

UNFOLDING THE BINARY CONSTRUCT THROUGH J. G. FARRELL'S *THE SIEGE OF KRISHNAPUR* (1973)

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Abstract: This article aims to rewrite a colonial event and the first war of independence. It endeavors to highlight the binary construct of the same event. Two perspectives of an incident are inevitable. The so called sepoy mutiny of 1857 was a watershed in the history of England and India. Much has been penned down about it and still much remains to be forked out. Delving deep and analyzing both the combatants, this article unfolds the dual perspectives in a singular manner.

Key Words: postmodernist perspective, metaphorical overtones, historiographic metafiction, gendered narrative, binary construction.

Introduction: About the Author and his Works

James Gordon Farrell (1935- 1979), British novelist who won acclaim for his Empire trilogy, a series of historical novels that intricately explore British imperialism and its decline. His debut novel, *A Man from Elsewhere* (1963), a cerebral narrative about a communist journalist attempting to expose a celebrated writer's past, contains echoes of French existentialism. He followed it with *The Lung* (1965), in which he drew upon his own affliction with polio, which he contracted at Oxford, to present a downbeat portrait of an irascible man confined to an iron lung. On the strength of these two works, in 1966 Farrell won a fellowship to travel to the United States. While in New York City he published *A Girl in the Head* (1967), which tells in seriocomic fashion the story of a cynical eccentric living in an English seaside town.

He showcased his interest in the collapse of the British Empire as a cultural watershed. Hence, he embarked upon what would eventually become a trilogy of meticulously researched novels on the subject. The first, *Troubles* (1970), focuses on the struggle for Irish independence in the years following World War I, with its principal setting—the sprawling, run-down Majestic Hotel—serving as a metaphor for the dying empire. Though a rule change made the novel (and all others published in 1970) ineligible at the time for the Booker Prize, in 2010 it received the Lost Man Booker Prize, an honour (chosen by means of an online public poll) meant to correct the anomaly. In 1973, after spending time in India, Farrell produced *The Siege of Krishnapur*, a fictional treatment of the 1857–58 Indian Mutiny that blends a lively adventure narrative with an unmistakable critique of British Victorian values. Esteemed by critics, it won the Booker Prize. *The Singapore Grip* (1978), the final novel in the series, ambitiously recounts through both personal and political lenses the Battle of Singapore during World War II, in which the British colony fell to the Japanese.

In 1979 Farrell drowned while fishing near his home in Ireland. An unfinished novel, *The Hill Station*, another examination of British colonialism in India, was published two years later.

The Siege of Krishnapur

In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Farrell fictionalizes the British India encounter from a fundamentally **postmodernist perspective**. It is true that Farrell is not an Anglo-Indian novelist in the manner of Forster or Paul Scott; nevertheless, he is an Anglo-Indian novelist in his own distinctive way. Most critics have played down Farrell's significant contribution to the post-imperial fictional discourse on British India. Yet, Farrell towers above the rest of his ilk by employing **innovative fictional techniques** in his presentation of colonial India.

The fact that Farrell's fictionalization of British India is unique in several ways underscores the need for, and justifies the relevance of, a study of Farrell's Indian connection. India has captured Farrell's imagination in a way that no other colony of the empire ever managed to do.

The **title** of *The Siege of Krishnapur* has primarily two interpretative dimensions- the historical or the actual and the individual or the metaphysical, and the text of the novel enacts a vibrant oscillation between these two poles of possible reference. The title 'Siege'- activates these dimensions so powerfully and consistently that this term remains in a state of creative oscillation from one pole to the other throughout the text.

While an examination of the historical dimension of the titular significance of this Empire novel brings to light Farrell's ironic vision of the past. If we look at its metaphysical aspect, it reveals Farrell's concern with what life was like in those violent days of imperial expansion. And finally, it deals with man and his predicament. Englishmen and women were besieged by the rebellious sepoys. By inventing a fictitious place called 'Krishnapur' (meaning the place of Lord Krishna), Farrell consciously activated other dimensions in the title.

Farrell has clearly pointed to the **metaphorical overtones** of the 'Siege' in *The Siege of Krishnapur*. In an interview with Malcolm Dean, he remarked that a siege "is a microcosm of real life and the human condition - with hostility all around you with the individual in a rather temporary shelter" (Dean,1973:31). Viewed from this perspective, the siege of the novel becomes a profound lesson in British psychology as the Britons fail to withstand the rigours of the siege with grace.

Writing Technique

The Siege of Krishnapur, is surprisingly humorous, gripping and seriously profound novel with regard to the uniquely human aspects of imperialism from the perspectives of the Victorian British. The book rewards the reader with fascinating historical detail, enriching a story containing a genuine depth of human insight. Perhaps, it is the only historiographic metafiction among the Anglo-Indian fictional output on the Mutiny. With the postmodernist re-discovery of the use of history in fiction in the 1960s and 70s, giving birth in the process to what has now come to be called **historiographic metafiction**. It is type of a novel wherein the writers of historical fiction employ stunningly original techniques in their novels.

While all the Mutiny novelists of the 60s and 70s stuck to the conventional mimetic mode, Farrell's fictional representation of the Mutiny is postmodernist in the sense that his language technique is fundamentally metaphorical and subversive. Using subversive techniques of fictional recreation of the Mutiny, Farrell succeeds in destroying the hallowed concepts of British race superiority and the Empire's exhibited bravery. He also throws fresh light on the horizon of newer possibilities of fictionalizing the Mutiny. When one considers this disruptive component of Farrell's fictional technique, most of the charges leveled against *The Siege of Krishnapur* fall wide of the mark, as those charges are made on the simplistic assumption of Farrell's fictional mimeticism.

By imaginatively reconstructing the turbulent days of the Mutiny, Farrell attempts to show that the period of 'the Siege of Lucknow' was a time when the British population was forced to live (for the first time in imperial history) just like the teeming millions of Indians who have been living for decades under foreign rule. Thus, Farrell's novel gives, in metaphorical terms, a subversive account of the Mutiny.

Viewed from this perspective, the Residency under a siege of sepoys becomes a metaphor for India which has long been under British siege. *The Siege of Krishnapur* offers illuminating glimpses into the hearts of the British at their most unassuming and least romantic. Deromanticising the 1850s in *The Siege of Krishnapur*, Farrell shows that the superior race of Britons, shorn of all pretensions and pushed to the extremities of a life of the most penurious of Indians. They are at heart far more ill-equipped and incapacitated than the natives to face the harsh realities of life. The argument that *The Siege of Krishnapur* is implicitly a fictional treatise on how the British would conduct themselves if they find themselves unexpectedly colonized by the colonized. It is accepted and amply illustrated through a critical reading of the text. Crane charged that Farrell lacked the knowledge of the Indians. According to him, it is reflected in the novel (Crane, 1992:26).

Farrell sprinkles his book with images of disease, excrement, and death that call attention to the physical limitations of British colonials who would rule as gods. But they had serious problems with their personal hygiene in the heat and dust of India. With their consumptive appearance and lice-infested heads, the colonizers were forced to live the life of Indian untouchables.

Overview

The Siege of Krishnapur is divided into four parts, containing thirty two chapters, spread over 374 pages. It pictures the progress of the white community seeking political and individual security. Living through periods of acute stress and strain, to a state of utter helplessness, poverty and constant fear of imminent extinction. With meticulous attention to the minutest details, Farrell has successfully shown that the real significance of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 lies in the fact that it gave the British colonizers a taste of what it is to be in their search for food. The British resort to desperate and barbaric remedies and are subject to abject states of misery and indignity. Gradually, the British are reduced to the point of being savages, eating anything that came their way.

The novel begins in the weeks just prior to the uprising and massacre at Captainganj and the siege of the British community of Krishnapur. It is 1857, and the British rule in India is coming under attack because of the use of ensign rifles that go against religious beliefs. In Calcutta, life goes on as usual, with various amusements for members of the upper class. George Fleury and his sister arrive from England, and they socialize with the Dunstaple family and with Mr. Hopkins, the Collector, whose wife is returning to England.

When chapatis (a type of flat, round bread) begin to mysteriously arrive around the soldier's camp, or cantonment, in Krishnapur, the Collector is the only one to sense trouble brewing. He has mud ramparts erected and goes to Calcutta to warn other officials of the impending danger. His warnings are ignored, and not long afterwards there is a brutal rebellion at Captainganj which leaves many British soldiers dead. All the soldiers, the British citizens and the Eurasians take shelter in the Residency area. Fortifications are erected and the small group defends itself against a series of attacks by the sepoys, the Indian natives who were employed by Britain as soldiers.

As the siege progresses, various moral and practical tensions arise. Native Christians are not allowed to enter the compound in an effort to save food supplies, and there is debate over the allocation of food and the burial of bodies. Conditions deteriorate as the siege progresses, and faith in religion and cultured society is put to the test. The Padre becomes convinced that Fleury needs to renounce his sins, and the priest becomes increasingly fervent in his lectures and in his discussions with the Collector. Fleury and Louise become closer as the siege progresses, as do Harry and the "fallen girl," Lucy Hughes. The Collector becomes ill, and he fights a vicious fever as a final retreat is made into smaller and more secure fortifications. Hari, the Maharajah's son, and the Prime Minister are kept unofficially as hostages in the hopes of diminishing the enemy attacks, though the Collector eventually lets the men go.

As cholera attacks the community, Dr. Dunstaple becomes obsessed with Dr. McNab's incompetency, and in an attempt at winning an ongoing public argument, Dr. Dunstaple drinks a lethal vial of rice water, a liquid from a cholera victim. In the month of September, the group becomes desperate, and hunger and despair set in. Social customs are almost entirely ignored, and an auction is attempted, where Rayne is shown up for his unethical bidding and an unequal distribution of the now depleted food stores.

Throughout the siege, the enemy attacks many times and the defending community members survive by luck or various military tactics. Eventually, a large attack occurs, and the British retreat to their final stand, the banqueting hall. Every possible object is used as ammunition- from stones to statue heads- and a relieving army finally arrives to save the besieged group. Fleury and the Collector meet many years later in Pall Mall as they go about their business in London. The Collector's attitudes about culture and progress have been drastically changed by his time in Krishnapur.

Colonial Policies in India

Lord Wellesely's subsidiary alliance established British authority over many Indian states. Mysore, Hyderabad, Oudh, Tanjore, Surat, Carnatic and Maratha strongholds came in the perview of the Britishers. But, the three successors of Lord Wellesely, viz., Lord Cornwallis, Sir George Barlow, Lord Minto discontinued this policy. It was revived by Lord Hastings. It was a policy of partial or complete annexation of native states. The princes and the subjects of these states were dissatisfied and nurtured bitter resentment at the treatment meted out to them by the Britishers. During the administration of Lord Dalhousie the policy was carried on more systematically than before. It spread more dissatisfaction, turmoil, chaos and disturbance in the country. He named it as 'Doctrine of Lapse'. He did not lose a single opportunity, where heirs were not there, to implement the policy, denying the states the permission to adopt a son and the territory was made to lapse within no time.

The principality of Satara, the Bhonsla state of Nagpur, the state of Jhansi in Bundelkhand and Sambalpur in Orissa lapsed to British government, as their rulers died without leaving any male heir to succeed them. Consequently, the mutiny broke out in Sambalpur under the leadership of Surander Sahi, in Jhansi under the leadership of Lakshmi Bai. In Kanpur, the adopted son of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao II, was not recognized by the Britishers. The pension paid to the Peshwa was discontinued. In Oudh, the treaty of 1801 required the Nawab to reform his administration and to follow the advice of the Company's advisers. The deterioration that set in could not be restored. Britishers annexed Oudh as a counterblow. But, the internal condition of Oudh grew worse and annexation which was effected neither by conquest and nor by lapse- left the Indians, civil and military population alike, in highly agitated state of the mind.

This sudden change of government was followed by a summary settlement of the revenue which deprived the landholders of wealth and power. Under such circumstances, hostilities increased and it gave the character of legitimate war than that of a rebellion. A policy of deliberate confiscation could only provoke bitter discontent. But, unfortunately, unanimous front could not be presented by the princes. Some princes identified themselves with the British government, as they were unwilling to risk the throne.

Impact of the Reforms in India (1757-1857)

During the period between 1757 and 1857 many social, educational and economic reforms were introduced in India. These reforms were not compatible with the prevailing caste system and religion in India. Besides, when the reform measures were implemented, the common man was not taken into confidence. These reforms also disturbed the existing structure of the society. Some of the reforms were the introduction of railways, abolition of sati system, legalization of widow remarriage, spread of female education, introduction of English as the medium of instruction. Measures such as these created feelings of suspicion among the people. There also arose the religious fear of conversion to Christianity through the missionaries.

The immediate spark was ablazed with the greased cartridges among the Indian sepoys, Hindus and Muslims alike. They refused to bite the rifle which was smeared with the objectionable animal fat, both of beef and pork. This came in as a rebellion of the sepoys under the leadership of Mangal Pandey at Barrackpur cantonment. The initiative in declaring the mutiny was taken by the military class. The entire native army did not revolt in vindication of their grievances. Out of about 300,000 of native forces only 80,000 to 90,000 sepoys revolted. That means more than one third of the sepoys fought against the British while the others were sympathetic with the ruling government.

Indian Mutiny was an upheaval of mixed character. In certain regions the civil population made a common cause with the mutineers out of various motives. But the mutiny could not attract the new middle classes growing up under the British rule. The mutiny in the north-western provinces had the appearance of a popular revolt. These provinces were the chief centers of recruitment for the native army of the British East India Company in India. In these areas larger revenue was also collected. People in north-west provinces were bearing a heavier burden of revenue.

To keep the people alert over the coming storm and to prepare them for an active participation in the impending revolt, 'chapatis' or cakes of unleavened bread in the form of ship biscuits were widely distributed throughout the north-west provinces and Oudh. The 'chapatis' produced the desired effect. The north-west was in a blaze. Such districts as Shaharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Rohilkhand, Moradabad, Bareilly, Shahajahanpur and Badaon in the Meerut and Bareilly divisions were scenes of popular agitations in protest against the social legislations and land revenue policy of the government.

Landowners and peasants, in fact, everyone who had grievances against the government rose in revolt. Grievances were demonstrated in plundering the treasury and burning public records and government quarters. Tidings ran that the English rule was at an end, and that the English were hiding themselves for fear of their lives.

The sepoy mutiny of 1857-59 is one of those few events which are incontestably looked upon as land-marks and turning points in the history of our country. The movement is remembered at once as a test of the solidarity of the British Empire in India and as a testimony to the determined opposition of the native population civil and military, to such governmental policies as wounded their feelings or affected their interests in the pre-1857 days.

Cawnpore

The sepoy mutiny at Cawnpore was trying to overthrow the British wherein Tantia Tope and Rao Sahib led the revolt under the leadership of Nana Sahib. The Europeans of the garrison with their dependants sought refuge in a partially constructed entrenchment and found themselves immediately under siege. The siege lasted three weeks under the summer sun with minimal water and shade, until the besieging troops sent two European female civilians carrying terms. Rejecting the first offers, the garrison commander General Sir Hugh Wheeler received an offer from Nana Sahib of safe passage to the Ganges and boats to take them down to the relative safety of Allahabad. Wheeler with little food, and water only from a well under constant fire, had little choice but to accept. As Nana Sahib was known to the Europeans of Cawnpore, as a frequent visitor to social events, Wheeler must have felt he was trustworthy.

When the Europeans boarded riverboats, at the **Satchiura Ghat** just outside Cawnpore, their pilots fled setting fire to the boats, and an exchange of fire ensued. The Indians fired on the boats with grave shots killing most of the Company troops. Only four men managed to escape. The surviving women and children were led back to the city and placed in the **Bibi-Ghar or 'House of the Women'**, the former residence of a Company officer's Indian mistress. On 15th July, a group of men, local butchers in fact, as the rebel sepoys had refused the task, entered the Bibi-Ghar armed with knives killing those there and 'the bleeding remains of dead and dying ...dragged to a neighbouring well and thrown in'(Wheeler, 1899: 738). This well would become infamous in Rebellion lore (Hyam, 2002 : 136).

British revenge was not long in coming. When European forces retook Cawnpore in June 1858, the British and the Company soldiers after seeing the terrible sights took their sepoy prisoners to the Bibi-Ghar and forced them to lick the bloodstains from the walls and floor. It is recorded in a Highlander's letter published in the *Aberdeen Chronicle*; October, 1857 quoted in *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (James,1994:19). Then they hanged them. These actions had general support, in response to Colonel James Neill's '**blood lick**' rule *The Times* wrote that it 'has gained him great credit'(Times, 21 September, 1857). It was unpleasant work but the 'God of Battles' would 'Steel [the] Soldiers' Hearts!' (*Punch*, 10 October, 1857). So horrified were the British about what had happened that the site 'became a sort of a shrine, to which soldiers were taken ... where as it were they consecrated themselves to the task of retribution'(James,1997: 253) and 'Remember Cawnpore!'(Times, 19 September, 1857) became as much of a rallying cry as the 'Remember the Alamo!' had been to Texans a few decades earlier.

The lethal start of the rebellion and massacres at Cawnpore gave the soldiery a justification to feel that they were right in acting in the same way as their opponents. Soldiers took very few prisoners. Those they did capture were interrogated and then executed. Any settlement with perceived sympathies for the mutineers were burnt and the British adopted the old Mughal punishment for mutiny, sentenced rebels were lashed to the mouth of cannons and blown to pieces. This practice had religious significance, because by destroying the body, it deprived the victim of any hope of entering paradise. This was not the only example of British vengeance turning to barbarity, however. There were incidents when troops piled up dead or wounded Sepoys, poured oil over them, and then set them on fire. Violence bred violence even for the civilized Victorians.

The massacres at Cawnpore were, for the British, one of the signal events of the 1857–8 revolt, central to framing the entire 'Mutiny' narrative in British official and popular accounts for the remainder of the century (Metcalf,1997: 289–90).As late as the 1890s the American missionary William Butler could refer to the events at Cawnpore as 'the blackest crime in human history' since 'every element of perfidy and cruelty was concentrated in it. No act ever carried to so many hearts such a thrill of horror as did the deed that was done there on 15th July, 1857' (Butler,1894: 294) .

The suffering of British women at Cawnpore quickly became a metonym for the severity of the challenge to the British Empire in India. Subsequently, the events at Cawnpore tended to be depicted through a **gendered narrative** in which Indian brutality to British women displaced the brutality of British colonial rule and the terrible reprisals exacted on those suspected of participation in the 1857 revolts. The writers like Jenny Sharpe, Patrick Branthinger and Nancy L. Praxton have pointed out the same in their respective works.

Consequently, even though twice as many children as women died at the Bibighar, for the British the event came to be known as the '**Massacre of the Ladies**' and the '**Slaughter in the House of the Ladies**' (Sherer,1910: 78) . Moreover, the nakedness of the corpses convinced those that discovered them that the women had been subjected to sexual humiliations, although there was never any actual evidence of this, as contemporaries quickly noted, and later official investigations found the likelihood of sexual assault remote.

Still, innuendo and suggestive images of the fate of the prisoners in the Bibighar effectively raised popular outrage among both British troops and those reading news of the events back in Britain. The outrages against British women perpetrated at Cawnpore thus confirmed British views of Indians as degraded savages, and served as a rallying cry to the building of a renewed, Christian-militaristic masculinity. Faced with such apparent barbarism, the savagery of British reprisals was the more easily rationalized. Indeed, British vengeance appeared all the more virtuous in the face of the demonization and emasculation of the Indian.

Lucknow

Where Cawnpore would provide tales of horror, it would be the nearby garrison of Lucknow that would provide the basis for many a story of heroism under siege. Although most of the sepoys in Oudh mutinied, not long after those in Meerut and Delhi, the local commander Henry Lawrence had enough time to muster the European and loyal sepoy forces at his disposal, to fortify the thirty-three acre Residency compound, before coming under siege. That siege became 'the Mutiny's most celebrated episode', a British garrison holding firm against all the odds surrounded by a brutal opponent with far superior numbers (Ferguson, 2003:148). Lawrence had 1,700 men, including loyal sepoys to protect over a thousand non-combatants (David, 2002: 227). Rebel numbers would top thirty thousand at their height.

After ninety days and heavy losses, those in the Residency heard gunfire on the outskirts of the city, that signalled an approaching relief force. Having recaptured Kanpur, a relief force under Major General Henry Havelock had made their first attempt to reach Lucknow on 20th July, but though militarily successful losses from illness forced a withdrawal. The second attempt to relieve the Residency proved more successful. Lucknow and its garrison were relieved on 25th September by soldiers under the joint command of Havelock and Sir James Outram. Unable to evacuate safely those in the Residency, the relief column found itself also under siege, awaiting the arrival of a second group of soldiers under the command of Sir Colin Campbell.

Campbell had taken over in the Lucknow theatre in October. Campbell's force moved towards Lucknow in mid-November, making their way towards a section of the Residency. Campbell sought to evacuate the Residency compound rather than to capture it. On 18th November the force reached the Residency and carried out Campbell's plan. It would not be until March of the following year that Lucknow was finally captured by Campbell. By the winter of 1857, the Company had started to recover ground and in the next few months, reversed many of their losses. As with the second relief of Lucknow, major besieged populations had been relieved, and the Company could move from reacting to events to putting down the Rebellion itself.

Subdued Revolt

The Rebellion, geographically, was limited to Punjab, Ganges valley, and central India with the whole of Southern India, central and east Bengal and Rajputana remaining peaceful. The last theatre of conflict was primarily focused generally on the East India Company's Central India Agency, ending with the capture of Gwalior in June 1858. Though most of the rebels were defeated after Gwalior, sporadic fighting continued into 1859. A 'State of Peace' was finally officially declared on 8th July 1859, even though fighting was still going on and it was not until 28th July that the Governor-General Charles Canning could finally proclaim: 'War is at an end. Rebellion is put down' (David,2002: 374). Bahadur Shah was tried for a number of offences: he was unsurprisingly found guilty and then sent into exile in Rangoon. That act formally ended the Mughal Dynasty.

The Aftermath

There was only one winner: 'Neither Mughal, Maratha, or the Company was the real victor of the struggle. It was the pervasive spirit of the West' (Percival, 1972 : 273) - or rather the British. The East India Company was dissolved, and the British Crown assumed direct rule over India, beginning the period commonly known as the Raj. The new directly controlled India was headed by a Governor General, the Viceroy, who acted as the direct representative of the Crown and embodied the supreme legislative and executive authority in India. He would not be responsible to shareholders but to the Secretary of State for India, a cabinet member. The Army was also able to regain some of the prestige it had lost in the Crimean War. Despite the severity of the reprisals, a measure of conciliation had been introduced to administrative policy. In 1877, Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India, filling the position of the Mughals.

The shock of what had happened and how they had responded to the Rebellion was the cause of much self-examination as to why it had occurred and the response to it. The Rebellion had 'taught the British caution' in subsequent dealings with their Indian subjects, beginning with the removal of policies that had produced resentment (Hobsbawn, 1975: 152). The expansionist policy of replacing the old regimes of the subcontinent with British administrators was replaced with one that viewed 'the established order much more favorably, and as something that ought to be promoted and preserved' (Cannadine, 2001: 41) . Integration of the higher castes and princes was now considered important, land policy was revised, and any plans for radical social change were shelved. A revolt partially against reform would end in a resumption of the status quo. It marked the 'swan song of [the] old India' (Lyall, 1893: 271), the death of both the East India Company and Mughals as rulers in India.

It was also a period of change in the technologies that allowed information to be transmitted, such as the electric telegraph and improved maritime engines that coincided with an expansion of the British and colonial press.

It was very clear to the Colonial power that they could not overpower Indians if Indians stand united. They could subdue the rebellion only because Indians could not unify and organize themselves. And, this winning point for them had to be explored further. The Hindus and Muslims were in majority in India. If they were divided, then their path would be smooth. Henceforth, a new policy of divide and rule was followed in India.

Conclusion

Ever since the Mutiny began to set literary imagination on fire, the question of historical objectivity was much debated. While the novelists' loyal to the empire fictionalized the Mutiny as a life-and-death struggle between British civilization and Indian barbarism, the Indians primarily looked upon it as a rebellion against the white colonizers. While M.M. Kaye and John Masters perpetuate many of the myths which

have surrounded the British portrayal of the Mutiny, Manohar Malgaonkar in *The Devil's Wind* (1972) sets out to tell the story of the Mutiny from an Indian point of view. This points to Farrell's unique achievement in objectively functionalizing the Mutiny.

Farrell has demythologized the 1850s. He has successfully recreated the feelings of that time while stripping it of romanticism and adding truths not found in the literature of the day. In a perfectly unique manner, Farrell has debunked the myth of the Raj. Whilst, the Mutiny exposed the spiritual and physical clinks in the British armour. For the Indians it was just another painful episode in a dull routine of painful life. Thereby, stressing the permanence of India in contrast with the transience of the imperial glory.

Farrell deserves a place of no mean distinction in the Anglo-Indian cannon of Mutiny fiction on imperialism. Farrell's novel is both a reading of all the textual histories of the Indian Mutiny and an invention, an extension and a supplement to it. Farrell is undoubtedly the only postmodernist Mutiny novelist in Anglo- Indian literature. By successfully breaking away from the shackles of the romantic adventure tradition of mutiny fiction, Farrell has been able to demonstrate that the popular picture of the Mutiny was a distorted one.

Stories of atrocities against Europeans filled the pages of colonial newspapers, some were real, some invented, and most were exaggerated. Such stories were often analogues of local concerns as Chakravarty suggests but in relation to the British press (Chakravarty, 2004).

It can be called as binary construction, as on the colonial side it was called a sepoy rebellion and in the native land as the first war of independence which sowed the seeds of nationalism. A brutal rebellion could not be justified in the wake of the slaughter which took place at Satchiura Ghat and Bibi-Ghar at Cawnpore. But, the derogatory term as 'sepoy mutiny' too cannot be admissible for the heroism of the Indian soldiers, men and women alike. Violence and revenge beget measure for measure. The consequences were far stretched on both sides. More or less the destruction was parallel at both ends. Comprehensive lessons were imbibed two ways. Fatal factors could not undo the done. The dead could not be revived. But, the chapters of life can definitely be re arranged to rectify the bloodshed incurred. Colonial power showed its might later on and the colonized slave paced towards freedom. Both the sides strengthened their role and fought, yet more deadly battles before they settled down for the good.

Perhaps with this end in the mind Farrell created, *The Siege of Krishnapur*. 'The reality of the Indian Mutiny' writes J.G. Farrell in the Afterword of his 1973 novel *The Siege of Krishnapur*, 'constantly defies imagination' (Farrell, 1973: 375). Farrell is referring to the sheer volume of documentary accounts of the 1857 uprising in India, the mass of diaries, letters and memoirs written by eyewitnesses: a body of detailed evidence, anecdote and opinion so comprehensive, he suggests, as to seriously curtail or even neutralize the novelist's freedom of invention. Fictionalizing facts is one process and exaggerating reality is another. Rough content cannot lay down a smooth path. But, an amiable attitude is the only way to the construction of cultural and spiritual progress. In many ways the process of imperialism is disseminated from within.

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