

Abstract

India is nowadays known for its rich and diverse cultural heritage, high technology, rapidly developing economy, and the highest numbers of official languages in use. Nevertheless, the country's historical past deserves an in-depth study and a full appreciation. For centuries this territory functioned as a place of colonial encounter between the native people and travellers from the West (Portugal, France, and Great Britain). Undeniably, the imperial hegemony resulted in exploitation of natural resources, reappropriation of cultural goods, and rebellion from the side of indigenous residents. However, there is much more to the colonial past than just instances of prejudice and racism. The subject of this dissertation is the figure of the British coloniser in India, explored on the basis of selected works of historical fiction.

The reason for undertaking this subject matter lies in the exceptional status of British India as a colony. The historical context as well as geopolitical status of India are crucial for the conducted research. It is common knowledge that the process of colonialism was initiated in the fifteenth century by Portugal and Spain, and it concluded in the twentieth century with worldwide independence movements (Brown 1999: 444). Encouraged by the prospect of financial gain combined with intellectual curiosity, European traders of the transition period from the Middle Ages to modernity would travel to exotic areas which were granted to them as special spheres of influence by means of treaties. Subsequently, some form of cooperation would develop between the colonisers and the native inhabitants. With the passage of time, the Europeans would acquire control of these places and convert the locals into their subjects. Given the numerous examples and forms of colonial expansion, the researcher's intent is to narrow the area of study to Indian colonisation, which constitutes in many ways an exceptional realisation of the abovementioned process. That is to say, the colonisation of India stands out among other instances of imperial conquest because of the diversity of its territories. Namely, their indigenous inhabitants derived from a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds. The Republic of India currently consists of 29 states and 7 union territories that have remained disparate for centuries.

The principal methodological approach used in this dissertation relies on postcolonial theories. In view of a wide range of research approaches, postcolonial studies, as literary critic Leela Gandhi correctly observes, function as a site of encounter as well as war between diverse disciplines and theories (Gandhi 1998: 42). To ensure an original contribution to

knowledge, my intention is to utilise as well the field of psychoanalysis, which is currently experiencing a renaissance in academia and is crossing into postcolonial discourse more frequently than ever before (Smith, <http://www.brockpress.com>). To be specific, the figure of the coloniser is analysed in this dissertation through the lens of Carl Jung's theory concerning archetypes. The hypothesis to explore is the coloniser's conformity with the archetypal patterns. Furthermore, it should be determined if he functions as an entirely positive or negative character.

Joseph Campbell expands on Jung's studies on archetypal attitudes by introducing his own concept of a hero on a personal journey. According to the researcher, the main protagonist in the great majority of contemporary novels goes on an adventure during which he or she overcomes a variety of hurdles until the journey is completed and the boon is obtained (Campbell 2004: xxv). In that situation, it should be established whether the coloniser is a wanderer of such nature. For example, he could be a kind hero or a cruel villain. The coloniser, like the monomythical hero, may have straddled the line between the known and the unknown realms as he or she travelled between Britain and India. It is worth noting that for some Britons born and raised in India, Britain was the unknown realm. Their role as the figure of a coloniser was hence in many ways insecure.

Corroborating and expanding Jung's and Campbell's findings, Jordan Peterson claims that ideological beliefs contain narrative frameworks that influence an individual's emotional stability. As a result, the domain of values (carried within myths, fictional stories, and religious systems) may well be more essential for the well-being of individuals and societies than reality. When these ideals are rejected, an oppressive system emerges, which is subsequently reproduced and replicated across numerous civilizations (Peterson 2002: 7). I intend to connect Peterson's ideas to the complex aspect of the coloniser's psyche and the colonised's subordinate position.

The aim of the dissertation is to show how the interpretation of the coloniser portrayed in selected contemporary historical novels allows the reader to understand the issue of colonialism in present times as clashing ideologies increasingly generate quarrels over a historical past rather than leading to a mutual understanding. In realities represented by these works of literature, the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is frequently illustrated in a complex manner, which indicates a departure from Edward Said's binary oppositions and an evolution of colonial imagery. The interconnection of the domains of postcolonialism and psychoanalysis allows to expose the convoluted mechanisms of

colonisation and decolonisation of mind. This appears to be particularly significant in the case of India, which has an equivocal relationship with its past.

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