



J. G. FARELL'S *THE SIEGE OF KRISHNAPUR*: (RE)SITUATING THE IMAGE OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The present paper discusses J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* – a Booker Prize-winning novel based on the Raj and published in the 1970s, decades after the Raj period in India ended and India became independent. The novel is quite unlike the colonial discourses on India. Further, the paper interrogates the mode in which the novelist (re)situates the image of India. Moreover, the present analysis is an indictment portrayed by the author on the basis of race – the indigenous' defective kinds in order to legitimise conquering and structuring public and private spheres. Even though the currently being studied work has a nostalgic bent for the Raj, they do not entirely adhere to the ideologies of earlier colonial discourses.

KEY WORDS: *Image, public sphere, nationalism, orientalism, post-colonialism.*

INTRODUCTION

The Siege of Krishnapur by James Gordon Farrell won the Booker Prize in 1973. *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), along with his works *Troubles* (1970) and *The Singapore Grip* (1978), forms the Empire Trilogy. The Empire Trilogy deals with three key episodes from the history of the British Empire in its decline. *The Siege of Krishnapur* gives a partly fictional account of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The novel, *Troubles* is set in the midst of the political upheaval of Irish War of Independence and *The Singapore Grip* is about the last days of the British Empire just before the invasion of Singapore by the Japanese in the Second World War.

The present novel, *The Siege of Krishnapur* is set in a fictitious town called Krishnapur. The plot revolves around the attempts and efforts of the British residents, particularly the Collector, Mr Hopkins, to fight off the mutinous sepoys till relief forces come to their aid. Initially, the British government in Calcutta does not take rumours of the rebellion seriously. The British officials nurture the illusion that Indians are incapable of fighting the British. However, quite contrary to their expectations, the sepoys' rebel, leaving the English under siege in Krishnapur. The English face many hardships during the period of the siege and are in a pitiable state by the time relief forces arrive to regain control over Krishnapur. Following this, it may be stated that the 1857 Revolt against the British gave the English authors a fantastic setting to showcase their bravery along with the dominance of the Anglo Saxons over the conquered could be depicted (qtd. in McLeod 43). Such novels eulogised the British defeat of the sepoys and reinforced the colonial discourse of British superiority.

(Re)situating the Image of India

Farrell's novel is not a celebratory account of the Mutiny. Farrell's account of the Mutiny, though written in the manner of imperial adventure fiction, is essentially a subversive one that employs irony, inversion and parody to achieve this end. Farrell understands that imperial modes of self-perception have their roots in cultural forms, and that the only way to get access to and reconsider a history that still has an impact on the present is through an ironic reworking of these cultural forms (Morey 110). The title of the novel is very ironic. The irony lies in the fact that Indian sepoys in their own land are represented as invaders whereas the real English invaders like the Collector seem to represent the good and the heroic, fighting valiantly against their evil enemies.

Farrell's representation of the Mutiny inverts the coloniser-colonised picture and presents a picture of the English colonisers being colonised by the Indians and subjected to poverty, misery and fear. Farrell shows us how English men and women let go of their pretensions of culture and civility and stoop unimaginably low when they encounter harsh realities of life under siege. The English community is compelled to sacrifice one luxury after another during the siege. They are herded together in a room at the Residency without any servants at their beck and call. Their punkahs had become defunct and the ladies had to "fight polite but ruthless battles" (*The Siege* 109) for a place under the working punkahs. These white ladies had to look after themselves for the first time in their lives (155).

With their consumptive appearance and lice-infested heads, the colonisers begin to resemble Indians. Shortage of food supplies forces them to eat dal and chapati, the common food of the poor Indian. The Magistrate conducts an auction of private food stores of people who had died during the siege. Though, at the end of the auction, it is found that most of the food items were brought by Mr Rayne with the help of his servants. When confronted by the Magistrate, Mr Rayne reveals that he intended to sell the food item to the residents later at a higher price. "It's a question of fortune, Mr. Hopkins. One has to make the best of a situation" (260). Mr Rayne's ruthless economic exploitation immediately brings to mind the economic exploitation of the Indians by the English. Incidentally, Farrell inverts the exploiter-exploited equation under colonization when he tells us that the Indian dhobis taking advantage of the siege had hiked their prices and even the Collector is forced to wash his own clothes like a dhobi.

Quite significantly, the whites become exhibits for a crowd of native on-lookers who come with their picnic hampers to observe the whites from a nearby hill slope using telescopes and opera glasses. This is an interesting departure from and an inversion of the colonial situation in which the Orient should be under the supervisory gaze of the civilized Occident. Acute shortage of food compels the English to take desperate measures. An aged horse is seized, killed, and its flesh is given out as food. A black beetle is spotted by The Collector on the stairs. He grabs it with his fingers, pops it into his mouth, and crunches it with the same joy as if it were a chocolate truffle (278-285).

Hunger thus turns the most civilized of the English to turn barbaric. When relief troops arrive at the Residency, the General is distressed to see his men looking like poor devils: They resembled untouchables; he had never previously seen Brits get themselves into such a state (309). The metaphor of sickness is a significant one in the novel. Even though the English are medically advanced, they find it difficult to control the outbreak of cholera and other diseases within the Residency. A host of English characters in the novel including the Collector, the Joint Magistrate and Dr. Dunstaple fall ill.

Subsequently, it has been asserted by Binns that "Sickness functions as a metaphor for the rottenness of the imperial order" (69). Quite significantly, Mr Hopkins suffers from myopia. The Collector's myopia is not just literal, but metaphoric as well. In this connection, Crane rightly observes: "Telescopes cannot help the Collector's cultural myopia or his Whig view of history..." (100). Farrell's use of parody is also a significant counter-discursive strategy. The mock-heroic battle fought by Fleury, dressed like Robin Hood in a green suit cut from the baize of a billiard table, is described hilariously by Farrell (293). The Englishmen use instruments of civilisation such forks, teaspoons, and violins as weapons to fight the mutinous sepoys is also significant: A sepoy wearing a green turban had his spine broken by 'The Spirit of Science,' while others had been killed by spoons, fish knives, and marbles, and a

poor subadar had silver sugar tongs inserted into his brain that had caused him to pass away (*The Siege* 289).

Farrell seems to ironically imply that the English did not bring civilization to India, they only brought in destruction. Here, Farrell draws our attention to what Taylor calls "the gap between imperial ideals and imperial practice" (Kalpakli 211). Again, the use of books of literature as ballistic weapons in the battle is not just humorous, but also a witty dramatization of the postcolonial view that literature served as an instrument of imperial power (304). The depiction of the mock-heroic battle scenes also brings to the forefront the question of representation and its indispensable role in the construction of the colonial discourse. Even while participating in the battle, Fleury finds happiness in imagining himself in heroic postures.

Though engaged in firing cannon, he pictures himself captured in a noble pose for the Illustrated London News (*The Siege* 139). According to McLeod, the novel's central parody of colonial discourse is on the idea of staging and performing predetermined roles. Characters are frequently shown trying self-consciously to play out stereotypes (46). The General who comes with relief force at the end of the novel also cannot help reflect on how he and the siege will come to be portrayed (*The Siege* 310-11). The value of the prized collection in possession of Mr Hopkins, the Collector, is also subjected to deconstruction by Farrell.

Furthermore, it may be observed that the Great Exhibition of 1851 is Mr. Hopkins's obsession. The Crystal Palace by Joseph Paxton, which was initially built in London's Hyde Park and subsequently moved to Sydenham Park in 1854, is referred to as 'The Great Exhibition'. In this context, Strongman is found to have affirmed that the 'Great Exhibition' serves as an extravagant metaphor for the size and exhibition of the British Empire. The enormous iron and glass structure served as a temple, museum, and gallery for the tangible achievements of empire founded on the principles of civilization and development. It had a vast collection and display of items, wonders, and innovations from the farthest extremities of empire and Europe (Strongman 20).

Subsequently, it may be stated that the Collector sees the Exhibition as an instance of the superiority of the English civilization. He regards it "as a collective prayer of all the civilised nations" (53) and has in his possession items that were collected from the Great Exhibition. These items and other prized collections of the Collector have an ambivalent function. Farrell describes how the Collector views the walls over seats and sofas covered with plum cretonne, which are heavily fortified with paintings in oil and water colour, mirrors, and glass cases housing stuffed birds and other wonders (16). According to McLeod, the adjective "armoured" in this context is telling. Instead of serving as proof of a benevolent, hospitable culture, it portrays the collection as a source of cultural protection and authority (53).

Significantly, as the siege progresses, the Collector's prized objects are taken out or dismantled to strengthen the ramparts that were rapidly dissolving in the incessant rain. Many objects of aesthetic beauty are turned into ammunition for cannon. According to McLeod, Farrell wants to highlight the dishonest purpose of the Collector's collecting in this passage. He believes if the collection is an effort to bring people together by creating ideas of universal order, it also aims to obstruct this process by stabilising and hierarchizing cultural heterogeneity (53). According to Morey, the 1851 Exhibition's exhibits, along with broader representational and domesticational methods like travel writing, painting, and imperial adventure fiction, contributed to the mid-Victorian belief in power via knowledge. However, the First Sepoy War, which occurred barely six years after the Indian Mutiny, severely revealed the British power in India's core complacency. The book by Farrell plays on the tension between faith in Western development, materialism, and surveillance, and the harrowing privations of a siege during the Mutiny (111).

At the culmination of the siege, the Collector realises how trivial, pointless, and significant the siege of Krishnapur had been (*The Siege* 311). He becomes aware of the tragedy of India's hungry millions as a result of the blockade. He gives up his membership in progressive organisations and fine arts associations and sells his art holdings. The Collector learns that "[c]ulture is a sham" and that "[r]ich people paint culture on life to cover up its ugliness" (313). He develops a habit of pacing the

streets of London, frequently in the less affluent districts, in all kinds of weather, alone himself, seldom speaking to anyone but staring as if he had never seen a poor person before (312). The siege brings about a complete transformation in the Collector. He not only realizes the failure of the English to bring their ideas of civilization to India, but also comes to realize that India has a civilization of its own.

At the beginning of the novel, Farrell portrays a village with a terrifying pond and one or two water buffaloes; more frequently, there is merely a well that must be dug from dawn till dusk by the same two men and two bullocks every single day of their life. But, whether or not there is a pond doesn't really matter to a traveller because there is nothing comfortable or civilised about this place in either scenario. (9) The image of the two men and two bullocks makes an indelible impression on the mind of the Collector. "When he thought of India in later years, he would always see these two men and two bullocks" (311). The impact of this picture on the Collector has been noted: Two Indians getting water from a well - a scene that, in his mind, encapsulates India since it depicts lives that are fully functional without the aid of western culture, ideas, or technology (82). The defamiliarization of the heroic, as expressed in the Victorian notion of the civilising mission of the Empire and its motto: "the White Man's burden among the 'lesser breeds' of the world, has also been correctly noted by Lars Harvett as one of *The Siege's* most significant effects" (Strongman 24).

The novel's reversal of British fortunes is certainly subversive, but the novel betrays ambivalence in its acknowledgement of the failure of the colonial enterprise. By the end of his life, The Collector comes to feel that a people, a nation, is not formed according to its own finest ideas, but rather is fashioned by other forces about which it knows little (*The Siege* 313). Great Britain had the "best ideas" for India, but they did not materialize. The failure of the mission is vaguely attributed to "other forces, of which it has little knowledge", thereby granting the English a certain innocence in their ignorance. Farrell does not indict the British colonial project as wrong; he only sees it as a failed mission and in doing so sends out an ambiguous message through *The Siege of Krishnapur*.

Furthermore, it may be observed that the novel written in 1973 depicts the British people's true anguish when the locals suffered injuries that were intolerable and they instantly began acting like paternal overlords, guiding the white people forward and upward. Farrell seeks to show that during the "Siege of Lucknow", the British populace was forced to live (for the first time in imperial history) in a manner similar to the millions of Indians who had been subject to foreign control for many years. Farrell accomplishes this by vividly portraying the turbulent days of the Mutiny. In figurative terms, the novel provides a revolutionary depiction of the Mutiny. Moreover, it may be noticed that a crisis in the Raj is depicted in Farrell's factual novel, *The Siege of Krishnapur*.

In the fictional Indian setting of Krishnapur, a pivotal period in the history of the 19th century Raj is recreated in Farrell's book. The Dalhousie government, which culminated in the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the coronation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India, is the historical period in which the novel is set in India. In order to employ reality in a literary fashion, Farrell alters chronicles and memoirs of the "Siege of Lucknow" for the novel. As a result, "the fictitious town of Krishnapur (city of Krishna)" serves as the new backdrop for the book (Crane & Livett, *Troubled* 84). The tale describes the harsh circumstances the British had to endure in India during the Sepoy Rebellion.

Since the Indian people lack the resources to challenge British rule in India, the British administration makes the false assumption that they would not dare violate the colonial agreement and act promptly to suppress the sepoy uprising. The sepoys are still carrying out their intentions and have surrounded the English Residency in Krishnapur. The British residents of the Residency start to lose hope in their ability to survive, but in the end, British relief forces save them, and British sovereignty in India is re-established. Nonetheless, even if British supremacy is accomplished, Farrell takes a critical stance towards the British imperial policies in India in the book. Both an action story and a less successful novel of ideas, the book is both.

Farrell attempted a full-scale historical re-creation in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, in contrast to his intuitively written *Troubles*, which was written from his bones. But, his laborious parody of a Victorian novel groans under the weight of his extensive study, which ranges from social mores to phrenology to religious debates in the 19th century. Not only are a bunch of discouraged men and women gathered in

the Krishnapur enclosure, but there are also high Victorian intellectual curios. Sometimes, Farrell's characters are little more than signposts indicating different proclivities, each playing their assigned part. Mr. Hopkins, the Collector (in British India, the district chief), is the main character and, like Edward Spenser, is little ludicrous, despite being painted with less effort. He enjoys making grandiose declarations about development and civilization.

The British imperial endeavour in India was undoubtedly supported by such principles, but Farrell's approach to his characters may be just as harsh and blatant as their lofty notions about the gospel of development. The novel is essentially an attempt to demolish illusions. Farrell portrays it as a life-changing experience from the perspective of his protagonists, who are fighting for their lives as well as their material possessions and everything they have ever believed. The Collector survives and lives to an advanced age without having to deal with the strange ideas about his civilising mission that he once entertained; they were buried with the dead of Krishnapur.

The besieged British colonisers, however, are not heroes and, as evidenced by their inconsistent internal focus, have a variety of concerns on their minds that do not exactly support the Victorian idea of superior Christians. The majority of the energy expended by those who will be remembered as the 'heroes of Krishnapur' appears to be used in disputes over food, money, Protestant and Catholic dead bodies (between the two priests of the Anglo-Indian community), and ultimately over moral principles and social positions (there is a 'fallen woman' in the Residency). In a strict sense, the book lacks a hero and doesn't have any characters who the reader is constantly encouraged to empathise with. There isn't even a true villain or an anti-hero.

The breakdown of the British "stock figured" memory of 1857, with its spectacular heroes and villains, includes this tactic. Unmatched in the fictional literature of imperialism, Farrell launches an attack on imperialism through his narrative. The book is a fictitious reproduction of a historical reality; it is not a true account of the Indian Mutiny. Farrell intended to change the way he approached the Mutiny. Accurate historical realism is irrelevant in a work of fiction that aims to make a subtle but potent critique of imperialism and its civilization. The fact that Farrell wrote a book about the Mutiny at a time when more than fifty other books had already been written about the subject is significant.

The following extract from Crane's *Inventing India* exemplifies this point:

"The events which began on 10 May 1857 are known variably as the Indian Mutiny, the Sepoy Mutiny, the Sepoy Rebellion, the Sepoy Revolt and the First War of Independence.... It was not simply a Mutiny or rebellion by the Bengal sepoys, as many Victorians saw it, because although it was by no means embraced by the whole population, it was not confined solely to the Sepoys either." (11)

Farrell recognises the foundation of imperial modes of self-perception in cultural forms and believes that the best way to rethink a past that still has an impact on the present is through an ironic of such cultural forms. This sets his work apart from other Anglo-Indian novelists of empire, such as John Masters and M. M. Kaye. In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Farrell makes an effort to subvert the popular imperial adventure fiction genre from the 19th century through the use of pastiche and mock-heroic techniques in addition to cultural revival. He brings to the fore issues of representation as well as fantasies of power through supervision seen in the novels of authors like Kipling and Masters by inverting the gaze and abruptly making the coloniser the subject of the 'othering' perspective of the natives who arrived to observe the progress of the siege from a nearby hillside.

In the novel, Farrell carries out an ironic distance in time between a contemporary silent reader and the society of the 19th century. Metaphors are used effectively by Farrell in his writing. The novel's title is symbolic in and of itself. The majority of Farrell's narrative was based on histories and memoirs of the "Siege of Lucknow", but the action was moved to the fictional town of Krishnapur (which means "city of Lord Krishna"). Farrell intentionally opened up more dimensions in the term by inventing a made-up location. One of the standout characteristics of Farrell's novels is the variety of interpretations. The meaning in *The Siege of Krishnapur* is mutable and open-ended.

The narrative of the novel oscillates between these two poles of possible reference because the title of the book, "Troubles", has two interpretative dimensions, the historical and the philosophical.

The phrase maintains a creative oscillation from one pole to the other since the title engages these dimensions in such a strong and unified way. While a look at the historical elements reveals Farrell's sardonic view of the past, a look at the philosophical elements indicates Farrell's interest in the way of life during those bloody times of imperial expansion and, ultimately, in man and his difficult condition. The "siege" of *The Siege of Krishnapur*, as used in its immediate historical context, refers to an incident often known as "the siege of Lucknow" in the initial war for Indian Independence, when a group of English colonisers and their families were besieged by the insurgent sepoy.

Farrell has pointed out the metaphorical undertones of the novel's "siege" in a metaphysical framework. These symbolic connotations are described in the following lines by Farrell himself, as reported in Binns' "J. G. Farrell, in an interview with Malcolm Dean" of *The Guardian* on 1st September, 1973: "(a siege) is a microcosm of real life and (the) human condition – hostility all around you with the individual in a rather temporary shelter" (18). This justification suggests that Farrell foresees the impending fall of the British Empire. Ronald Binns offers the following claim in connection to these problems, such as temporariness and insecurity, which are felt more keenly during situations like battles and sieges. Humans and their communities are constantly under siege in Farrell's mature fiction, ravaged by circumstance both within and externally (23).

Farrell thoroughly examines these difficulties in *The Siege of Krishnapur* in an effort to make the British imperialists aware of them. This idea is best illustrated by the following incident from the Sepoy Rebellion, which shows the battle between the sepoy and the British colonists during which the latter use spoons and forks (*The Siege* 317). This depicts the process of the British Empire's decline in India, referring to the wrong policies of the English colonisers and the wrong behaviour of the English people in India. Thus, Farrell is emphasising that the use of violence against civilians in India is one of the British's mistakes. Furthermore, civilisational instruments such as teaspoons and forks become weapons of violence and destruction when English colonisers use them as weapons.

As a result, rather than bringing civilisation to India, British colonisers bring violence and bloodshed. In this way, Farrell draws readers' attention to the British colonisers' wrong imperial policies, because he believes in colonisation through persuasion, not colonisation through violence. By mocking the British colonisers, Farrell attempts to raise their awareness of the importance of using the proper colonisation methods. Farrell, in other words, is concerned with "the gap between imperial ideals and imperial practice(s)" (Taylor, "Commentary," *New Statesman* 41).

Despite the English colonisers' claims to have a superior and deeply rooted civilisation, as illustrated by the statues of Plato and Socrates in the novel, the invalidity of this claim is revealed by Peter Morey's remarks:

"European civilization is personified by the enormous marble sculptures of Plato and Socrates that tower over the hostile plain and serve as cover for Harry Dunstaple's artillery on the walls. Their last look was horribly damaged by musket and round fire. It shows how Western philosophical systems fail to encompass and represent the East". (*The Siege* 308)

The Collector is introduced in the novel as the personification of that aspect of Victorianism that sought to take advantage of the opportunities presented by cultural and technological advancement in order to bring Western civilisation to the "uncivilised" East through his collection of artefacts from the Great Exhibition. This goal should also be served by the wealth produced by capitalism (and, of course, colonialism). According to him, the goal is to gain that higher way of life, which we amorphously refer to as civilisation and which encompasses a wide range of things, both spiritual and practical, through riches rather than merely acquiring wealth (Morey, *Fictions of* 116).

In the end, the Collector comes to terms with two facts: first, that British invaders failed to successfully introduce advanced culture and civilization to India since they instead brought carnage and violence; and second, that Indians already possess a civilisation of their own. Farrell appears to be emphasising the following points as a result: The English must also respect the native people's distinctive culture, which the British must acknowledge exists. British colonisers ought to learn how to get along better with Indians and colonise them from within Indian society rather than from the outside. Throughout the book, Farrell skilfully employs metaphors to illustrate the British mission to

introduce civilization to India. The title is symbolic in and of itself. Farrell feels the escalating animosity of the Indian people towards the British occupiers as well as the impending collapse of the British Empire and British civilisation through the symbolic description.

Farrell highlights the idea of temporariness, in particular the transience of British civilisation and culture, through the metaphorical portrayal of several diseases in *The Siege of Krishnapur*. For instance, the Collector's myopia prevents him from seeing the distant future, which includes the fall of the Empire, but he can see the near future, the Sepoy Rebellion. The Collector gives up social idealism after receiving medical care for his illness and learns that "his confidence in the superiority of his own time over all past times has quite vanished" (*The Siege* 100).

Furthermore, it may be observed that the Collector loses trust in the superiority of his culture and civilization over that of India and declaring, "Culture is a sham.... It's a cosmetic painted on life by rich people to conceal its ugliness" (349). This shows that he was aware of the distinctions between Indian and British civilisation. He also understands that it is impossible to compare two diverse things as superior or inferior to one another. Farrell contends that the British colonisers treated the colonised in general and the sepoys in particular only as exploitable people because they were arrogant and had a false feeling of pride in the glories of their superior civilization. Farrell suggests that the British Empire had to overcome a dishonourable exodus from the majority of its colonies because the British culture was mistakenly seen by the imperial rulers as the solution to all societal, political, and administrative obstacles to nation-building.

In *Farewell the Trumpets*, James Morris writes ironically that in the heyday of their imperial power, the British truly felt they were carrying out a divine mission, innocently, elegantly in the name of Lord and the Queen (37-38). Moreover, Morris states that one has to forget the underlying motivations and tactics of the British Empire. Following this, in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Farrell examines and reveals the real goals and techniques of imperialism. In this case, imperial civilization is like a deadly illness that seeks to spread to the defenceless Indian populace. After the unlucky distribution of chappatis, which "swept the countryside like an epidemic" (*The Siege* 11), the Collector, who is depressed and trying to avoid the purportedly mounted whip, orders the construction of a tall wall and a deep ditch around the Residency's perimeter. Ironically, the sickness strikes from within, which compels readers to consider the disease's profound symbolic implications as it threatens to wipe out the imperial community left to its fate in the Residency.

As a result, the illness is still undiagnosed, and this diagnostic handicap may be connected to the illness of imperial civilization that has gone unrecognised until it ultimately led to the collapse of the Empire's health. When Farrell discovers that the walls are made of bricks, he makes the humorous remark that bricks are unquestionably a necessary component of civilization and that without them, one cannot advance at all (10). Hence, in his description of Krishnapur's landscape, Farrell has made it clear in a characteristically Farrellean manner that the text is a serious and deftly executed attack on imperial civilisation. Farrell's expert assessment of a mistakenly imagined superior civilisation is possible in the very description of the existence of Krishnapur, which is the figurative centre from which the disease of imperial civilisation spreads like an epidemic: Anyone who has never visited Krishnapur before and approaches from the East is likely to believe that he has arrived a few miles sooner than he expected (9).

Thus, by maintaining an ironic narrative stance and introducing characters who represent opposing responses to the colonial experience, Farrell advances to expose the sham of the myth of imperial civilisation. Fleury, who appears to be Farrell's civilisation mouthpiece, refers to the colonisers' concept of civilisation as a "beneficial disease" (42). Fleury is commissioned to write a book about "the advances that civilisation had made in India under Company rule" (24) and returns to England with plenty of reservations about the so-called superior culture and civilisation. When Fleury travels to India to write a book about its darkness, he is troubled to see his own people blinded by the brilliant light of an unfamiliar and elusive culture.

Unlike Conrad's Kurtz in *The Heart of Darkness*, who excavates deep into the heart of darkness in the hope of dissipating it forever, Fleury returns to his home country enlightened. Fleury's depiction

of imperial civilization as a “disease” leads one to believe that Farrell is trying to make a definitive diagnosis of this colonial ailment in his novel. Another prominent figure is The Collector, who is a significant proponent of the ideology of the superior culture and civilization of the Empire, upon which he bases his leadership and conduct in the Residency. The Collector considers British rule after the arrival of the siege, but rather than seeing it as proof of British superiority, he wonders why the native Bengalis should have decided to go back to the anarchy of their forefathers after a century of beneficial rule (159).

It appears that the colonial process is totally one-sided, and the Collector’s mental landscape is devoid of any genuine empathy for the Indian population at this point. He is unable to see beyond his hallowed ideals of progress through civilisation either through colonisation. Through a Great Exhibition (a so-called landmark of Western civilisation), Farrell ridicules the colonizers’ “diseased” concept of civilisation. The Collector is the Great Exhibition’s ardent supporter. He spent a lot of money shipping statues, sculptures, paintings, and other exhibits to India. He wants to show off his “progressive and rational civilisation” (Binns, 66) by displaying these items.

As the Collector claims that some items on display in the Exhibition are strange, offensive, and even comically ludicrous to modern eyes, Farrell’s stance against the idea of a higher culture becomes fairly clear. The Collector’s fascination with the Exhibition as a representation of advanced civilisation becomes a potent critique of civilisation itself. The idea of “superior culture and civilization” as “a doubtful proposition” is broached by Fleury, but he is met with staunch opposition. The Collector concludes by declaring that “a superior civilisation such as ours is irresistible” (*The Siege* 177), but Fleury adamantly responds, “It’s wrong to talk of a “superior civilisation” because there isn’t such a thing. It mars the noble and natural instincts of the heart. Civilisation is decadence!” (177). Here, Farrell makes a deliberate effort to expose imperial hypocrisy through the use of basic ironies, which, from the perspective of his fictional framework, make the episodes appear even more sarcastic. Not just the Collector but several other characters in the book experience disease.

Furthermore, it may be noted that Binns comments on the symbolic nature of illnesses and diseases, and he also notes that in the text – illness acts as a symbol for the imperial order's corruption. The Joint Magistrate is not in Krishnapur as he left for a medical treatment in the highlands, where it was thought he would not come back (42). Given her bad health and recent illness-related death of her youngest child, the Collector's wife is being sent back to England. Cholera killed the wife of Dr. McNab. Dr. Dunstaple and Mr. Donnelly both pass away after heart attacks. Given that India in the nineteenth century was a country with a high mortality rate among Europeans, this list of illness and death is in some ways more plausible and realistic than that contained in *Troubles* (69–70). The cholera epidemic at the Residency, in Binns' opinion, may be viewed as a symptom of moral disease and deterioration (70). Additionally, he claims that “partial blindness” and “swollen heads” have an impact on the imperial community and serve as the “psychological manifestation of their moral myopia” (71) in addition to cholera and other maladies.

In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, the Collector, Mr. Hopkins is the representative of the company. He is the archetype of an Englishman from the 19th century living in India and supporting British colonial policy. Even his decision to become a Collector is pragmatic and is put to use by Farrell. In his *Troubled Pleasures*, Ralph Crane makes the following observation: His ‘collecting’ is a metaphor for the entire British thought, which promotes the acquisition of colonizable (useful) area in addition to tangible possessions. This philosophy of domination, ownership, and materialism is done so in the name of ‘the spread of civilisation’ (94). The novel’s use of the Great Exhibition to illustrate the two contrasting elements of the British Empire functions in two diametrically opposed ways.

The British Empire’s strength and weakness in the face of Indian culture are demonstrated on opposite sides of the coin. In fact, almost from the very beginning of the narrative, the reader finds that the Collector worries about the fragility of the colonially imposed system. He was one of the first people to predict the emergence of the Rebellion. As a result of this apprehension, he advocates to “disarm the native regiments” (*The Siege* 65) to prevent them from rebelling. Apart from the Collector, the imperial authorities paid the least attention to the mutiny rumours: “only the Collector remained convinced that

trouble was coming" (14). Therefore, he gave the order to dig a "a deep trench combined with a thick wall... round the perimeter of the Residency compound" (15)

Fleury, on the other hand, is distinct from the other Englishmen in the book despite having England blood in his veins. Fleury frequently criticises the purported services provided by the British in India. He is referred to as an idealist liberal humanist because of his more favourable attitude towards Indians, their culture, and their civilization in general. He rejects the idea of civilization as being only connected to materialism and technical advancement. Despite the beginning of the siege, he continues to be idealistic. He frequently refutes the idea that British culture is better, telling Louise that India requires a civilisation of the heart rather than 'sordid materialism': "Only then would we have a hope of coexisting together. On that glorious day in the future, would there even be classes and races?". (118) As a result, at various points in the book, he wonders whether civilisation is more than just channels and railways, or whether it also has an emotional or spiritual element. Fleury strives to maintain a sense of equilibrium in his behaviour and is reasonable. The Collector does, however, start to realise the magnitude of his errors and the foolishness of his speech. A sense of powerlessness overtakes him as he understands that his interactions with Indian people have largely been reflections of his own culture and that he has not really experienced native Indian culture. The Collector leaves the Residency and, as he crosses the arid plain between Krishnapur and the railroad for the final time, realises that the authority that comes with his imperial status is hollow. He immediately realises how large India is, and as his perspective widened, he came to see how little, pointless, and significant *The Siege of Krishnapur* had been. (311).

Most of Farrell's characters struggle with the decision of whether to adhere to liberal humanist philosophy because of the tension between the policies of British colonial control and humanistic aspirations. The novel's ending portrays the siege's end not as a tremendous victory but rather as the beginning of the end for the British Empire, British culture, and British civilization. Farrell conveys the idea that this win is actually a defeat or a failure. The British people's rejection of Indian culture and civilization causes Indians to reject English culture as well. The Empire will eventually come to an end as a result of the Indians' rejection of English culture, which is a conclusion Farrell does not want to see. Consequently, it may be surmised that *The Siege of Krishnapur* uses many different imagery and symbols to convey the white conquerors' imperialistic attitude. Ironically and with a lot of humour, Farrell addresses the imperial mindset of the British invaders. In the novel, Farrell uses a number of potent imagery and symbols to portray India. "Tennis court" is one another projection: "picture a map of India as big as a tennis court with two or three hedgehogs crawling over it" (102). This iconic Farrellean depiction of India as a tennis court represents how the British handled India in the 1850s. It may be argued that by utilising this image, Farrell is figuratively suggesting that British colonisers are as irrelevant in India as hedgehogs are on a tennis court.

The reader also finds the "vast and empty plain" resorts as representations throughout the narrative. Keeping this view, it may be pointed out that according to Ronald Binns, Farrell's India is depicted in the same way as Conrad's Africa is in such a way that it makes the white man's claims look ridiculous and insignificant (68). The tale makes numerous allusions to the enormous firmaments of India's disregard for British politics. The Collector makes sweeping claims about progress and civilization, yet his cries echoed in vain across the huge Indian plain, which spanned hundreds of kilometres in all directions (81). Moreover, it may be noted that the novel depicts the vast Indian plains sap the confidence and bravery of the British inmates of the Residency as they consider abandoning the enclave.

Ultimately, Farrell portrays the Collector learning about the siege, India, and life itself from the immense plains of India (*The Siege* 343). The gloomy foundations of his civilised existence were laid by the dreadful days of the siege at Krishnapur make him acutely aware of India's reality, as well as that of its people and way of life. In the first few chapters of the book, Farrell employs the phrase "description of the Indian village" to illustrate the enigmatic permanence of India. It suggests the unfavourable potentials of a nation whose varied facets are shrouded in secrecy and the village is hidden in a bamboo grove and has a terrifying pond with one or two water buffaloes; more frequently, there is just a well

that must be dug from dawn till nightfall by the identical two men and two bullocks on each day of their lives (9-10).

After the siege, which results in significant changes in the British personalities and the political life of imperial Britain (the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India), the Collector is astounded by India's persistence, symbolised by the two men and two bullocks. He was recalling those two men, together with the two bullocks they were using to draw water from the well, not long after his last encounter with Fleury. Possibly at the very end of his life, in 1880, he had come to the conclusion that a people, a nation, is not formed according to its own finest ideas but is instead fashioned by other factors, of which it has little knowledge (345).

CONCLUSION

The concluding lines of the narrative, set against a mystery aspect of Indian society, read like a comprehensive commentary on the evils of imperialism. The "billiard room" is used miraculously by Farrell to depict the peaceful British India before the siege and its violent nature during the siege. As a representation of the opulent aspect of British living in India, Farrell's pool room invokes the English countryside with its greenery, serenity, and peace (170). Moreover, the Collector is afraid to enter the hall as the pool-room gradually turns into an Indian bazaar. The environment that was supposed to calm the British senses starts to exert tyranny over them. Due to the sepoy attack, many of the Residency's apartments become unusable, and the billiard room fills up with English ladies who are residing nearby.

Farrell's account of the Collector moving through the pool room during his rounds makes one think of a British citizen moving through a crowded bazaar in India. Unfortunately, high-pitched voices raised in disagreement or emphasis filled the room, making it extremely difficult for anyone to be heard over the cries of children, illicit parrots, and mynah birds (170). Here, Farrell makes the pool hall a potent allegory for the bloodshed that gripped British India in 1857. Hence, these images and symbols are mostly used in Farrell's Empire fiction, to critique imperialism.

Subsequently, it may be surmised that Farrell's perception of a peculiar disconnection between thinking and language, as though the idea's words are unable to fully capture the complicated suffering without being too formal as the cause of this adoption of the symbolic mode (Drabble 188). Moreover, the reader finds that a "disease symbolism" was used by Farrell in his expert condemnation of imperialism, it is claimed, in order to avoid an excessive amount of formality in light of this observation. In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, disease strikes from within, just as the Mutiny torments from outside. The images and representations of disease are embedded into the text in such an intricate way by the author that the link between the sickness of the characters as well as certain external factors become undeniably clear.

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