

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Every work of arts must have a theme, because theme is the most important element in it. It is stated that theme is ‘the message or moral implicit in any work of art’ or ‘the central and dominating idea in a literary work’ (Shaw, 1972: 378).

In this analysis, I would like to reveal the theme of V.S. Naipaul’s A Bend in the River through the social conflicts. Having found some sources, I find out that social conflict is the opposition of two individuals’ or groups’ ideologies to gain the right one. The conflict itself is ‘the opposition of persons or forces upon which the action depends in drama and fiction’ (Shaw, 1972: 91). Shaw has divided conflict into three types, one of which is social conflict. In Dictionary of Literary Terms, social conflict is defined as ‘a struggle between man and man’ (Shaw, 1972: 91). In some cases, social conflict does not emerge between two individuals only. It can emerge within a society with many groups in it. Different opinions or even ideologies might be the source of the problem that will arouse social conflict. According to Marxist-based social theory, social conflict emerges when ‘individuals and groups (social classes) within society have

differing amounts of material and non-material resources (the wealthy vs. the poor) and that the more powerful groups use their power in order to exploit groups with less power.’ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social-conflict_theory> In other words, social conflict is related to power. The more powerful group will be the ruler and the less powerful will be the suppressed.

A Bend in the River is a novel written by V.S. Naipaul, ‘a world writer of Indian descent whose works are concerned with the issues of freedom and decolonized world.’ <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V. S. Naipaul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V._S._Naipaul)> It tells about a newly independent African nation with its conflicts in finding their voice and identity. The nation has got their independence, yet there are still traces of colonization, as some critics argue that ‘colonialism is over when in fact most of the nations involved are still culturally and economically subordinated to the rich industrial states... even though they are technically independent.’ <<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/anglophone/postcolonial.html>> The Africans, who have been colonized over the years by the Europeans, will reclaim what should be their rights. And there is only their feeling of anger that is retained during the colonization. Having got the status as an independent nation, the Africans warn the Europeans that their sovereignty is over. Their great anger of the oppression in colonial time bursts into violence after the Independence Day.

In conveying the theme through social conflicts, postcolonial approach is suitable to be used as extrinsic approach in the novel. Post-colonialism itself ‘deals with many issues for societies that have undergone colonialism’ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcolonial_theory> Therefore, I would like to use

Frantz Fanon's theory of The Wretched of the Earth, which is 'the ancestry of postcolonial criticism' (Barry, 2002: 193).

A Bend in the River deals with the issue of decolonization, that is 'the process by which a colony gains its independence from a colonial power, a process opposite to colonization' <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decolonization>> Colonial power is built by the colonizer to indoctrinate the natives so that they believe superiority is only owned by white people. Politically, colonial power is built in the government so that the natives believe that in the Europeans' hand, their nation will be brought to the same level with the whites'. And culturally, colonial power also succeeds in making the natives see that all of the whites' values are the best; for instance, in arts. But finally, this colonial power has made the natives realize that they have felt oppressions over the years because they have to lose their freedom in having their national identity. Gaining the freedom is the main reason for them to free themselves from being suppressed and feeling inferior.

Fanon points out that 'madness is one of the means man has of losing his freedom' <<http://www.nu.ac.za/CCS/>> A nation that has been suppressed for a long time without any resistance will reclaim their history with the feeling of anger because of losing its freedom as well as finding its identity. Having been colonized for a long time, Africans have lost their voice and their identity. In fact, identity is required for every independent nation to be admitted by other nations. Yet, the colonizer feels that oppression during the colonial time is not enough. Indirectly, they still colonize their ex-colonized nation by dominating the region and even the government itself. However, it is necessary for the oppressed to be

free from the oppressor; not only technically, but also economically and culturally.

Statement of the Problems

The problems that I would like to analyze are:

1. What is the theme of V.S. Naipaul's A Bend in the River?
2. How do the social conflicts help in revealing the theme?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To show the theme of V.S. Naipaul's A Bend in the River.
2. To show the author's way in presenting the theme through the social conflicts.

Method of Research

In this thesis, I use the method of library research. First, I read A Bend in the River by V.S. Naipaul as the primary text. Next, through the reference books and internet websites I obtain more relevant information about the novel. In analyzing the novel, post colonialism is used as the approach so that the theme can be revealed clearly. Finally, from the data and the information obtained, I analyze the novel and conclude my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

I divide this thesis into three chapters. In Chapter One, the Introduction consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two, I present the analysis of the theme through social conflicts of A Bend in the River by V.S. Naipaul. Chapter Three contains the conclusion of what has been discussed in the previous chapter. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and Appendices. The Appendices contains a synopsis of A Bend in the River and the biography of V.S Naipaul.