
The Siege that lead to the fall of the Empire in J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur*

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the fall of the British Empire. The novelist J. G. Farrell brings about the reasons for the fall of the Empire. The local people who were fed up of the British rule started rebelling against the colonial masters. The Siege of Krishnapur which was taken easy by the British leads to the fall of the empire. The ignorance of the British leads to their own downfall. The Colonial masters neglected the local customs and traditions which were very important to the colonized. The paper brings out how vain was the rule of the British in India and also how their own policy of divide and rule became a boomerang to them.

Keywords: Empire, Colonization, Fall, History, Mutiny, First Independence Movement.

The publication of *The Empire Trilogy* by J. G. Farrell brought recognition and distinction as a novelist to him. He stands among the distinguished novelists of the post-war world. J. G. Farrell is one of the interesting novelists of the contemporary era. He was the traditional British novelist. Like other British novelists he reacted to the convention of realism in Literature. The works of J. G. Farrell are culmination of realism and history. He brings about overlapping subjects together and writes historical novels. His novels are influenced by the theory of realism. J. G. Farrell developed a kind of interest in human history and to understand the rise and fall of human beings he adopts a Tolstoyan approach to read history. He is able to relate the personal experiences with the historical experiences.

James Gordon Farrell was born in Liverpool, on January 23, 1935. He spent much of his lifetime in Ireland and France. He lived for a short time but in that short time he got recognition as a great novelist of the British tradition. He got many well-known literary prizes in his short career. His death was untimely; he was fishing nearby his farmhouse on 14th of August 1979. On this fateful day, he drowned and died. He got his early education in a traditional school called Rossal, it was run by the Catholic Church of England. J. G. Farrell struggled a lot in his childhood days. He worked as a part timer to earn food and to give his school fees. Later on in the year 1956, he went to Oxford for higher education. The Oxford gave him what he was searching for; he started his writing career at Oxford itself. It was there he met great teachers and friends as well they helped him to shape his writing career.

The second novel of the *Empire Trilogy*, *The Siege of Krishnapur* is about the mutiny of 1857. The novel deals with the theme of the struggle, which has been considered as the first Indian independence movement by the Indians and as a Sepoy mutiny by the British. *The Siege of Krishnapur* was a great success. The novel made him popular as a novelist. It proved the artistic genius of Farrell. The plot of the novel centres on the first Indian independence movement of 1857. The novel throws light on the sufferings of the Colonisers. It comments on the attitude of the Colonisers. It is a keen observation of behaviours of Colonisers by the novelist. The novel not only focuses on the outcome of the siege but on political, social and cultural impact of the siege.

Mr. Hopkins, the collector of Krishnapur, is the protagonist of the novel. He is the representative of the British Empire in India. He lives in Krishnapur at the time of the mutiny. The movement, which was considered only a mutiny by the Britishers in a village called Barrakpur Delhi, it soon reaches the boundaries of Krishnapur causing unrest and a kind of enmity among the villagers. When the heat of the mutiny reaches Krishnapur the collector becomes nervous and he is afraid. In Krishnapur British people and the Indians were living happily. They often host functions and parties together. Both the men and women were living harmoniously and happily. The collector fears that the mutiny will create animosity among the villagers and they would start fighting each other. In the parties and functions, they would prepare delicious food and share with each other.

On one day an evening party is hosted by the collector in his office, Mr. Hopkins, the magistrate, Dr. Dunstable, Louise, Fleury, Miriam and others are present in the party. They all are enjoying the party. They are in happy mood except the collector's wife Mrs. Hopkins. She is nervous. She is out of mood. Because of some personal reasons, she is not able to enjoy the moment with others. She recently has lost her child and the memory of the child haunts her repeatedly. She recollects the time she had spent with the child and becomes sad. She starts crying in the party, the other women who are present try to console her. She comes out of her nervousness after some time and mingles with the other people in the party. Thus, life in Krishnapur is going very beautifully with the harmonious atmosphere. Life in Krishnapur seems easy and plain. In Krishnapur people enjoyed social life. The Britishers enjoy the Indian foods like Rotti, Holige, Kadabu and also like other eatable dishes like Pickles, Cheese, Chickens, Meat and Chocolates. However, the news of the mutiny and the siege causes disturbance among the Anglo-Indians. The news of the mutiny in Behrampur reaches the collector and disturbs him a lot. He is at unrest. Soon after the siege of Behrampur the mutineers attack Captain Ganj. The Padre of Behrampur's Church is struck in the mutiny and the mutineers captured him. Somehow, the Padre escapes from Behrampur and reaches Krishnapur and takes shelter in Krishnapur. This particular incident disturbs the collector. After a few days, a crowd of mutineers also attack the British colonies in Krishnapur. The people of Krishnapur are caught in crisis. News of attack on Anglo Indian people start arriving at the collector's office. Huge sound of building demolition and crying of the people are heard by the collector. After their colonies were being attacked and sieged by

the mutineers some Eurasians and Britishers are seen in front of collector's office. The crowd had come up with the bundles of their belongings. They request the collector Mr. Hopkins to protect them from the mob. The collector calls an urgent meeting with the other officials. He meets the magistrate to review the condition and decides to fight against the mutineers to protect the Anglo Indians. The mutineers reduced the colonies to ash. The colonies are destroyed. There remained nothing.

With the help of others Mr. Hopkins fights against the mutineers. Harry, one of the officers at Krishnapur fires at the mutineers with loaded guns, rifles and cannons. The fierce fight between the British officers and mutineers resumes. The British soldiers fight hard with the mutineers. The mutiny or the war of independence caused unrest and disturbance in the life of the people. The women who were harassed by the mutineers cried for help. The collector arranges a big hall in which the women were kept protected. There is human slaughtering and killing. Lot of people are wounded. There was violence everywhere. Dead bodies are seen on the streets. Heap of dead bodies and bones are seen on the sides of the roads.

Vultures hovered over the sky in search of meat. Many birds were seen sitting on the dead bodies and eating meat. Some birds were unable to fly because of the heavy meat they ate and some were seen dead by over eating. Men were killed; women were raped in the open streets. However, some British officers like Harry, Fleury, Miriam and others showed great courage in fight against the mutineers. However, the people who have faith in God and Religion lost courage. They not only lost faith in God and Religion but also on life. After the devastating ransack the siege was stopped, the air in Krishnapur lost its crisp dryness. It was summer and Krishnapur got more heat than before. It was an oppressive kind of heat. The Lieutenant of Krishnapur Mr. Cutter sacrificed his life in the mutiny. Every now and then one or the other person, who were wounded in the war, died. The number of deaths went on increasing. People started becoming sick and tired. After some days, Krishnapur was attacked by pandemics like Cholera. People were suffering from the chronic disease. They were afraid of the spread of the diseases. Dr. MacNab treats people but there is dearth of good medical infrastructure and medications. All most all the officers of the empire suffer from ill health. Miriam, Fleury and Mr. Hopkins, the collector himself got diseases and were bed ridden. The collector is diagnosed with Cholera. Fleury's face got swollen. Her face becomes so red that one could not look at her. The pandemic did spread very quickly and many Anglo Indians died of the disease. People would witness dead bodies on road as if they find animals. Their dead bodies were buried wherever they find place. On some occasions, dead bodies were left to rot because no one was interested in giving death rites to those bodies. The Padre did think that it is a religious work and he himself buried many dead bodies. Mrs. Bennett also loses her baby to the disease. She is heartbroken by the loss of her kid.

The condition of the collector worsened day by day. He has a look of pestilence. He was suffering from haemophilia before he was struck by Cholera. Now the haemophilia got better of him and he was in a worst condition of health. He is terribly looking pale and weak. He

becomes thin and loses weight. He wrapped himself up in the large rug and was not able to walk even in home. People are afraid of death. There is death everywhere. The people who survived the mutiny and the disease cried for loss of their dear one's death. At the end of August, rain stopped pelting down. In addition, when people thought of normal life, there arrived the clouds of flies. Flies are seen everywhere. The flies would sit on everything they find in their way. Thus, there was a scarcity of water and food. The big flies even started sitting on human beings. People were starving and were dying of hunger. The administration desperately was in need of some ways to provide food and shelter to the people. Many remedies were arranged by the administration of Krishnapur. They started searching for water and food. Pieces of rotten meat were used to provide food. Even the Anglo Indians ate the rotten meat of dead horses. Not only the meat of the horses but also the meat of all the dead animals was used for food. As time went on the condition of Krishnapur was changed. Moreover, the things were coming to normal condition.

On Thursday, the 17th of September, at 10am in the morning, Mr. Hopkins visits the Church and has a long conversation with the Padre. They think about the problem of the food that happened after the ease of cholera. He learns how worst the condition of the survivors was. Soon after, the condition of the colonies improved. The wife of Dr. MacNab was suffering from illness dies. The doctor and Miriam are recovered from cholera and are married. Louise and Fleury have also got married and have two children. Harry another officer got married with Lucy. Dr. Dunstaple, who suffers from heart attack, also dies.

The siege of Krishnapur had lasted for three and a half months. It started in the month of June and went on until the mid of September 1857. Nevertheless, the impact of the mutiny was huge both on physical and mental state of the Anglo Indians.

After the things are at ease in Krishnapur Mr., Hopkins returns to England in train. In England, he appears to be stronger than ever before. His stay in India had given him a variety of experiences. The vastness of Indian sub continent has brought about a great deal of experience to his kitty. The collector visualizes people drawing water from the well and thinks that he could not bring any change in the lives of Indians. He worked for thirty years in India but things could not change. He lives in England and decides to never, come back again to India. The survivors of the mutiny also return to England to lead a civilised life. They have nightmares of their experience in India. The collector resigns from all the committees and decides to retire from all the posts he held over the period and to lead a retired life. The collector grows older and he is a kind of legend for the members of the club he started in India. After many years, there happens an encounter between Fleury and the collector in England. They remember the days of mutiny and speak about their experiences. They become nostalgic. Until the end of his life, the memory of two men drawing water from the well haunts Me. Hopkins. He also remembers the bullock carts he had seen in India. The collector dies in the year 1880. He realises that the outside forces rather than the inner forces shape

man. He also believes that the mandoes not have knowledge about the force by which he is shaped.

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