. Kurtz is considered “hollow at the core” of his heart, for which his last whispers “echoed loudly within him”. This hollowness is created out of greed and hunger for power and ivory. Marlow being a member of the same team his face appeared “worn, hollow”. He even describes the brick-maker, manager’s spy as a genuine devil being “hollow” from within by entitling him as “papier – mache Mephistopheles”. When the word ivory rang in the air (for these agents), they out of joy went for “hollow claps”. Greed for ivory created a “hollow” environment not for its natives, but also for these foreigners who wanted to rule over them. The desire for which could not be suppressed and it ultimately became the cause of their downfall from the very level of what can be called humane.

2. Influence of Virgil’s Aeneid

V.S.Naipaul’s intertextual engagements are not only found with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, but conceptual similarities are also found with Virgil’s *Aeneid* and William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Salim, the narrator for Naipaul should have been a more careful interpreter of the inscriptions and of woman psychology. Only he could have understood the real mentality of the ruler and his short span ladylove Yvette. He would have never been a failure in both the cases. The inscription on the ruined granite monument was “Misericoriam populorum et foederum” (p.29) in Latin which Salim interpreted as the gods approval for the mixing of the continents and the peoples, but he was hopeful of what Fausto Ciompi opined. Ciompi comments that even though Salim was unnerved by the sight of the ruined monument outside the dock gates which was “defaced” and “left to rust”. With other colonial statues and monuments, he kept his hope enlightened with his sentiments. In the early days of his arrival in Africa he was given a clear picture of the past, present and also of the future through the Latin tag and to some extent by Nazruddin. But his sentiments made him hopeful and this prefigures his other mistake of getting into illusionary relationship with Yvette. And this has an intertextual relationship with Book-IV of the *Aeneid*, where Dido, the queen of Carthage perished as her similar desire was strongly disapproved by god.

Salim commits a mistake by getting involved with Yvette; the young, beautiful, captivating and self-centered lady. She trapped him in their very first meeting and started satisfying her and Salim's physical needs. Gradually it became his habit. Yvette came regularly to Salim's place after a necessary isolation; would immediately spread herself on the bed without a word, and after meeting her needs next moment she would get ready to return to her husband. Understanding the situation, though Salim's sentiment again makes him hopeful about their relationship, but "god emphatically do not approve" their relationship because of infidelity. The lady being wife to president's close man, Raymond got fascinated by a person who just owns a shop. She is a fine example of glorifying his life and the reason of Salim's downfall. On the other hand, Dido - the queen of Carthage and protagonist of *Aeneid* like Yvette neglected her royal duty and abandoned her reputation as a woman for Aeneas. Publius Vergilius Maro popular as Virgil, has showcased his artistic talent in understanding and sympathizing with Dido's characterization, who gave up his life as a "self-inflicted wound". To get her needs fulfilled she called on the destruction of the Roman State, which even horrified Aeneas, who lacked impulsiveness. In this way she sets a fine example of her ability both to glorify Roman Empire and to sympathize with the victims of its destiny. Naipaul got fascinated with Virgil's Dido of Book IV and portrayed Yvette with the same traits.

Naipaul's Yvette had become a physical habit of Salim. So, he was only worried of a single thing:

I looked only to see whether the life I had with Yvette was threatened or was going to go on.(p.232)

For Salim the publication of president's book which was prepared by Raymond, and about which everyone was running to and fro, never mattered as his only concern for the period was Yvette and her wishes. But gradually her interest on Salim also lost as it happened prior in the novel, in case of Indar and her husband. Salim being well acquainted with her behaviour got attracted by her looks and rich stature. Finally, he had to give up his love because of gods' repeated commands – as he was leading towards bankruptcy, was also imprisoned and at last had to leave the land where he had spent his best part of life. Similarly, Aeneas fell in love with and deserted Dido, the Carthage with the wish of god, as gods had sent him to her court, forced her to fall in love with him, and made him leave her. Naipaul's Salim and Yvette, and Virgil's Aeneas and Dido's situation is more or less of the same kind.

Not only Naipaul has borrowed ideas from Virgil's *Aeneid* Bk-IV, also Conrad's inclination towards Virgil's same book is reflected in *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's representation of hellish experience of *Heart of Darkness* is a memorable part of the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Dante's *Inferno*, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. Even Eliot's description of Aeneas is indeed appropriate. He enters the underworld close to Lake Avernus through a cave. The lake commonly associated with hell, which was located between Cumae and Naples; and deserted by birds and beasts because of its ghastly, sulphurous outpourings. In Book- IV Virgil philosophizes life with his personal philosophy. For him Anchises explains the process of life and death to Aeneas while he stood shocked by visualizing the long queue of Roman souls waiting for reincarnation. He speaks of second trial which is necessary for all to achieve purgation and there after they are offered with the waters of forgetfulness from the river Lethe before their rebirth. And it is required as the man loses its original sanctity once they get bonded with emotions and passions; the soul gets purified only by passing through hell after death.

Conrad even does the same in his novel, like Jesus Christ who preached through parables to his disciples. Even though he wanted his readers to visualize the facts of his story, at the same time his intention was to reveal the truth which lies beneath. His protagonist, Kurtz symbolizes the "repentant sinner", who repents of his lifelong sins in his death bed. Marlow, the narrator and spokesperson of Conrad symbolizes the thoughtful observer of human race and thoughtful student of human temperament. The two women knitting black wool in a sluggish manner were like the guards of the door of darkness. And the ivory stands for White men's greed and it compels them to pass through the hellish experience. Conrad has used many ghastly and inferno- like imageries to communicate with his readers about life, death and life-

after-death. He with the help of parables tries to teach his readers the truth of life. In describing the condition of the tribes, Conrad has used deadly imageries and it makes Marlow feel this Africa to be inferno. On one hand, the image of starved and diseased natives made to work days together. And some of the men chained down together with iron collar round their neck give the picture of hell, which is necessary as per Virgil to undergo purgation.

Dante's voyager explores the depths of inferno after descending into it with much laborious effort. He looks down the farthest abyss which is "dark, profound, and cloudy". Professor Maud Bodkin citing the views of Eliot, compares this image of inferno with the growth of European Civilization i.e. the European experience. In other words, Virgil's sixth book conveys a similar emotion to that of Dante's *Inferno* and cavern of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. For Dante the lowest region of hell was a "the dismal hole", and it leads through "rocky steps". Though the place is covered with ice, the skin of the sorrowful dwellers appears dark inflamed; their eyelids are frozen together with tears of pain and suffering, and their teeth sound like storks out of the same (pain and chilled environment). The pilgrims' appearance is ghastly even though they are living, and they tremble with the external chilling temperature. Dante by visualizing the image acknowledges that he himself trembles, and that trembling will always come once you go near the "frozen pools". The appearance of hell and its dwellers in the novel is so ghastly, horrifying, deadly and inferno-like that even the image of hellish experience seems trivial. In earlier passages the reddish sinister glow of fire made us get the experience of hell, but here Dante gives the same experience though the chill of ice. Similarly, memorable expressions of hell presented by him are like that of Virgil and Milton, who depicted the hellish experience through the age old idea of "hell of fire". For Dante Alighieri only fire cannot be a medium for purgation, ice too can lead the path. Maud Bodkin raises a question that in Coleridge's dream where the ice filled caves "stood in miraculous contrast to" the flora and fauna of the gardens, and the beautiful sun lights spreading the happiness; in Dante deadly and ghastly ice is the culmination for all. This influenced the dreamer by the concept of farthest retreat from love and life while choosing the symbol. The way, Bodkin puts forth her ideology about the choice of the symbol "ice" for hell by Dante, is very convincing. In the Indian epic *The Mahabharata* similar idea is also found. And in *Bhagabata* the contrasting idea that of Virgil and Milton i.e. fire symbolizing hell is clearly depicted.

3. Influence of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

G.Wilson Knight writes in *The Crown of life*,

A myth of creation woven from his total work by the most universal of poets is likely to show correspondences with other well-authenticated results of the racial imagination.(p.226)

The racial imagination what is mentioned earlier is borrowed by Naipaul from Conrad, is actually an age old idea reflected in *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare with the help of "Caliban – the devil" of his play. Caliban, the black and offspring of a witch remains uncorrupted by civilization. He poses a strange amalgamation of characteristics like poetic with absurdity, "the pathetic and the savagely evil". He unlike other characters like Stephano and Trinculo sang the songs of natural African beauty, but like them he also deserted the original simplicity of the Prospero's creation – the magical island. Once he is there he was forced to choose between Prospero's spiritualistic and his animal instinct. It is then after he is treated as a labourer by the white men. The racial discrimination what we find in *A Bend in the River* and *Heart of Darkness* is also visible in *The Tempest*. Canibal in his poems sings of the African culture and its surroundings like that the above stated authors.

"Ferdinand" of Naipaul's *A Bend in the River* smacks of a pre-figuration borrowed from *The Tempest* of Shakespeare. Like Shakespeare's, Naipaul's Ferdinand is also a merry-going and lover's boy, who completed his studies from Lycee and then through scholarship joined the polytechnic. Where Ferdinand of *The Tempest* was a reason for the happy ending of the novel, Ferdinand of *A Bend in the River* helped

Salim to move out of Africa in its chaotic situation; even though he was one of the president's men, and was under a tremendous pressure from both the parties. Shakespearian Ferdinand, being son to the worst enemy of his beloved, restores the conflict and formed a "brave new world" with his love and enriched experience. And was the cause of a happy ending for *The Tempest*. Naipaulian Ferdinand was highly ambitious and a fun-loving guy of Lycee, who even being indulged in a theft of a document from Father Huismans' office; proved to be the cause of well-being restoration at the end. The use of the name "Ferdinand" in Naipaulian novel pre-figured and made the vision clear for its readers from the beginning.

CONCLUSION

A Bend in the River seems to be an amalgamation of modernity and tradition with the influence of the age old concepts, characters, and authors. Starting from Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare to Conrad; Naipaul has picked up the best of all times and proved the mythical and the traditional work to be the favourite of all times through his creative work. Ignorance of the reader about these references in no way reduces the impact of these works so as to make them create the impression of organic wholes. The knowledge that every work of art has a predecessor and the idea that works born out of other works of art is only too common a theme in the contemporary world of art.

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