

## Nostalgia: An effect of tribal feuds with reference to V.S. Naipaul's "A bend in the river"

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### Abstract

"Tribal Feuds" defined as the recurrent quarrel and fighting between the ethnic groups, it could mostly happen when these people get offended by the others. In Naipaul's "A Bend in the River", tribal feuds were the effect of the growing European culturalism in Africa. Salim, in his journey experienced the tribal feuds in the surroundings and left with nostalgic sense. The ruins of the past remained in him like the ruins of the society. Salim as well as the other expatriates were the victims of the ethnic fight. The unfavorable present situation made him think of his past, he had once enjoyed. He thought that the olden society had been his utopian society when compared to his present day society. This article expresses the nostalgic feelings of the African society, especially Salim's longing of his past as the tribal feuds evoked hard situation to live within the society happily.

**Keywords:** tribal feuds, nostalgia, expatriatism, life of diaspora, tribe, survival, politics, European culture, African society

### Introduction

Africa was always been the country which had the problems within its various tribe. The term 'Tribe' referred to the certain ethnic groups in a country. In ethnic country like Africa tribal feuds and bloodshed were the common one. As its ethnicity the feuds and fighting were not the inborn quality of human. The Anthropological studies stated that killing others was not the nature of human in the past days. The practice of killing others came only when the people felt the bond between their own groups and started to think the difference between the words 'US' and 'THEM'. It became more valiant when European colonial powers invaded in these ethnic groups trying to enslave them and pushing them onto others' land in 1500 A.D.

Even after the independence Africa could not escape from the European touch. Little by little European cultures started to occupy the tradition of Africa. It was clearly exposed in the novel "A Bend in the River" that politics was the main reason for the changes. The use of French in many official places, the creation of 'New Domain' and the new education system were all the signs of European culture. Even the President of Africa, the lover of his native language used French words in his speeches. All this changes caused the feuds and violence. The civilization of Africa was shattered due to the continual tribal feuds. The people lived in the horror. They tried to escape from the horrific society but it led them to have nostalgic emotions. The settlers of Africa were the affected ones than the native Africans. Even if they were born in Africa could not be considered as the native Africans. The survival of the settled foreigners was dangerous and difficult as compared with the natives.

As humanity familiarized itself with survive in the most dangerous and insecure situation, it could bear the struggles to live. The people of Diaspora also equipped their selves with the tools live in the African society. They could survive physically but the mental struggle within their mind made it hard to exist. They had inner conflict and they could choose the options as per their desire like the other native Africans.

Like the natives of Africa the diasporic people could not have official support of the government. They were support less in Africa. This state raised their conflict to survive in the society and it was hard to live with the peaceful mind.

The men of Diaspora thus tried to cope with the violated society. Most of the settled men were belonged to the business field both with the small scale and large scale. Salim, who had bought a shop from Nazruddin, a well experienced business man. Salim found it difficult to maintain the business as the area was nearly destroyed and people in that area moved to somewhere else. The bush was used to be the main area before the tribal war. The only remained thing was that the ruins of the bush. This was like the ancient Roman buildings and their fatal destruction. And they could not be replaced.

*"Wondrous is this wall-stone; broken by fate, the castles have decayed; the work of giants is crumbling."*

The above line was extracted from an Anglo-Saxon poem of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The line clearly exposed the inability of Anglo-Saxons' to built the ruins of Roman city. The Anglo-Saxons did not have the architectural skill to repair the Roman walls and castles, thus they built the new ones instead. The withdrawal of the Empire caused the changes in the civilization; they had to recreate everything. This situation was mostly related with the work "A Bend in the River". The equation of the British Empire, which once ruled the Third World nations with ancient Rome was taken for granted. It had the civilizing mission. The withdrawal of the Roman Empire made lacked the strength that they were all devoid of the skills which made civilization possible. Consider for instance what happened when the colonial rule was withdrawn from Africa; the civilization mission was shattered.

The bush, which was once a nice place, was ruined by the tribal wars. And it could not be replaced. Naipaul's sentiment of anti-pastoral could be understandable that the interior of the bush was not the kind of place in which a Wordsworth or a Thoreau could find a refuge from the glamour violence. "The bush" as in his "A Bend in the River" represented as:

*“muffed the sound of murder, and the muddy rivers and lakes washed the blood away.”(60)* The settlers in “A Bend in the River” were horrified at the closeness of the bush. The bush threatened to over-run the feeble attempts of man to build the highway, rock garden and the floodlit hotel. These were all the effect of tribal fighting. The bush could not be restored as it was once the peaceful place for peoples and they lived an ordinary domestic life. The nostalgic description of the bush also provoked the people’s longing for the good life. The memories of the people could not be restored as same as the bush that they had to live in terror and unhealed state. Salim tried as hard as he could to stay in that African society; he nearly achieved it. He refreshed himself with remembering his olden days. In his childhood days he used to hear stories from the old men Mustafa, a reputed family member. His family was big and lived at the east coast of Africa. They had their separate family servants who were all used to live near their houses. The servants were like slaves and sound of the term ‘slave’ reminded him of the stories from “The Arabian Nights”. His reference of stories from Arabian Nights clearly expressed his well settled life at the east coast that his family had the servant family and he got all the good things which a child could get in his young age. The friendship of Salim and Indar was one of his beautiful memories. They used to play squash in Indar’s home and enjoying the weekends. Salim enjoyed as much as he could do in his family surroundings. His life at the coast was a happy one but he wanted to have his own life; he moved to the centre. His staying in the centre town was the contradiction of his childhood life. Naipaul’s description of Salim’s past was like a fairy tale and his life in the town, a horrific tale which was undesired to be enjoyed. This dissimilarity encouraged the nostalgic feel in his mind. The want of Salim was the balanced olden days. This choosing of being neutral to the feuds between the liberation army and the rebellion people was sign of his peace searching soul. It was a normal one in the society to choose the desired side but it was difficult when the person found that the both the sides were undesired one. The creation of ‘The Domain’ seemed to satisfy his longing for the ‘Utopian’ like society. The domain was the new hope for many natives of Africa. And it could not help the settlers of Africa as they could not be the part of native Africa. His want of his past was the dream of many Africans, the natives as well as the settlers. The dream remained only a dream. Naipaul was a true visionary; he had observed the society as it was. The longing for the past would be cleared only through the blissful present. If the people satisfied with their life there was no need to go back. The people of Africa in “A Bend in the River” always would have the continual tribal fights and the nostalgic feel was a settled one.

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