❚ Article ❚

A Study of Division and Communal Conflict in Africa and South Asia

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Abstract

British colonizers adopted a policy of "divide and rule" to secure colonial dominance in Africa and South Asia, and exploiting the existing communal divisions aided the colonizers in doing so. Mistrust and communal conflicts among people in both Africa and South Asia destabilized social harmony, affording colonial rulers rich opportunities to enhance their dominance. Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* reveal the multifarious internal communal conflicts among people in former British colonies in East Africa, West Africa, and South Asia, respectively, and capture how such conflicts paved the way for British colonial dominance. This paper seeks to explore how these three novels are in dialog with one another in their portrayal of the internal conflicts and lack of unity among the peoples of Africa and South Asia during the colonial era that the British colonizers manipulated to tighten their colonial stranglehold.

❚ *Keywords* : divide and rule, communal division, Africa, South Asia, colonialism

Introduction

The former British colonies in East Africa, West Africa, and South Asia had different colonial experiences, and even within the countries of these regions, the experiences vary. Nevertheless, despite all such differences, the search for common experiences to illuminate the British colonial enterprise from a larger and more comprehensive perspective

is valuable in helping the former British colonies in these regions to relate to one another's experiences. As such a comparative inspection will also help those nations—who are free now—to look back at their past and draw lessons from their mistakes, this is precisely why it is important to examine how the "divide and rule" policy of the British colonial rulers functioned successfully in two different geographical contexts, although many decades have passed since the end of colonial rule. Not only did the British colonial "divide and rule" policy deliberately exploit the locally-rooted rivalries among different groups, but these rivalries were in fact enforced and perpetuated to foment animosity among the colonized people so as to forestall them from unifying against the colonial regime. As a result, understanding the mechanism of the "divide and rule" policy will afford these nations a chance to introspect, and make them aware of the significance of unity in times of national crisis. This is precisely why, even in today's context, a careful examination of how the "divided and rule" policy manipulated internal communal conflicts is not only relevant, but also necessary.

Morrock defines the "divide and rule" policy as a "conscious effort of an imperialist power to create and/or turn to its own advantage the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, tribal, or religious differences within the population of a subjugated colony" (1973, p. 129). Scholars agree that British colonial rulers implemented the "divide and rule" policy in Africa and South Asia in order to establish their colonial enterprise on solid ground. Christopher argues that the British colonizers "divided and redivided [African] populations into discrete groups, based on linguistics, religion, ethnicity, and skin color;" and "adopted a policy of 'divide and rule' allied to territorial separation" (1988, p. 233). Like the British colonies in East and West Africa, South Asia was also a victim of the "divide and rule" policy, as Morrock claims that "nowhere was the principle of "divide and rule" put to use on a larger scale than in India" (1973, p. 143). In Farooqui's opinion, the view is "substantially correct" that "colonial rule in India was based upon the strategy of 'divide and rule'" (2015, p. 49). Tharoor argues that the British colonial rulers had "a partic-

ular talent for creating and exaggerating particularist identities and drawing ethnically-based administrative lines in all their colonies" (2017, p. 102).

It is important to note that East Africa, West Africa, and South Asia had different pasts, with different socio-cultural backgrounds and different encounters with colonialism; therefore, the way British colonial enterprise worked in these regions must not have been exactly the same. However, since British colonizers could implement the "divide and rule" policy in these regions with significant success, it is worth identifying how that was possible in two different geographical and geopolitical contexts. Morrock identifies four basic tactics of a "divide and rule" policy, two of which are "the augmentation of existing [communal] differences" and "the channeling or exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonial power" (1973, p. 130). This is exactly what the selected novels reveal. All three, published in 1964 and 1965, were among the earliest novels written in English in their respective regions to explore how the "divide and rule" policy augmented the existing communal differences, which warrants a parallel examination of these three significant novels.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965) and Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) portray how conflict over territorial control between two villages and personal rivalry among community leaders severely damaged communal harmony in Africa, giving the colonizers an easy chance to infiltrate into the heart of Africa. The novels also shed light on the differences in religious beliefs that fed communal conflict in East and West Africa. Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) shows how the Hindu-Muslim conflict severely damaged communal solidarity in the Indian subcontinent, allowing British colonial rulers to play the Hindus and Muslims off against each other. The novel also sheds light on the lack of unity between the two major strands of the independence movement: One was the Gandhi-led nonviolent non-cooperation movement, and the other was the revolutionary terrorist movement.

The implementation of the "divide and rule" policy in East Africa,

West Africa, and South Asia would have been more challenging for British colonizers if there had been strong communal unity among the colonized people. However, one must not use the pre-existing communal divisions as an excuse to downplay the atrocities of the British colonial enterprise or to overlook the fact that the augmentation of communal differences and conflicts was their "deliberate strategy" (Tharoor, 2017, p. 111). There is no denying that the colonizers deliberately manufactured division among the people they colonized, and it would be pernicious to hold that the pre-existing communal differences were the only reason the British colonial administration was able to implement the "divide and rule" policy successfully. However, it would also be unwise to completely ignore the fact that these regions were also struggling with pre-existing social, cultural, religious, and political conflicts that had disrupted communal unity, which the colonizers shrewdly exploited. The colonial administrators insinuated themselves among the natives and further exacerbated the communal, religious, and ethnic differences between groups through institutionally imposed discrimination to further weaken communal harmony and perpetuate colonial rule. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, and Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* explore these issues in the context of East Africa, West Africa, and South Asia, respectively.

The River Between: Communal Division in East Africa

The River Between portrays the lives of people along the Kameno and Makuyu Ridges of Kenya during the early days of British colonization. The Honia River physically divides the two ridges, but it unites the people as well since their lives are dependent on it. However, their mutual dependence on the river does not make them natural allies. Communal and religious differences play a vital role in determining the relationships among the people of these two ridges. Controversial social customs, including female genital mutilation, are questioned within each tribe itself, creating divisions between Kameno and Makuyu. Moreover,

personal jealousy and rivalries among communal leaders further divide the people of these two villages.

The novel makes it clear that the religious and cultural differences among the people of Makuyu and Kameno were present even before the arrival of the colonizers and the introduction of Christianity to the ridges. Williams claims that "geographical separation" along with the "historical rivalry and growing contemporary antagonism between the ridges of Kameno and Makuyu" is central to the novel's organization (1999, p. 23). He also points out that "pairs of opposites," which include "communities, cultures, groups, individuals, genders, spiritual beliefs" and politics, are responsible for the lack of unity among the people of Makuyu and Kameno (Williams, 1999, p. 23). *The River Between* portrays how controversial cultural practices such as female genital mutilation divide the people, particularly the women, of the two ridges. Even though FGM is an integral part of Gikuyu culture as an adolescent initiation rite for women, the health risk associated with this process—one of many issues that make FGM highly controversial—is crucial to why even the people of the ridges question the necessity of this initiation rite. The death of Muthoni from health complications after undergoing FGM strikes a severe blow to Waiyaki's loyalty to his tribe's culture. Chege, Waiyaki's father, understands these problems in Gikuyu society and sends Waiyaki to the missionary school to receive education. With education, Waiyaki begins to understand the problems of his own community. However, it is the very education he receives from the missionary school that alienates Waiyaki from his own people.

The novel also highlights the fact that long before the arrival of the colonizers, Kameno and Makuyu had been rivals over the "leadership of this isolated region" (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 1). Gikandi mentions that it is because of the struggle for regional power that the "two communities with a common past and culture come to be defined by so much antagonism and such bitter rivalry" (2000, p. 50). Establishing territorial control and gaining regional power are extremely important for a tribe to enjoy economic advantages. According to Kenyatta, "The main cause of friction

between tribes, especially in Kenya, was economic" (1965, p. 208). Understanding this, Waiyaki believes that education is the only way forward. "Education for unity" and "unity for political freedom" are his goals to restore solidarity among peoples "torn with strife and disunity" (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 143).

Personal rivalry plays a vital role in deepening the divisions among the people of the two ridges that eventually turn into bitter animosity. The novel portrays how bitter rivalry among the major characters hinders progress toward communal harmony in the ridges. Kamau, Kabonyi's son, considers Waiyaki his "rival to death" and helps his father conspire against him (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 108). Williams considers the rivalry between Kabonyi and Waiyaki a "manufactured or self-interested" opposition (Williams, 1999, p. 23). Waiyaki wants to introduce Western education to educate the young people of his community and eradicate superstitions and malpractices from his community. However, malevolent Kabonyi and his followers are traditionalists who want to maintain tribal purity, turning a blind eye to the problems in their own beliefs and practices. Kabonyi constantly opposes Waiyaki purely out of personal hatred and schemes to destroy Wayaki's reputation out of jealousy of Waiyaki's growing popularity in the ridges. Simon Gikandi points out that "Despite these dangers," Waiyaki "works hard to try and overcome the radical divisions between Makuyu and Kameno," hoping that "a middle path can be found between the ideality of a colonial education and the traditions of the Gikuyu" (Gikandi, 2000, p. 63). But "his role of a mediator between the antagonistic groups in his community" also becomes the source of his "marginalization" (Ogude, 1999, p. 126). It is mostly through Kabonyi's malevolence that Waiyaki, despite his honest intentions and most earnest efforts, fails to bring about unity between the two ridges and eventually succumbs to Kabonyi's conspiracy. The omniscient narrator states that "perhaps Kabonyi would not have been so hostile [to Waiyaki] had the young man's place been taken by Kamau, his son" (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 93). The tragic failure of Waiyaki to restore peace between Makuyu and Kameno is symbolic of the fall of Gikuyu

society itself, and deceitful Kabonyi's hideous intention to ruin Waiyaki's constructive work reveals the unpleasant truth that division within the Gikuyu community itself was a major factor besides colonial intervention that contributed to the fall of the Gikuyu society in Kenya.

The River Between presents a classic depiction of the inevitable clash of civilizations when the cultural values of the colonizer infiltrate into the collective psyche of the colonized. For the same reason, the novel provides a seamless illustration of the dichotomy in which the colonized population found itself when one group is willing to embrace colonial values they deem progressive, while the other group desperately clings to long-hallowed indigenous values and traditions. It is easy to fight the enemy outside one's community, but when the clash of civilizations manifests itself within the same community, the struggle becomes profoundly self-destructive. The colonizers, by colonizing foreign land in the first place, must be viewed as constituting the force that decimated native civilization. The utterly horrific mistreatment of the colonized people ineluctably reveals the inhumanity of the colonial enterprise, denial of which can only be described as a pernicious illusion.

However, to gain a comprehensive and disinterested perspective on a phenomenon as intricate as colonialism, one must put emotion aside and be introspective. As horrendous as the colonizers were, there is no denying the fact that some blame, however counterintuitive it might sound, accrues to the Africans as well. Had they been united, the colonizers would have had an extremely difficult time colonizing them. Unfortunately, African communities had a fair share of internal conflicts, of which the colonizers took full advantage through their far superior technology and the unmatched shrewdness with which they manipulated and exacerbated the preexisting internal conflicts among the native African population. This is one of the most poignant facts of Africa's subjugation that *The River Between* so elegantly illustrates in the context of East Africa.

Arrow of God: Communal Division in West Africa

Like East Africa, West Africa also suffered from communal divisions that paved the way for colonial rule. Chinua Achebe's novel *Arrow of God* portrays vividly how a lack of unity, and in some cases, bitter animosity among different West African tribes proved to be suicidal for the Africans. In this novel, Achebe shows how clashes among different communities in material possessions, religion, personal rivalry, and so on could be extremely self-destructive, making it easy for the colonizers to cement their position in Africa, leading to the damage, and in some cases, complete disintegration of the indigenous social structure and culture. Ezeulu's failure to react to the arrival of British colonizers through both his stubbornness and his rivalry with Nwaka "brings about the conflict which leads to the diffusion and disintegration of traditional Ibo life as well as the destruction and defeat of Ezeulu himself" (Patterson, 1977, p. 64).

Arrow of God highlights the conflict between two neighboring Igbo regions, Umuaro and Okperi, over land and the worship of a god called Ulu. Umuaro consists of six villages that worship a common god, Ulu. The neighboring region Okperi, whose boundaries are not made clear in this novel, worships a different god. The dispute between Umuaro and Ukperi sets the tone of the novel, which is rife with communal and personal rivalry. In Chapter Two, the novel reveals that the six villages making up Umuaro come together to protect themselves from the raid of Abam—an enemy of Umuaro—which indicates that the Igbo villages in Nigeria were divided, and that there had been animosity among them long before the colonizers came. Interestingly, the unity among the six villages keeps Umuaro safe from colonial occupation, while Abam is colonized. However, once free from the threat of Abam, Umuaro engages in a new conflict with Okperi over a piece of land that both villages claim as their own. Not only does the conflict arouse animosity between Umuaro and Okperi, it also gives rise to division within Umuaro itself, which by damaging the unity among the six villages makes colonial inter-

vention easier.

It is important to note that Umuaro and Okperi are not historical enemies, but in fact quite the opposite. Both villages are connected to and dependent on each other, as men from one village marry the women from the other village. Unfortunately, the dispute over farmland deals a severe blow to the friendship of these two villages, and their relationship is permanently damaged because of the war. Most importantly, the war gives the colonizers a superb opportunity to step in and take advantage of the situation. The district officer T.K. Winterbottom intervenes to stop the war. He disarms the fighting warriors of both villages and gives the disputed land to Okperi, already a stronghold of colonial administration. This further widens the gulf between Umuaro and Okperi, and strengthens colonial power. The villagers of Umuaro claim that "it is due to the white man who says, like an elder to two fighting children: you will not fight while I am around. And so the younger and weaker of the two begins to swell himself up and to boast" (Achebe, 1988, p. 339). This is how by deliberately favoring Okperi over Umuaro, Winterbottom disempowers Umuaro. Since Umuaro is resisting colonial occupation, playing Okperi against Umuaro proves ideal to divide and rule the Igbo people. However, this opportunity for Winterbottom to play the two villages against each other only arises because of the needless war between Umuaro and Okperi over land. By making war needlessly against Okperi, Umuaro gives Winterbottom the chance to intervene, and is thus culpable for such a fatal mistake. Prudent Ezeulu eloquently puts it:

> "We went to war against Okperi who are our blood brothers over a piece of land which did not belong to us and you blame the white man for stepping in. Have you not heard that when two brothers fight a stranger reaps the harvest [⋯] The man who brings ant-infested faggots into his hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit." (Achebe, 1988, p. 455)

This is how the conflict between Umuaro and Okperi gives colo-

nizers the chance to infiltrate Igbo society and exacerbate the division between Umuaro and Okperi.

Unfortunately, the conflict between these two villages is not the only problem, as Umuaro itself is torn with conflicts among some of the leading figures of the village. Just as the personal conflict between Waiyaki and Kabonyi destroys communal harmony in the two ridges in *The River Between*, Ezeulu's conflict with Nwaka and Ezidemili destabilizes the village Umuaro in *Arrow of God*. Innes claims that "complex relationships and rivalries" and "jealous concern for status" influence "almost every social contact in *Arrow of God*" (Innes, 1990, p. 71). He also points out that "Ezeulu is surrounded by a whole web of conflicts and rivalries," including his rivalry with Nwaka and Ezidemili, resulting in mistrust among people and division within Igbo society (Innes, 1990, p. 71). Ezeulu's conflict with Ezidemili is mainly religious. Ezeulu is the chief priest of Umuaro, who worships Ulu, the most powerful god in Umuaro, while Ezidemili is the priest of a lesser god, Idemili. Ezidemili envies Ezulu for his popularity, and hates the fact that Ezulu is the priest of the most revered god in Umuaro. From sheer personal jealousy, Ezidemili joins Nwaka's scheme to destroy Ezeulu's reputation. Nwaka is a political rival of Ezeulu who challenges Ezeulu's authority. He wants to be the undisputed leader of Umuaro, but so long as Ezeulu is the chief priest of the most revered god, it is next to impossible for Nwaka to rise to the pinnacle of power. He thus allies himself with Ezidemili to establish himself as a viable rival of Ezeulu. Mezu claims that Ezeulu "wields an immense power that is primarily religious yet is of a simultaneous secular—economic, cultural and political—urgency," which validates Winterbottom's description of Ezeulu as a "priest king" (Mezu, 2006, p. 39). However, Ezeulu is not a natural leader, and since his political power is only a result of his religious authority, he does not know how to handle such power. Mezu argues that Nwaka and Ezidemili loathe how Ezeulu "constantly pushes and stretches the exercise of his power, testing its limits to gauge how far he can apply it" (Mezu, 2006, p. 39). Their hatred for Ezeulu—emanating from their personal jealousy, and

also from their reaction against Ezeulu's hubris—culminates in their deci-
sion to ignore his rational advice not to wage war against Okperi. With
the incitement of Nwaka, the entire village is divided on the issue of
war. Nwaka arranges a secret meeting with his followers and declares
war against Okperi, saying that "three or four Okperi heads must fall"
to avenge the death of Akukalia and to settle the land dispute (Achebe,
1988, p. 346). The war, along with the crisis of leadership emanating
from Ezeulu's clash with Nwaka and Ezidemili, renders the village vul-
nerable to colonial infiltration.

When we examine how internal communal conflicts used to play
themselves out in both East and West Africa, it is impossible to overlook
one significant trait of such conflicts common to both regions. In both
East and West Africa, personal conflict among community leaders was
never rare. Precolonial African communities used to live in small villages
led by their respective community leaders. As a result, mutual respect
among community leaders was of paramount importance if the commun-
ities were to live in an amicable atmosphere of peaceful coexistence.
However, tribal societies, by virtue of their community structure, are to
a great deal reliant on the leadership of their respective community lead-
ers, and this bears additional significance if the community leader is a
religious leader as well. In precolonial African societies, religion used
to be intimately interwoven into the very fabric of society, which is pre-
cisely why when religious leaders also became community leaders, they
had the rare privilege to exercise remarkable power due to the immensity
of their influence. Characters like Joshua and Ezeulu are ideal examples
of this phenomenon.

When we think of African colonialism, we immediately think of
violence and slavery. However, if violence and slavery are the physical
manifestations of colonialism, it is the mass proselytization of the native
African people that reveals the silent undercurrent of psychological
slavery. The colonizers were able to convince the Africans that their in-
digenous traditions were inferior, whereas the colonizers were the torch-
bearers of civilization. Such casuistry in the guise of altruism served

to make the Africans feel so inadequate that they eventually accept the colonizers' culture, which had been proclaimed to them as far superior to their own. People like Wayaki and Ezeulu resisted such propaganda, but faced severe backlash from the people of their own communities who had been won over by colonial agents. Such fracturing of societies was part of a deliberate mechanism adopted by the colonizers to weaken communal harmony among the natives. Unfortunately, both in East and West Africa, the native Africans could not see through the veil of colonial deception and utterly failed to overcome their differences. As a result, they helplessly, naively, and decisively played into the hands of the colonizers' grand scheme of divide, conquer, and rule.

A Bend in the Ganges: Communal Division in South Asia

Like Africa, South Asia was riven by communal, religious, and political conflicts, which helped British colonial rulers implement the divide and rule policy, which eventually contributed to the partition of India. Manohar Malgonkar's groundbreaking novel *A Bend in the Ganges* vividly depicts the disunity among the people in India that ended in the tragic partition. Apart from being "one of the most popular novels written on partition," this novel is also considered "one of the best-known texts in the whole canon of Indian-English fiction" (Roy, 2010, p. 47). The novel stands out in particular for its "extensive political documentation" of historically important events "right from Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement till the time of the Partition" (Roy, 2010, p. 48). The novel captures how religious differences among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in India divided millions of people, influenced India's independence movement, and significantly changed the geopolitical atmosphere of the Indian subcontinent as a catalyst for partition.

The novel portrays how the "two opposing political ideologies," namely the nonviolent non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi and the revolutionary terrorist movement led by young Indian revolutionaries, divided India's independence movement, allowing British rulers to pro-

long their occupation of India (Roy, 2010, p. 59). One of the two heroes of this novel, Gian Talwar, supports Gandhi's nonviolent noncooperation movement, whereas Debi Dayal, the other protagonist, is an active revolutionary committed to carrying out terrorist attacks as a way of fighting colonial occupation. Here, parallels can be drawn between *The River Between* and *A Bend in the Ganges* in the divisions among the people in terms of whether to fight back against colonial rulers using violent or nonviolent means. The protagonist of *The River Between*, Wayaki, faces serious opposition from the people of his own community, who do not support his idea of nonviolence and believe in "action now" (Thiong'o, 1965, p. 118). Similarly, in *A Bend in the Ganges*, Gian Talwar is criticized and ridiculed by Debi Dayal because of his support for Gandhi's nonviolent movement. To Gian Talwar, Gandhi is the "apostle of truth and non-violence" who represents "true greatness to every Indian" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 7). He believes that only Gandhi can bring freedom to India with his nonviolent movement, whereas Singh, a member of the revolutionary movement and a friend of Debi's, considers Gandhi's idea of nonviolence "the greatest danger" to India because he believes it to be "the philosophy of sheep, a creed for cowards" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 18). To the revolutionaries, the "apostles of non-violence were the enemies of the nation, bent on emasculating the population" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 72). History tells us that both approaches to freedom had their own failures and successes. It is debatable as to which one of these two methods had the potential to be more successful had it gained the overwhelming support of the people, but the very fact that India's independence movement was divided into two major strands makes it clear that the people of India were not united despite their common goal of an end to British occupation of India. Lack of political unity was a major factor why people from all over India could never strongly challenge British colonial rulers before, which also explains why when they eventually did, were still ideologically and methodically divided in terms of their struggle to achieve freedom. This division, according to Roy, also sheds light on the "anomaly that underlies the

Hindu-Muslim question" (2010, p. 49).

Religious differences were by far the greatest reason for the division of the people of India during the tumultuous period of political upheaval in the early part of the last century when the entire Indian subcontinent fought for independence. Muslims' conflict with Hindus and Sikhs was the main reason for the partition of India in 1947. The British colonial rulers exploited and in many cases deliberately fanned the flames of religious conflict among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs to further divide the people of India, allowing them to rule without facing any major challenge until India's independence movement gained momentum in the early twentieth century. Tharoor argues that religious tension in South Asia was "defined, highlighted and fomented by the British as a deliberate strategy" (2017, p. 111). Bimal Prasad notes that "because of their strategic position, the British could easily play one community [religious] against the other, and this they always did" (2001, p. 257). *A Bend in the Ganges* vividly portrays how religious differences sowed mistrust and hatred among people that spiraled out of control around the time of India's partition, resulting in bloody riots that claimed millions of lives and left a lasting impact on religious solidarity among the people of the Indian subcontinent.

Since religion is an important part of a culture, religious differences create cultural differences as well. Such cultural differences contribute to the development of an artificial division among people that is very difficult to overcome. Even though Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs had been living in the Indian subcontinent long before the British occupation of India, their religious differences played a vital role in the subjugation of India. The novel highlights this issue through the careful construction of its plot, its characters, and their actions. Although Debi Dayal is a well-educated and dedicated revolutionary committed to working with his fellow revolutionaries from different religions, his struggle to consume beef as a token of solidarity with his Muslim friends gives readers a glimpse of how difficult it was to renounce religious customs in the secular environment of the revolution. Debi Dayal and his fellow revolution-

aries believe that "religious differences among the races of India were the root cause of the country's slavery" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 73).

A Bend in the Ganges is critically acclaimed for its treatment of Indian politics during the time of India's partition. All the important characters in this novel have high political awareness, which provides the readers a view of the political scene of India at that time from different perspectives. In this novel, the author skilfully brings out the political tension between the Indian National Congress led by Gandhi and Nehru, and the Muslim League led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. This political conflict played a pivotal role in exacerbating Hindu-Muslim tensions in India, which eventually contributed to India's partition. Debi Dayal and his fellow revolutionaries are deeply worried about the Congress-ML conflict. The revolutionaries blame both parties for eschewing their secular values and espousing sectarian politics, with the Congress favoring the Hindus and the Muslim League favoring the Muslims. Shafi Usman, the leader of the group of revolutionaries in this novel, is extremely disappointed by the Hindu-Muslim rift, and deeply regrets that the people of India are "no longer united" and that "the Hindus and the Muslims are both going their own ways" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 73). He laments that "the Congress and the Muslim League had come to a final parting of ways, with Hindus and Muslims separated into opposite camps, learning to hate each other with the bitterness of ages," forcing even the leaders of the terrorist movement—which is fundamentally based on secular principles—to take sides (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 81).

The Hindu-Muslim animosity eventually reached such a pitch as to divide the revolutionaries, shaking the entire terrorist movement to the core. Secularism was one of the fundamental principles making up the foundation of the movement. Amid the Hindu-Muslim tension that damaged the "nationalist struggle against British rule, the terrorist movement was the last gasp of those who wanted to carry out the struggle united" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 72). "Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs banded themselves" together to drive terrorist the movement forward; and they were "required to renounce vegetarianism and the taboos of religion"

(Malgonkar, 1964, p. 72). Their meetings used to end "with their partaking of curry made of equal parts of beef and pork, symbolizing the flouting of the sacred impositions of all the religions of India: Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 72). This is how "having smashed down the barriers of religion that held other Indians divided," the revolutionaries became "blood-brothers in the service of motherland" (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 73).

Unfortunately, despite all their efforts to maintain the spirit of secularism, the terrorist movement eventually succumbed to the flames of religious bias and fanaticism that divided the entire Indian subcontinent. The very people who professed to renounce religious identity in order to uphold communal unity were the people who renounced secularism and pushed the terrorist movement in the opposite direction. According to Hafiz, a Muslim revolutionary, "the callousness of the Hindus towards the Muslims" has forced him to "re-orientate" his activities, by which he means organizing a separate movement against the Hindus in order to fight for the rights of the Muslims (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 81). Hafiz tries to convince Shafi to turn his back on the Hindus, and claims that Muslims will be living in India "as inferior citizens, as the slaves of the Hindus" after the end of British rule (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 89). He calls the Hindus "a far greater menace" than the British and expresses his desire to join the Pakistan movement to carve out a country for Muslims (Malgonkar, 1964, p. 90). It is important to note that Hafiz's concern for the rights of Muslims is not the only motivation behind his desire to join the Pakistan movement. His hatred for and fear of Hindus are also contributing factors. He boastfully mentions that the Muslims ruled India and enslaved Hindus, and expresses his concern that Hindus now might do the same once British rule is over.

Here again, the historical Hindu-Muslim animosity resurfaces to cause further division. He accuses the Congress of denying the Muslim League its deserved place in Indian politics, and expresses deep resentment over Congress's claim to be the only party that can rightfully represent people of every religion in India. In his conversation with Shafi,

Hafiz says that after winning elections, the Congress is acting like a tyrant. History, however, gives Hafiz's claim some validity. According to Hodson, after winning the provincial election in UP in 1937, the Congress ordered the Muslim League in UP Province to "dissolve itself in the Congress," which Hodson considered a "grave blunder" by the Congress that made this party "a worse bogey than the British raj" to the Muslims of India (Hodson, 1993, p. 67).

Jinnah left the Congress and joined the Muslim League because "he realized that Muslim interests would be difficult to protect under a Congress dominated by Conservative Hindus" (Ali, 2009, p. 84). Jinnah maintained that in order for the Muslim League to be an "effective Muslim organization," it must be "turned into a mass movement" (Ali, 2009, p. 84). In stark contrast, Jawaharlal Nehru "often labeled the [Muslim] League as a reactionary organization" (Ali, 2009, p. 82). Nehru asserted that the "alleged animosity between Hindus and Muslims" was nothing but colonial trickery of the British Raj "to divide the Indian people" and to "prevent them from uniting against the imperial power" (Embree, 1987, p. 49). Nehru strongly believed that "religious identity was irrelevant to the struggle of freedom," even though a significant number of Muslims rejected his view and that the number continued to grow (Embree, 1987, p. 49). In this novel, Hafiz represents millions of Muslims in India who did not trust the Congress to fairly represent the interests of Muslims, and feared that if the Congress dominated the political sphere of India, it would also entail the domination of the Hindus over the Muslims.

This is how the Indian subcontinent had to pay the price for the lack of unity between the Hindus and the Muslims that eventually contributed to the partition of India. The tension between Hindus and Muslims in India dates back to the time when the first Muslim invaders conquered and ruled different regions of India—a land dominated by the Hindus. After the fall of the Mughal Empire at the hands of the British, Muslim domination in India ended, giving the Hindus and the Sikhs a chance to assert their domination. They were open to English

education, which gradually gave them an advantageous position compared to the Muslims, who as a whole rejected English education. A sense of betrayal grew among many Muslims who thought that the Hindus had betrayed them—a sentiment that played a pivotal role in the growing Hindu-Muslim conflict during the time of India's partition. Hafiz—the revolutionary who believes that Hindus will enslave Muslims after British rule in India ends—is no different from the many Muslims who believed the same at that time. This age-old tension between the Muslims and the Hindus helped the colonizers to "divide and rule" India and played a decisive role in India's partition.

Conclusion

Africa and South Asia have different colonial experiences, and even in countries within Africa and South Asia, these experiences vary. However, despite these differences, it is always necessary to seek commonalities that will not only help us examine colonization from a larger and more comprehensive perspective, but also enable the previously colonized nations to better appreciate one another's experiences. "More than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism," and "literature offers one of the most important ways" in which the "day-to-day realities experienced by colonized peoples have been most powerfully encoded" (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p.1). Achebe and Thiong'o are two of the greatest postcolonial authors who, mostly through their literary works, revealed the true nature of the British colonial enterprise in Africa and challenged the melioristic propaganda that the early Western colonial discourse strongly espoused. However, what gives their literary works authenticity and worldwide acceptability is the honesty with which they examined the problems within African communities that facilitated colonial infiltration, and this is exactly where Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* joins their ranks. Even though this novel did not garner as much attention as it rightfully deserved, it examines the multilayered divisions

among the people in the Indian subcontinent under British colonial rule with commendable success.

The River Between, *Arrow of God*, and *A Bend in the Ganges* highlight the problems and conflicts within the African and South Asian communities that played a major role in their own downfall. All these novels depict the relevant communal and personal conflicts, which mostly centered around material possessions, leadership, religion, cultural differences, clashes of values, and personal rivalry. The novels clearly show how such divisions within a society can catalyze their own destruction and disintegration, allowing the colonizers more easily to take control. The implementation of the "divide and rule" policy would have been more difficult had there been strong unity among the people in Africa and South Asia. In both regions, the people were divided religiously, culturally and, politically—that is, in the most fundamental elements of a society that should serve instead to create and develop a sense of belonging among the people of a community. Unfortunately, in the case of both Africa and South Asia, the socio-cultural and political division among people proved insurmountable, allowing the colonial rulers to succeed in more easily implementing the "divide and rule" policy that only strengthened the divisions among people and helping the colonizers to cement their position in foreign lands. This is how *The River Between*, *Arrow of God*, and *A Bend in the Ganges* vividly depict the grim picture of self-destructive communal conflict.

The British colonial enterprise devastated both Africa and South Asia. In East and West Africa are concerned, both regions are still dealing with the scars of colonization. Millions of Africans were captured as slaves, many indigenous languages were lost, traditional customs were abandoned, rituals were abolished, religions were wiped out, and the very pride of Africa was stolen as its history was re-written from the Western colonial perspective, in which the great continent was reduced to nothing but a dark continent. South Asia also paid an extreme price for colonization in the form of the partition in 1947 when millions were killed and displaced. Since the "divide and rule" policy helped the colonizers

cement their position in both Africa and South Asia, and since in both regions the colonizers benefited immensely from the lack of communal unity among the locals, an honest approach to understanding the mechanisms of colonial domination from the perspective of the colonized must employ a self-critical lens through which to examine the problems and weaknesses within the colonized that enabled the colonizer to achieve and maintain such overwhelming dominance over the colonized. Unfortunately, communal division is far from over in Africa and South Asia. Racial, religious, and geopolitical conflicts are still rife in these two regions. Hence, for both Africa and South Asia, this is an appropriate time to look back at their common colonial past, draw inspiration from their shared anticolonial struggles, and most importantly, to learn the lessons of their common mistakes. This is exactly where literature can play a crucial role, for there is scarcely any other form of art that can appeal to our ethos, pathos, and logos so profoundly.

Both *A Bend in the Ganges* and *Arrow of God* were published in 1964, whereas *The River Between* was published just a year later in 1965. *Arrow of God* and *The River Between* are among the first English novels by African authors to tackle the issues of colonialism. Similarly, *A Bend in the Ganges* is among the earliest partition novels written in English by South Asian writers. Just as in Africa, South Asian writing in English has undergone a major thematic shift as the writers tackle a plethora of issues besides the national experience under colonial rule. However, the colonial legacy has a permanent place in history, which is why revisiting postcolonial literature to discover shared colonial experiences across different geographical contexts still holds great relevance. This is precisely where these three novels are in dialog with one another, as, in addition to portraying colonial atrocities, the novelists are also brave enough to introspectively point out the problems within their own communities that the colonizers exploited. The British colonial era has long since ended, and the former African and South Asian British colonies are free nations now. Both Africa and South Asia are full of ethnic diversity, and such diversity must be nurtured as a strength, not a cause of

division. Due to such diversity, a strong intercommunal unity in these regions was important during the colonial era, is important now, and will continue to be important for the foreseeable future. Failure to establish this necessary precondition for peaceful coexistence would disrupt communal harmony, providing an advantage to opportunists. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu aptly states, "when two brothers fight a stranger reaps the harvest […] The man who brings ant-infested faggots into his hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit" (Achebe, 1988, p. 455). If we penetrate to the crux of the matter, this is one of the major lessons a reader must take away from these three novels.

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