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The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy as Revealed in African and South Asian Literature

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Abstract:
In this paper, my objective is to examine Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s novel The River Between (1965), Chinua Achebe’s novel Arrow of God (1988), and Manohar Malgonkar’s novel A Bend in the Ganges (1964) with the aim of exploring the literary impacts of the ‘divide and rule’ policy in the context of South Asia and Africa. In both regions, the colonizers shrewdly executed this policy despite the fact that Africa and South Asia are different in terms of geography, culture, and history. The colonizers quickly identified and manipulated the existing differences among the locals and introduced new agents of division which helped them rule by damaging the communal unity. In both regions, the colonizers followed similar principles which suggests that the socio-cultural factors shared some significant features. In this paper, I will explore the aforementioned novels to discover what insight literature gives us into the various factors that helped the colonizers execute this policy in two different geographical and geopolitical contexts.

Keywords: divide and rule, colonization, Africa, South Asia, communal division

Introduction
Establishing colonies and maintaining colonial rule requires effective strategies. The ‘divide and rule’ policy is one of the most effective strategies that the British colonizers used to consolidate their power in Africa and South Asia. A comparative textual analysis of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s novel The River Between (1965), Chinua Achebe’s Arrow of God (1988), and Manohar Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges (1964) reveals some significant common patterns. The colonizers primarily followed four steps. First of all, they were quick to identify and manipulate the existing communal divisions among the local people. Then, they introduced new agents of division in terms of religion and education to further widen the rift among the local people. After that, they created a group of loyal native intermediaries to cement the colonial stronghold. Finally, the colonizers used force to subdue any kind of anti-colonial resistance.

A Pan-African approach of studying colonialism has been there for a long time because of the common struggle of the African people against colonial oppression. In The Wretched of the Earth (2004), Frantz Fanon argues that “African unity” is a term “to which the men and women of Africa were passionately attached and whose operative function was to put incredible pressure on colonialism” (106). However, there should be more cross-continental studies of postcolonial literature because of the manifest importance of such a theme. In The Colonizer and the Colonized (2003), Albert Memmi argues that the colonizers portray a distorted image of the colonized because such image “occupies an important place in the dialectics exalting the colonizer and humbling the colonized,” because without such a distorted image of the colonized, the “presence and conduct of a colonizer would seem shocking,” and because such misrepresentation of the colonized is “economically fruitful” (123). In “Discourse on Colonialism” (2000), famous postcolonial scholar Aimé Césaire argues that the colonial enterprise was nothing but a mechanism of plundering the colonized under the pretext of a humanitarian endeavor (32-33). Therefore, a cross-continental study of postcolonial literature, due to its vast and enriched domain, can function as an extremely powerful critique of colonialism which will take into account its devastating consequences not only in Africa, but also far beyond. In his essay “The Quest for Relevance,” (2007) Ngugi wa Thiong’o discusses the importance of such a study arguing that the colonized people’s “search for a liberating
perspective” will only be complete if they can see themselves in relation to each other’s experience (87). In the Introduction to The Empire Writes Back (1989), it is argued that millions of people living today “have their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism,” and “literature offers one of the most important ways” in which colonialism’s “general influence on the perceptual frameworks of contemporary peoples” is expressed (Ashcroft et al. 1). This is why it is of utmost importance that their shared experiences be studied from a cross-national perspective across different socio-cultural spectrums, and the analysis of literary texts is an extremely powerful means of doing so. Since Africa and South Asia were the biggest colonies of the British Empire where the ‘divide and rule’ policy was implemented with considerable success, a parallel exploration of their literature seems warranted in order to understand more about such policy.

Achebe’s Arrow of God and Thiong’o’s The River Between need no introduction. Both novels are among the most influential postcolonial fictions in English written by African authors and have been much hailed for paving the way for a new generation of African authors to carry on their literary pursuit where the portrayal of colonial experience manifests itself in an Afrocentric perspective. As Achebe’s work reveals, “British power has been manifested in the terrible destruction” of Africa, not in the “glory or richness of European culture” (Innes 69). The novel also “spawns a story of exercise of power, the exploration of the nature of power, and its limits which generate fractious conflicts” (Mezu 37). Thiong’o’s The River Between—his first completed novel—seeks to explore how British colonialism instigated and incited division among the native Africans (Williams 22). In this novel, Thiong’o explores how “the imposition of colonial rule” in Africa was predicated on the conversion of the natives from the “traditions and narratives of their ancestors to the stories of colonial modernity” (Gikandi 49). Manohar Malgonkar’s 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 to be “one of the best-known texts in the whole canon of Indian-English fiction” (Roy 47). The novel particularly stands out for its “extensive political documentation” of historically important events “right from Gandhi’s Non-Cooperation movement till the time of the Partition” (Roy 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 by being a catalyst for the partition.

The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy and Current Debates: Africa

The European colonial powers used different strategies to consolidate power in the colonies. Richard Morrock identifies three major strategies “that have been used by the modern colonial powers to maintain control of their far-flung empires” (129). The first strategy involves the “settlement of large numbers of Europeans among the subject people,” the second strategy consists of “co-opting the native elite through assimilation or bribery,” and the “third strategy is divide and rule, a policy that has played a crucial part in ensuring the stability—indeed, the viability—of nearly every major colonial system” (129). According to Morrock, the ‘divide and rule’ policy can be defined as the “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” (129).

A. J. Christopher’s perspective overlaps with Morrock’s as he also argues that territorial separation was a part of the colonial scheme to implement the ‘divide and rule’ policy. According to Christopher, “territorial separation through segregation and partition were widely pursued policies in British colonies with long lasting consequences” (233). Colonial rulers “divided and re-divided populations into discrete groups, on the basis of linguistics, religion, ethnicity, and skin color;” and “adopted a policy of divide and rule allied to territorial separation” (Christopher 233). The result of this policy was devastating as the division created by the colonial rulers to facilitate their territorial expansion eventually resulted in the permanent division of the former colonial territories (Christopher 233).
Colonial boundaries were mostly arbitrary in Africa. The colonizers hardly considered the fact that Africa had never been territorially divided as modern nations states, and that doing so would require paying utmost attention to people’s ethnic background. Blanton et al. claim that “the European powers imposed formal territorial boundaries” with “little or no consideration to the actual distribution of indigenous ethno-cultural groups” (473). Jackson and Roseberg agree with them as they claim that “only rarely did a colonial territory reflect the shape and identity of a pre-existing African socio-political boundary” which led to the development of political instability in sub-Saharan Africa (14). Roessler claims that such political instability and ethnic strife in Africa is a “legacy inherited from colonization” (304).

According to Wesseling, Africa mainly appears as an “object of European interest, love of conquest and diplomacy, and ultimately as an object of political partition” (3). In his famous book Divide and Rule: The Partition of Africa, 1880-1914 (1996), Wesseling points out that the extraction of natural resources was one of the main reasons behind the colonization of Africa. He argues that Nigeria became Britain’s “most important colony in West Africa” because the interior of the Niger Delta “was rich in the oil, and the rivers provided easy access to it” (187). Wesseling claims that “the Africa today was, in a political sense, created by the Europeans of that time,” and regrets that “the most shocking thing about the carve-up of Africa is perhaps not what was done, but the casual way in which it was done” (5).

The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy and Current Debates: South Asia

The ‘divide and rule’ policy played a significant role in the consolidation of colonial power in South Asia, the region most affected by such policy, according to Morrock (143). Farooqui also argues that “the view that colonial rule in India was based upon the strategy of divide and rule” is “substantially correct” (49). He claims that the implementation of such policy was a deliberate colonial “strategy” to create division among the Indians, and argues that “by the beginning of the twentieth century,” communal conflicts increased in India at an alarming rate which was “sufficient to demonstrate the success of the strategy” (49).

Famous Indian politician and former diplomat Shashi Tharoor is one of the most vocal critics of the British colonial rule in South Asia who believes that the Hindu-Muslim division was greatly augmented, if not originally caused, by the British colonial rulers which eventually led to the partition of India 1947. In his much acclaimed book Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India (2017), Tharoor claims that “the sight of Hindu and Muslim soldiers rebelling together in 1857 and fighting side by side” had “alarmed the British who did not take long to conclude that dividing the two groups and putting them against one another was the most effective way to ensure unchallenged continuance of Empire” (101). According to Tharoor, “religious communalism was in large part a colonial construction” because “Indians of all religious communities had long lived intertwined lives” (112-113). Tharoor believes that “large scale conflicts” between Hindus and Muslims “only began under colonial rule,” and “many other kinds of social strife were labeled as religious due to the colonialists’ assumption that religion was the fundamental division in Indian society” (114).

Tharoor also claims that the British colonial rulers had “a particular talent for creating and exaggerating particularist identities and drawing ethnically-based administrative lines in all their colonies” (102). He believes that “Lord Curzon’s decision in 1905 to partition Bengal” was one such attempt to divide South Asia based on ethnicity (117). Sengupta argues that “even before the partition of 1947, the politics of communalism complicated the nationalist dream of freeing the country” because the Hindu-Muslim politics “had begun muddying the course of Indian political advance from 1905 onward in Bengal” (16).

Tharoor argues that the British colonial rulers “helped solidify and perpetuate the iniquities of the caste system” in India by promulgating the theory that “caste hierarchy and discrimination influenced the workings of Indian society” (104). In this regard, famous anthropologist and scholar B. S. Cohn also believes that the ‘divide and rule’ policy had administrative implications. He points out
that “through the establishment of their legal, revenue, and administrative systems, the British created new economic conditions,” which gave rise to a new group of “large landlords” who were mainly from Hindu “Kayastha, Baniya, and Brahman” castes (418-431). Dirks points out that “institutional provenance of caste expanded” because of the “implementation of legal codes that made the provisions of the law applicable on caste lines” (66). According to Dirks, “the curtailment of the freedom of the land market,” and “criminalization of certain entire caste groups for local policing purposes” were also parts of the colonial policy to create antagonism among peoples of different castes (66).

**Literary Representations of the Execution of the ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy**

In both Africa and South Asia, the colonizers were able to execute the ‘divide and rule’ policy successfully despite clear geographical and cultural differences between these two regions. The colonizers were able to manipulate the existing division among the locals to their own advantage. Sometimes, they played one group against the other to further divide the people in order to thwart the rise of a collective consensus against the colonial occupation. They created groups of intermediaries from the locals who were loyal to the colonial rulers. Apart from the clever manipulation of division among people, forceful subjugation was another method that the colonizers used to establish their control.

The introduction of Christianity saw significant success in Africa. As African indigenous religions were not free from malpractices and superstitions, Christianity became an escape route for many Africans who embraced it. Even though Christianity did not become popular in South Asia, the introduction of the English language proved to be successful in both regions. Those who wanted a better life and hoped for the favor of the colonial rulers embraced English. In South Asia, the Hindus were more open to English education than the Muslims, which contributed to the downfall of the Muslim community. In Africa, the situation was even worse. As more and more Africans accepted Christianity and the English language, African indigenous religions, languages, and cultures were faced with existential threat. *The River Between*, *Arrow of God* and *A Bend in the Ganges* explore these issues in the context of Africa and South Asia, and capture how the implementation of the ‘divide and rule’ policy severely damaged communal harmony.

**The River Between: The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy in East Africa**

*The River Between* is a “study of divisions within Gikuyu society, greatly exacerbated, if not originally caused, by the growing impact of British colonialism” (Williams 22). This novel shows how the colonizers strengthened their foothold and established their authority in East Africa by enhancing the existing division among the people, and also by using force. The introduction of Christianity and English education played a pivotal role in enhancing the division between the people of Kameno and Makuyu. This, however, was a common strategy followed by the colonizers—both British and French—in most of their colonies in Africa. The process of establishing colonial dominance “is conducted through schools and, more importantly, Christian missions” (Williams 24). Mulwafu argues that Christianity paved the way for the colonizers’ to “intervene and colonize” (305). According to Aimé Césaire, the colonial project in Africa was entirely based on hypocrisy; and the introduction of Christianity and English education in Africa was a project undertaken neither to preach the glory of God, nor to educate the African people (32).

*The River Between* shows how Christianity emerged as an existential threat to the indigenous religion and culture in the two ridges. The Christian converts start to disregard the indigenous customs dismissing them as pagan rites. In some cases, many converts even go as far as to actively oppose the practice of some of the traditional rituals in Kameno and Makuyu. Circumcision is an extremely important part of Gikuyu culture as an adolescent initiation ritual; but the Christian converts condemn this practice as “wrong and sinful” in the eyes of God (25). It is important to note that not only are the converts belittling traditional religious customs, but also glorifying Christianity because it was introduced to the village by the colonizers. This is an example of the internalization of...
the ideas and values of the colonizers, rather than an example of constructive criticism of a social practice.

Joshua—the leader of the Christian converts in Makuyu—believes that he “realized the ignorance of his people” and “felt the depth of the darkness in which they lived.” However, he fails to see through the veil of the colonizers’ philanthropic project as he is blinded by his newfound faith in Christianity, and also by his belief that the “white man” is “unerring” (29). Clearly, he associates God’s infallibility with the flawlessness of the colonizers as they introduced Christianity to Makuyu. His blind admiration of Christianity, intense loathing for indigenous culture, and complete trust for the colonizers make him and his followers resistant to the novel’s protagonist Waiyaki’s effort to bring peace between the traditionalists of Kameno and the converts in Makuyu. According to Joshua, “all the tribes customs were bad” and that is why “there could never be a compromise” (84). However, Waiyaki believes that with his knowledge of Christianity and English education, he will be able to “uplift the tribe” so that “in the end the tribe would be strong enough, wise enough, to chase away the settlers and the missionaries” (87). But he is rejected by Joshua because of his loyalty to traditional religion, and mistrusted by the people of his own village because of his education in a missionary school. Moreover, Waiyaki faces hostility from Kabonyi, who represents the council of the elders, and also Kabonyi’s son Kamau, who is jealous of Waiyaki’s popularity. Such rivalry makes Waiyaki’s task even more difficult. As a result, Kameno and Makuyu reach an impasse perpetuating and exacerbating the division between the two ridges giving the Siriana mission an opportunity to take full advantage of the disunity between the two villages.

Joshua is a devout Christian who loathes indigenous religious practices. He becomes nothing but a mimic-man—a person who has completely internalized the ideas and values of the colonizers. In “Of Mimicry and Men,” Homi K. Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (122). According to Bhabha, the colonizer wants to be mimicked by the colonized, but in a way that still manifests an obvious difference between the two of them (122). This is exactly what happens to Joshua. He blindly mimics the colonizers but loses his own identity in the process while still remaining the ‘other’ in the eyes of his colonial overlords. The omniscient narrator points out that ever since Joshua “took to the new faith, he had remained true to Livingstone and his God” (The River Between 84). This statement clearly suggests that in Joshua’s psyche, Christianity is the white men’s religion; therefore, it is important to remain faithful to the white men as well. In his Black Skin, White Mask (2008), Frantz Fanon explains this behavior. Fanon claims that a colonized man “identifies himself with the explorer” or in other words, the colonizer, and considers the colonizer to be the “bringer of civilization” who “carries truth to savages—an all-white truth” (114). Joshua exhibits a similar mentality as he believes that the “white man” will remove “the ills of the land” and teach the people to “walk on the light” (The River Between 32).

There is a significant difference between Waiyaki and Joshua. Waiyaki believes that his education in a missionary school will help him understand how colonialism works which will enable him to “chase away the settlers and the missionaries,” whereas Joshua believes that the people of the two ridges “should leave their ways and follow the ways of the white man” (The River Between 32-87). Livingstone, the educator at Siriana mission, takes advantage of Joshua’s blind obedience to the fullest, making him a conduit for spreading colonial ideas and values behind the veil of Christianity, which eventually helps the colonizers take control of the ridges. Joshua becomes the example of a “classic indigenous intermediary” who believes that “in some sense he holds power,” but in fact he facilitates the colonizers to exercise their power against his own people (Williams 25). Williams claims that it was normal for the British colonizers to function through native agents, and as they did not naturally exist, they had to be created. One such creation was the idea of tribal chief. In areas where the colonial apparatus only started to penetrate, the job of a tribal chief was carried out by religious leaders. During the onset of British colonial rule in Kameno and Makuyu, Joshua instantiates “the colonists’ preferred model of leadership” in the two ridges as a religious leader (Williams 26). The omniscient narrator points out that by being wholly possessed by the “white
man’s power and magic,” Joshua has actually made the “white man” more powerful (The River Between 29). When he learns that Makuyu will be run by the British colonial administration from Nairobi, and that the villagers have to pay taxes to the British government, he has absolutely no hesitation to accept this decision as he believes that it is his “duty as a Christian to obey the government” (The River Between 31).

After the colonizers had established a strong foothold in Africa, they started to use force to displace the Africans from their homeland to make space for the settlers. Their exploitation of Africa was “bloody and ruthless” as they carried out “aggressive military campaigns” to “bring large chunks of territory under their control” (Farooqui 56). They established Government Posts to rule the African people. The colonial administration imposed high taxes on the African peasants which impoverished the local people and crippled Africa’s economy. The River Between captures this grim reality of colonialism in Africa. At first, the missionaries come with the aim of replacing indigenous religion with Christianity. A church is established in Makuyu, and native agents like Joshua become conduit for the colonizers to infiltrate deep into the Gikuyu society. After that, schools grow up “like mushrooms” as “symbols of people’s thirst for the white man’s secret magic and power” (The River Between 68). Eventually, as the colonial rule takes deep root in Kenya, Kameno and Makuyu become vulnerable. People are forced to move from their places and work for their colonial masters. A Government Post is established near Makuyu, and taxes are imposed on locals. Waiyaki regrets the fact that the colonizers “had penetrated into the heart of the country” spreading their “disruptive” influence (The River Between 72). He is deeply concerned about the fact that the settlers are “slowly encroaching on people’s land” and corrupting “the ways of the tribe” (The River Between 94). It becomes clear like daylight that the Siriana missionaries have been sent to “prepare the way for the settlers” as they are “pouring into the interior in greater and greater number” (The River Between 110). As Waiyaki’s companion Kinuthia says, “... the men of God came peacefully. They were given a place. Now see what has happened. They have invited their brothers to come and take all the lands. Our country is invaded” (The River Between 64). This is how the colonizers gradually establish their authority in Kameno and Makuyu, by establishing schools and churches as means of educational and cultural infiltration, by creating native intermediaries loyal to the colonial establishment, and finally by using force.

Arrow of God: The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy in West Africa

The British colonizers adopted similar strategies to colonize West Africa. Chinua Achebe’s Arrow of God portrays how the colonizers manipulated the existing conflict between Umuaro and Okperi to infiltrate into the Igbo society, introduced Christianity and the English language to establish cultural and linguistic dominance, and finally used force to take total control of the two villages. The colonial infiltration starts with the arrival of Christian missionaries in the villages—first in Okperi, and then in Umuaro. However, it is only when Christianity infiltrates into Umuaro that its adverse effect on the Igbo society and culture becomes clear. The Christians of the villages—the missionaries, administrators, and even the native converts—come to regard the indigenous culture and religious practices with condescension. Goodcountry, who is a convert and works as a missionary, gives Oduche the incitement to kill the sacred royal python because according to the Bible, Satan took the form of a snake to deceive Adam and Eve. Goodcountry believes that the indigenous tradition is barbaric, and that accepting Christianity is the only way the Igbo people can find a way out of their primitive backward life and enlighten themselves. As a son of Ezeulu, the chief priest of the god Ulu, Oduche’s attempt to kill the royal python exacerbates his father’s animosity with Ezidemili because he is the chief priest of the god Idemili, the owner of the sacred royal python.

If the missionaries loathe indigenous African people and culture because of religious reasons, the colonial administrative officers do so because according to them, the Africans are mere savages. The district officer Winterbottom believes that the Africans are backward races, great liars, and immature like children (Achebe 355-357). He also believes that the colonial enterprise is nothing but a benevolent project with the aim of making the African people civilized. Another colonial officer Mr.
Wade labels indigenous rituals as “disgusting juju” (Achebe 485). Such condescending attitude towards the African culture also spreads among the converts; Oduche and Goodcountry are the manifest examples of that. Moreover, not only does the growing importance of the English language pose a great threat to the native languages, but also helps the colonizers assert their dominance. Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to the missionary school to bring back the colonizers’ knowledge to the tribe so that the people can fight back. Unfortunately, his decision backfires as Oduche starts despising the African tradition, influenced by the colonial education. In his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Thiong’o sheds light on this phenomenon. According to Thiong’o, a language is “both a means of communication and a carrier of culture,” and that is why “the domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized” (13-16). In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon argues that the adoption of the colonizers’ language marks “the death and burial” of the “local cultural originality,” as the colonized people who adopt the colonizers’ language believe that they have elevated above the “jungle status” and have become “whiter” by renouncing their blackness (9). This explains why native converts like Goodcountry and Oduche consider the religion and culture of the colonizers to be superior to the African peoples’ religion and culture. The lives of native converts like Goodcountry, John Nwodika, Moses Unachukwu, and James Ikedi change dramatically because of their ability to speak English which earns them positions in the colonial administration like warrant chief, court messenger, steward, and so on. These people work as native intermediaries for the colonizers helping them strengthen their position in Africa.

In order to ensure total administrative control over Africa, the colonizers created a group of Africans loyal to the colonial establishment who were enticed “to convert to Christianity” for “additional benefits” (Nunn 151). Wesseling claims that “Africans played an important role in the running of the colonial system. Without their collaboration, colonial rule would not have been possible” (372). Village chiefs were among the group of people through whom the colonizers extended the ambit of their rule in Africa. The novel reveals how the colonizers altered the social hierarchy and power structure of Africa by inventing village chiefs “where there were none before” (Achebe 355). Even though Winterbottom knows that “the Igbos never developed any kind of central authority” and initially criticizes the colonial administration’s policy to appoint the village chief, he eventually finds justification for implementing this policy based on his belief that the Africans are incapable of ruling themselves (Achebe 356). But the idea of appointing the village chief is proved to be disastrous as the chiefs start abusing their power through “bribery, extortion, and false criminal trials” (Ayittey 425). James Ikedi, the former chief of Okperi, imposes illegal taxes on people, establishes “an illegal court and a private prison,” and asks the people to call him “His Highness Ikedi the First, Obi of Okperi” in an obscene display of power which he has learned from the colonial administration (Achebe 430). Such incidents prompt Winterbottom to say that when given power, the Africans “turn themselves into little tyrants over their own people. It seems to be a trait in the character of the Negro” (Achebe 430). A fictional character inspired from reality, the British district officer ignores the well-known fact that the colonizers created this problem by inventing tribal chiefs, blames Africans for everything, and justifies the policy of appointing village chiefs as an effective way of indirect ruling. This behavior is explained by Albert Memmi as he mentions that “a colonialist is, after all, only a colonizer who agrees to be a colonizer. By making his position explicit, he seeks to legitimize colonization” (89). This is how by creating loyal native intermediaries, the colonizers altered the social hierarchy and power structure of the Igbo society. As the intermediaries were loyal to the colonizers and hostile to their own people, they brought about further division and chaos in society helping the colonizers carry out their ‘divide and rule’ policy.

Forceful subjugation of the Africans was another method that the colonizers adopted in their quest for conquering Africa. In *Arrow of God*, Achebe reveals that the colonizers did not hesitate to use force when they wanted. One of Ezeulu’s followers recalls that the British soldiers destroyed Abame for killing a white man, and “the story of what these soldiers did in Abame was still told with
fear” (Achebe 347). Innes mentions that it is “the devastating power” of British colonial rule that “has been manifested in the terrible destruction of Abame” (69). Winterbottom gives the disputed land to Okperi because they welcome the missionaries and the government, but Umuaro does not. This is how Winterbottom’s intervention leads to further dispute between Umuaro and Okperi. The arrest and incarceration of Ezeulu because of his refusal to obey Winterbottom’s order to be a village chief proves that the colonial administration can go to any length to suppress any resistance. Winterbottom says that he “won’t have any natives thinking they can treat the administration with contempt” (Achebe 473). Sometimes, “the natives were to be forced to work without pay to keep costs down” (Ayittey 422). Mr. Wright and Winterbottom force the villagers of Umuaro to build the road linking Umuaro to Okperi without any pay. When Obika raises his voice against such injustice, he is mercilessly lashed by Mr. Wright who calls the laborers “black monkeys” and wrathfully says that he will not tolerate disobedience (Achebe 403). Such an abusive attitude towards the African people is downright racist, and forcing them to work without pay is nothing but slavery. The helpless villagers of Umuaro know that “there is no escape from the white man,” that fighting the white man is like going after a leopard with bare hands, and that if they do so, “the white man would reply by taking all their leaders to prison at Okperi” (Achebe 405-406). Such atrocity was characteristic of colonial rule in Africa. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon mentions that “iniquities such as forced labor, corporal punishment, unequal wages, and the restriction of political rights” was common for the colonized and oppressed Africans (97). Arrow of God sheds light on all these forms of iniquity mentioned by Fanon revealing the grim reality of colonial Africa. Since Okperi welcomes the missionaries and Umuaro resists them, it is the people of Umuaro who are forcefully subjugated by the colonizers. It is the people of Umuaro who are on the receiving end of abusive and unequal treatment by the colonizers while Okperi earns special favor. This is how the colonizers used force to suppress resistance, subjugate people, and create division among different communities.

A Bend in the Ganges: The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy in South Asia

In South Asia, the support of native intermediaries was extremely crucial for the British rulers, just like it was in Africa. The intermediaries worked as agents of division among people of different class and religion contributing to the execution of the ‘divide and rule’ policy. Bose and Jalal claim that the “strong strand of collaboration” between the British rulers and the “Indian intermediate social groups” was among the “critical factors which brought the British success” (57). According to Cohn, most of these intermediaries belonged to a “new landed class” who “acquired wealth through working for the new [colonial] administration” (431). Many of them were awarded titles of honor such as Raisahib and Raibahadur because of their loyalty to the colonial government which made them so servile that they did not support India’s movement for independence. When Debi Dayal, the protagonist of the novel, is arrested for his anti-colonial revolutionary activities, his father Tekchand, who “held an honorary commission in the British-Indian army,” condemns Debi’s anti-colonial activities and denounces him as a “seditionist” (Malgonkar 119). The novel also portrays how Raisahib Tulsidas’ son murders Gian Talwar’s elder brother due to a family feud, and is not punished because of his connection with the colonial government. Tulsidas is the local landlord who extorts money from the local people to pay revenue to the colonial government. His misuse of power makes the local people believe that the British are more trustworthy than the Indians who abuse their judicial and law enforcement power. Gian expects “complete fairness” (Malgonkar 55) from an English judge in the court, and his domestic helper Tukaram believes that the British do not take bribe like the Indians. But in reality, the colonial administration has always supported the Sahibs who have returned the favor by working for the British to strengthen their position in India. Gain Talwar’s faith in the colonial administration shatters when he fails to receive justice for his brother. As a result, he moves away from the path of Gandhian non-violence, kills Tulsidas’ son to take revenge, and eventually supports the Indian nationalist anti-colonial revolutionary movement.

The colonial rulers used the religious differences and conflicts among the Hindus, the Muslims, and the Sikhs to their own advantage to execute the British policy which eventually saw the partition...
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of India. Shashi Tharoor mentions that “religion became a useful means of divide and rule,” particularly the Hindu-Muslim divide which was “defined, highlighted and fomented by the British as a deliberate strategy” (111). Bimal Prasad points out that “because of their strategic position the British could easily play one community against the other and this they always did” (257). Manohar Malgonkar highlights this issue in *A Bend in the Ganges*. Shafi Usman, the leader of the group of revolutionaries in this novel, identifies religious differences as the main cause of India’s subjugation, and regrets that “the British had learned to take the fullest advantage of these differences, playing the Hindus against the Muslims, and the Sikhs against both” (Malgonkar 73). He also regrets that the Congress and the Muslim League have been tricked by the British into exacerbating the religious divide by antagonizing each other. Shafi believes that “the nationalists have just played into their [the British rulers] hands—Gandhi and Jinnah both” (Malgonkar 73).

Shashi Tharoor claims that the ‘divide and rule’ policy was nothing but a “process of social separation that soon manifested itself as psychological separation and conscious of difference” leading each community to “fear that its self-interest could be jeopardized by the success of others” (111). This explains why Shafi Usman, a purveyor of Hindu-Muslim unity and a strong adherent to secular principles, suddenly starts to mistrust his fellow Muslim revolutionaries, conspires to arrest them, and re-orientates his activity as a revolutionary by joining the Pakistan movement. Shafi, who has always believed that breaking Hindu-Muslim solidarity is nothing but “playing into the hands of the British,” eventually falls into the very trap of separatism as he is convinced by Hafiz—another Muslim revolutionary—who claims that the Hindus will make the Muslims their slaves after the British leave India (Malgonkar 91). *A Bend in the Ganges* vividly portrays how the policy created mistrust among the Hindus and the Muslims of South Asia. Such mistrust reinforced the Hindu-Muslim division, and made the implementation of this policy easier.

Using force was a common method for the British rulers to tackle any anti-colonial insurgency. They were particularly ruthless against the revolutionary freedom fighters who opted for violence to put an end to the colonial rule in India. But the revolutionaries were not the only target of colonial violence, as unarmed civilians were also victims. *A Bend in the Ganges* gives the readers a glimpse of how the colonial rulers used force and violence to deal with anti-colonial uprising. For the revolutionaries, “anyone who represented that [British] rule, British or Indian, was their enemy; anything that represented that [British] rule was their legitimate target” (Malgonkar 72). As a result, the British police force was always on the hunt for the revolutionaries, who would receive severe punishments including death sentence and life imprisonment if they were caught. Before Shafi Usman betrays his fellow Hindu revolutionaries and joins the Pakistan movement, he remains the most wanted man in his state, as the British police proclaims “a reward of thousand rupees to anyone giving information leading to his capture dead or alive” (Malgonkar 71). After Debi Dayal is arrested because of his involvement in anti-colonial terrorist activities, he is sentenced to life imprisonment, and is sent to the Cellular Jail in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Ironically, the lack of unity among the Gandhi-led nonviolent protesters and the violent revolutionaries made both groups vulnerable to colonial reprisal. Moreover, the Hindu-Muslim conflict also led to the Congress-Muslim League rift which eventually tarnished the religious solidarity among the revolutionaries. Such divisions only helped the British rulers to single out their opponents and use force to bring them down. But, as stated above, the attacks were not limited only to the militants, as unarmed civilians were also subjected to brutality.

The notorious Jallianwala Bagh massacre is one of the most heinous acts of mass murder committed by the British rulers. The massacre was “no act of insane frenzy but a conscious, deliberate imposition of colonial will” that took the lives of “at least 379 people” (Tharoor 169-170). *A Bend in the Ganges* gives a glimpse of the trauma caused by the massacre, as it reveals that Shafi Usman’s father is killed in the massacre when Shafi is only seven years old: “He had been taken to identify the body of his father, flung obscenely on a heap of other bodies” when the “dead of Jallianwala had already began to smell” (Malgonkar 74-75). This traumatic event inspires Shafi to join the revolutionary movement later. The colonial rulers deliberately used force to intimidate the mass
in an attempt to prevent them from uniting against the colonial rule. Since the aim of the ‘divide and rule’ policy was to prevent people from being united, the colonial rulers did not hesitate to use force to accomplish that goal.

Conclusions: The ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy and Its Strategic Blueprint

A close examination of these three novels reveals the fact that in spite of the obvious differences between Africa and South Asia, the basic strategies the colonizers used in order to execute the ‘divide and rule’ policy across these two geographical contexts were quite similar. Their method was simple. At first, they cleverly took advantage of the existing social, cultural, religious, political, and other kinds of divisions among the local people. The River Between portrays the division between Makuyu and Kameno, revealing the lack of unity in the Gikuyu society in East Africa; Arrow of God highlights the division between Umuaro and Okperi, revealing the lack of unity in the Igbo society in West Africa; and A Bend in the Ganges reveals the rift between the Hindus and the Muslims in South Asia. The ideological differences between the adherents to the militant Swadeshi movement and the followers of the Gandhian peaceful non-cooperation movement also receive a special treatment in A Bend in the Ganges. The British colonizers were quick to identify and use these differences to their advantage. They played one group against the other which widened the rift between the opposing groups. Both The River Between and Arrow of God capture how the colonizers favor the villages with the biggest number of Christian converts and exploit the ones where the traditionalists dominate. A Bend in the Ganges portrays how the lack of unity among the adherents to the Swadeshi movement and the Gandhian non-cooperation movement allowed the colonial administration to suppress the Swadeshi revolutionaries. The novel also highlights how the Hindu-Muslim tension significantly weakened the revolutionary movement, as mistrust crept in among the revolutionaries of different religions forcing them to go their separate ways. The British colonizers cleverly used the existing differences among the locals in Africa and South Asia as a strategy to execute the ‘divide and rule’ policy, and all three novels in discussion capture this aspect successfully.

After that, the colonizers exacerbated communal differences and conflicts by introducing new agents of division like Christianity and English education. In East Africa and West Africa, Christianity played a vital role in cementing the position of the British colonial rulers (Williams 24). Both The River Between and Arrow of God portray how Christianity poses an existential threat to the native African cultures and religions, and how the Christian converts start disregarding indigenous customs. Both novels highlight how the English-educated converts benefit from their ties with the colonial rulers, whereas those who reject Christianity and English education face utmost discrimination. Even though the colonizers claim that they introduced Christianity and English education in Africa for the well-being of the Africans, their actual motive was to establish colonial dominance (Césaire 32). In South Asia, Christianity was not very much accepted due to the strong influence of Hinduism and Islam; however, the introduction of English education worked in favor of the colonial administration. Many critics believe that the primary purpose of introducing English education to India “was to train clerks for government offices, to produce minor functionaries who would fit smoothly and without friction in the intricate administrative machinery of the British government in India” (Gupta 73). Moreover, “the effect of this limited education available” to a handful of people “was obviously deleterious to the masses” because it “only helped to prepare a group of elites who would be alienated from the rest of the society” (Kamerkar 377). A Bend in the Ganges portrays how a class of English-educated people is alienated from the society. Not only do they bow down to the colonial administration, but also oppose India’s movement of independence. This is how the British colonizers introduced new agents of division like Christianity and English education to further divide the people in Africa and South Asia, and all three novels in discussion capture this aspect vividly.

After introducing these new agents of division, the British colonizers created a group of native intermediaries who were loyal to the colonial administration. All three novels in discussion capture this phenomenon accurately through the depiction of characters that not only side with the colonizers, but also loathe their own culture and heritage. Moreover, they benefit from their
coalition with the colonizers, and many of them actively oppose any resistance against colonial oppression. *The River Between* portrays Joshua’s loyalty to the colonial administration. *Arrow of God* depicts characters like Oduche and Goodcountry who are indoctrinated in the colonial dogma to such an extent that they do not shy away from resorting to violence in order to obstruct the observation of native African rituals. Moses Unachukwu achieves high social status because of his English education, and James Ikedi maintains close relationship with the colonial administration for monetary benefit. *A Bend in the Ganges* portrays characters like Gopal, Tulsidas, and Tekchand who are in favor of the British colonial rule in India. Gopal’s family has close ties with the colonial administration, Tulsidas is a landlord who collects revenue for the British government, and Tekchand holds an honorary commission in the British-Indian army. All of them benefit from the colonial rule and therefore oppose any kind of anti-colonial movement, may it be it the Swadeshi movement led by the Indian revolutionaries, or the peaceful non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi. By highlighting how the British colonizers used native intermediaries to consolidate colonial dominance, all three novels in discussion reveal a major mechanism at work behind the ‘divide and rule’ policy.

The final step of establishing total colonial dominance was to use force. The British colonizers used force to establish colonial settlements and to suppress any anti-colonial movement ranging from peaceful protest to armed insurgency. *The River Between* reveals how the British colonizers forcefully evicted the native Africans in East Africa and grabbed their lands. The colonial administration also imposed high taxes on African peasants leaving them economically crippled. The novel also reveals that the colonial administration was ruthless to the native Africans who dared to stand against colonial oppression. Similarly, *Arrow of God* highlights how the British colonizers used brutal force in West Africa to continue their conquest. The destruction of Abame is one of many incidents where entire villages were wiped out by the British soldiers. The attempted killing of the sacred python represents an attack on the native African religious beliefs, and the incarceration of Ezeulu is an example of subduing resistance against the colonial administration. The novel also captures the introduction of forced labor and slavery in West Africa by the British colonial administration. *A Bend in the Ganges* reveals how the British colonizers in South Asia used force to suppress anti-colonial resistance and to silence voices that rose against colonial oppression. The colonial administration was particularly ruthless against the Indian revolutionaries who carried out the Swadeshi movement—an organized armed rebellion against the British Raj. The protagonist Debi Dayal is captured and incarcerated in the notorious Cellular Jail—a historically infamous colonial prison in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The novel also sheds light on the horrors of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre revealing the fact that even a peaceful gathering of people was not safe from the bullets of the British soldiers under the colonial administration. It is patently obvious that the British colonizers used force as a strategy to execute the ‘divide and rule’ policy in Africa and South Asia, and all three novels in discussion reveal this truth commendably.

Therefore, all three novels paint a clear picture of the existing communal differences among the colonized people, and show how the colonizers took advantage of that. They show how the introduction of new agents of division threatened the indigenous cultures of Africa and India. The novels also show colonial atrocities by depicting how the colonizers used brutal force to establish their dominance. By highlighting these issues, the novels in discussion reveal the colonial mechanism at work for the execution of the ‘divide and rule’ policy in both regions. Finally, all the three novels in question portray a clear picture of the devastating impact of the ‘divide and rule’ policy in their respective context. This is how, despite the contextual differences, the novels are in dialogue with one another in terms of their portrayal and treatment of how such policy was implemented, and its impact on people’s lives.
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