



RESEARCH PAPER

Postcolonial Identity and Discourse: Foucauldian Analysis of Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone*

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ABSTRACT

The term 'Post-colonial identity and discourse' is the cultural, social and political web that prevails in societies following the end of the colonial rule. This interconnected terminology also negotiates colonial structure of knowledge production and representation seeking to decentre Eurocentric perspectives and amplify marginalized voices. This paper seeks to achieve the objective of fostering alternative visions of self-determination, sovereignty, and solidarity among formerly colonized peoples by employing Foucauldian analysis on Kamila Shamsie's novel, "A God in Every Stone." Drawing upon the works of Michel Foucault (2016) and through a close reading of key characters and events, this analysis elucidates how colonial power structures and systems of knowledge production intersect in the novel to shape individual and collective identities. The present study is qualitative in nature. The data has been collected through the close reading technique of the *A God in Every Stone*. Moreover the findings of the study suggest that the elements of power and resistance are present in the novel and further the researcher has found different dimensions of Foucault's power, i.e., Sovereign power and disciplinary power through the dialogues of the characters as mentioned in the novel. The upcoming researchers can compare different literary works based on the presence of element of power and resistance. They can further compare different dimensions of power in the same literary text in the years to come.

KEYWORDS

A God in Every Stone, Colonization, Foucault's Model of Power, Sovereign Power and Disciplinary Power

Introduction

Postcolonial literature consists of literary works written by formerly colonized people. Through their writings, they show the everlasting harmful impact of colonization on the colonized people. Said (1978) opines that the white people, in order to maintain their unjust rule, produced the 'colonial discourse' which legitimized their oppression towards the colonized native people. They called themselves the occident and the Eastern people; the orients. Postcolonial literature and discourse have long served as vital avenues for exploring the complex interplay of power, identity, and resistance within the context of former colonial territories. Kamila Shamsie's compelling novel, "A God in Every Stone," provides a thought-provoking canvas upon which to examine the intricate dynamics of postcolonial identity and discourse. Situated against the backdrop of the British Raj in the Indian subcontinent, the novel invites readers to traverse the intricate terrain of colonialism's legacies and the enduring struggles for identity and agency.

This research article embarks on a Foucauldian analysis, delving into the narratives, characters, and thematic undercurrents of "A God in Every Stone." Through this lens, we seek to unravel how the novel mirrors the experiences of postcolonial societies in their quest for reclamation and self-definition. Michel Foucault's analytical framework proves particularly illuminating, offering us a toolkit to decipher the nuanced relationships between power, knowledge, and identity as portrayed in the novel.

As we navigated the pages of Shamsie's work, we have investigated the ways in which the characters confront the legacy of colonialism, the suppression of indigenous voices, and the shaping of personal and collective identities. Foucault's concepts of discourse, power, and subjectivity have guided us in this exploration, revealing the transformative potential of literature in challenging dominant colonial narratives, reinterpreting history, and fostering postcolonial identities.

Foucault (2016) argues that there are three forms of power. 1. Sovereign Power: It is the type of power where one person or a group of people have absolute power over their subjects 2. Disciplinary Power: Its major purpose is to use a person's skills for the betterment of the powerful person. This form of power controls the actions of the people through the ideological state apparatus. 3. Biopower: It controls the human body and population. Foucault (1975) says that institutions employ technology to normalize individuals' controlled behavior. Rouse (1994) says that Foucault develops a direct relationship between power and knowledge. If someone has power, they can easily control the actions of others.

The researcher attempts to analyze the postcolonial aspects such as power, resistance, hybridity, colonial authority, cultural alienation, and ambivalence. In this study, the researcher has analyzed *A God in Every Stone* from the postcolonial perspective to explore the relationship between the powers; held by the British colonizers and the resistance; shown by the colonized people. The researcher will explore the negative attitude of colonizers toward the colonized people. In *A God in Every Stone*, the Indian soldiers sacrificed themselves on the battlefield to protect the colonial empire during World War I. "Qayyum picked up the severed hand he'd almost trodden on and passed it to the man who thanked him, very politely and tried to join the hand in place." (Shamsie, 2014, p. 49).

The title of the novel *A God in Every Stone*; refers to the colonizers, who have left their impression on almost every stone in South Asia. Shamsie (2014) draws her readers' attention to the story of Darius the Great. He sent Scylax to India to help him find a way to invade that land. After he conquers India, he gives Scylax, a circlet made of silver. Through this precious gift, Sklyax becomes Darius' slave. Scylax did not want to be a slave of the Persian Empire. Qayyum Gul's brother; Najeeb wants to be an archaeologist just like Vivian, but Qayyum does not want his brother to follow the track of the colonizers. Najeeb becomes an archaeologist because he is impressed by the knowledge possessed by the white masters.

Craps & Buelens (2008) discuss the themes of the postcolonial novel. Such works are composed to address the atrocities of the colonizers and traumas suffered by the colonized such as homelessness, migration, racism, slavery, and violence. The authors have made huge contributions to the field of literature for the understanding of the readers. Such works have to be understood in the context of the reality of the subjugation of the weak. The writers have highlighted the sufferings of the lower-class colonized people. Unfortunately, their voices have been silenced because the interpretation of the postcolonial novel is based on Western literary standards. Since, 'trauma' is an English word, the traumatic experiences of only dominant white people are highlighted. The

researcher urges the readers to develop a knowledge of trauma and suffering. The oppressed people suffered from unbearable abuse by the dominant people.

The present research focuses on the power of colonizers and the resistance of colonized people against colonial rule using the theory of Power presented by Foucault (2016). The nature of the present study is qualitative. The data from *A God in Every Stone* is collected through the close reading technique. The present study focuses on these two novels from the postcolonial perspective influenced by Foucault (2016). He has made considerable contributions to the field of postcolonial study. The main focus of the Postcolonial critique is the subjugation of innocent natives because of the control of colonial powers. The postcolonial writers condemn the Western Colonialists for oppressing the natives during the period of colonization.

Literature Review

Eurocentrism refers to the standardization of British culture. The white people were the torch-bearers of human civilization. In the field of fiction, the characters that have beautiful physical features such as blonde hair; white skin; and blue eyes, spark the reader's interest more than the characters having brown or black skin colour (Matin, 2013). The colonizers' language divides the world into First -World, Second-World, Third-World, and Fourth-World countries.

Tahreem et al. (2020) argue that discourse constructs our reality. Discourse forms power structures within our society. Colonial discourse creates binary relationships between the colonizers and the colonized. The weak and poor people are dominated by the rich and powerful. The writers often create characters who try to escape from the oppressive structures of society but suffer from the dangerous consequences.

Cunneen (2011) examined studies of criminology from the postcolonial perspective. Postcolonial theory has influenced many fields of study such as legal studies, political science, and literature. The interpreter has attempted to understand the relationship between postcolonialism and the field of criminology. Law experts employed the use of the colonial method to introduce the legal system in society. The British people introduced such laws that subjugated the colonized people. This is how they took over foreign land and expanded their Empire. Literary writers claim that the British supremacists colonized the world in two major ways i.e., permanent settlement and economic exploitation. The people of third-world countries were abused physically and psychologically. Their gold, ivory, silk, and annual crop yields, etc were robbed to support the luxuries of the growing British Empire. It was a serious crime to raise voices against the British Empire. The colonial narrative suppressed the revolts by the imposition of the ideology of colonizers which dictated that the locals should be punished for their crimes. People of color always live in fear of being convicted despite not committing crimes. The legal system operates on a mechanism that segregates people on the basis of race. Hence, it can be inferred that the branch of criminology is based on the values of European society. The interpreter opines that the people of third-world countries have endured all forms of oppression because of crimes committed by the state against them. The only reason the British Empire became the most powerful Empire on the face of Earth, is because it exploited the third-world countries to such an extent that they suffer from economic and political instability.

Liaqat and Akhtar (2019) opine that Shamsie (2014) in her work *A God in Every Stone*, tells her readers that the British colonial power had control over all the resources of the colonized people. The white people even controlled the minds of the subjugated people. They convinced the brown people to defend the British Empire during the World War. In her work, Shamsie (2014) highlights the politics of the British Imperialists. They were able

to control the masses based on ethnicity, colour, wealth, and knowledge. Shamsie's character Tahseen Bey condemns the unjust rule of British people, by comparing it to the ancient Persian rule over India. Shamsie (2014) believes that the process of colonization is as old as time. It is human nature to want everything that others have. The title of the novel *A God in Every Stone*; refers to the colonizers, who have left their impression on almost every stone in South Asia. Shamsie (2014) draws her readers' attention to the story of Darius the Great. He sent Scylax to India to help him find a way to invade that land. After he conquers India, he gives Scylax, a circlet made of silver. Through this precious gift, Sklyax becomes Darius' slave. Scylax did not want to be a slave of the Persian Empire. Qayyum Gul's brother; Najeeb wants to be an archaeologist just like Vivian, but Qayyum does not want his brother to follow the track of the colonizers. Najeeb becomes an archaeologist because he is impressed by the knowledge possessed by the white masters.

The present research focuses on the power of colonizers and the resistance of colonized people against colonial rule using the theory of Power presented by Foucault (2016). The interpreter has used the model of power put forward by Foucault (2016) for the analysis of Shamsie's novel *The God in Every Stone*.

Methodology/Theoretical Framework

The researcher employed both the qualitative method and the interpretative approach for this study. In addition, I have used a large body of historical and international literature to support my research in order to interpret its goals in the perspective of post-colonial interpretations of the identity and discourse by employing Foucauldian framework. The interpretation has used information from *The God in Every Stone* (2014), a chosen post-colonial book by Pakistani author Kamila Shamsie. Through a close reading of Shamsie's narrative, the framework directs the identification and interpretation of instances of power and resistance within the novel. The study reveals instances of discrimination, individual prejudice, and racial prejudices as well as cultural conflict, throwing light on the various forms and degrees of colonialism and racism.

Results and Discussions

A God in Every Stone is a postcolonial novel. At the very start of the novel, we are told about a young and beautiful, British female archaeologist, Vivian Rose Spencer, who is carrying out her study. She is working with her German and Turk colleagues. Tahseen Bey, her senior as well as her father's friend, is also part of this team. She admires his personality so much that she falls in love with him. He is a mature person who despises the colonization of the British Empire. He narrates to her the history of the ancient Persian Empire. They are in search of an ancient silver circlet buried somewhere in the ruins. Vivian is having a good time with the people around her in Turkey when the war starts in Europe. Her father arranges for her to safely return to England. She starts working as a nurse to take care of the wounded soldiers

In order to analyze Shamsie's *A God in Every Stone* from the postcolonial perspective the researcher has used the application of Foucault's model of power. Foucault (2016) opines that power cannot be gained by anyone; it is rather exercised. It is a system of relations that exists in society among individuals. It is impossible to escape the web of power relations. Foucault (2016) affirms that there are three forms of power; i.e., Sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower. The first kind of power is the sovereign power that rules the entire country or kingdom by giving authority to a person or group of people. All the other citizens are the king's or queen's subjects. Disciplinary power is the modern form of power that controls the people by means of strict observation. Psychologists and social scientists dictate certain rules for all citizens to abide by. These rules lead to the

exploitation of the common citizens of the state. Biopower handles the birth rate, death-rate, and diseases.

“The reports of the nineteenth-century travellers hadn’t prepared her for this: on the terraced slopes of the mountains enough of the vast temple complex remained intact to allow the imagination to pick up fallen colonnades, piece together the scattered marble and the stone blocks, and imagine the grandeur that once was. Here, the Carian forces fled after losing a battle against the might of Darius’ Persian; here.” (Shamsie, 2014, p. 10)

The above-mentioned passage has been taken from Shamsie’s *A God in Every Stone*. Vivian Rose Spencer; is the major character of the dug archaeological site in Turkey. She was walking a beautiful path in a mountain. Since she was an architect, she was interested in history. The writer depicts the history of colonization through these lines. The empire of Caria was colonized by the forces of the Persian king; Darius. Since time immemorial, the common people had lived in fear of being subjugated by brutal rulers.

The King Darius of Persia ruled vast stretches of land such as Central Asia, Africa, the Indus Valley, etc. There were many people who revolted against his power, but he always suppressed them successfully. He went on the conquest of Caria and his armies crushed the soldiers of the Carian Empire. The researcher has used the model of power put forward by Foucault (2016). Foucauldian power is as old as time. Anyone can exercise power given the fulfilment of certain conditions necessary for domination over individuals. Power depends upon a network of forces. These forces are omnipresent in our environment. These forces give rise to the relationship between powerful individuals and their subjects. The process of colonization shifted from the great empires such as Rome, Egypt, Greece, and Persia to the British Empire. Time might change, but the patterns of colonization remain the same, which include the killings of men, abduction of children and women, and dominating the economic and social institutions of the colonized nations. The British colonial empire followed the colonial patterns of the ancient empires to dominate more than half of the planet Earth.

“The remnants of the Carian army. Listen – you can hear their weary footsteps as they drag themselves and their wounded brothers up the Sacred Way to the Temple of Labraunda. It isn’t the physical wounds that make their steps falter- it is failure. This morning they were men of hope and courage, a brave people at the edge of a vast empire, ready to cut through the chains that bind them to their Persian overlords. Now they are a tattered, spent force- not one of them hasn’t lost someone he loves to Persian sword.” (Shamsie, 2014, p.15)

In the researcher’s opinion, the above lines show strong resistance to the process of colonization itself. Colonization is a brutal phenomenon that has been the cause of the suffering of millions of people in the past. The ancient Persian Empire utilized all the forces of power in order to dominate the Carian Empire. The colonized people, on the other hand, showed strong resistance against the colonial empire. Unfortunately, the sovereign power crushed all the opposing forces. The colonizers depicted an inhuman manner by killing all those people who were just defending their loved ones and their homeland. However, the colonized people were labelled as heroes who died for the right cause and preferred death to a life of misery.

Tahseen Bey has an Armenian background. The people of Armenia resented the control of the Ottoman Empire over their land. He compares the Carian forces to the Armenian resistance forces. Unfortunately, the Armenian soldiers were lesser in number as compared to the Ottoman massive army. Poor soldiers died painfully on the battlefield

while defending their country. Tahseen Bey claims that the Ottoman and British Empires, both were greedy and shed the blood of innocent people. There is no justice for the weak people in this world.

Foucault (2016) opines that if there is no resistance, then there is no power at all. The people of Caria; Armenia; and the British colonies, used all their resources and strength to fight the colonial rule. Many freedom fighters lost their limbs, and many died miserably, but they did run away as cowards. They bravely faced the oppressors. Tahseen Bey pays tribute to the fallen comrades who showed extreme resistance against the powerful Empires in the history of mankind.

“Darius so trusted Scylax he gave him a silver circlet fashioned with figs- a mark of the highest honour. But twenty years later when Scylax’ people, the Carians, rebelled against Darius’ Persians, Scylax was on the side of his countrymen, not his emperor” (Shamsie, 2014, p.19)

In the above-mentioned lines, Tahseen Bey narrates the story of Scylax’ loyalty towards his own Empire: Caria, and its people. The great Persian king; Darius appreciated Scylax’ efforts in helping him to conquer India. He gifted him an invaluable gift of a circlet made of pure silk. Darius became the most powerful king of the Persian dynasty. He took away the wealth and liberty of the Indian people. It is the never-ending greed of the powerful people that they desire an endless amount of wealth. Darius wanted to conquer the world and crown himself as the sole owner of the entire human race.

Foucauldian power depends on a number of relations that exist in society. No individual can escape these multiple relations that constitute power. An individual who exercises power is the one who restricts the actions of other individuals. “All empires end. The Ottomans have been on their death-bed long enough” (Shamsie, 2014, p.24). Tahseen Bey excavated the site of a temple which was believed to mark the place where Carians fought against the Persians. He was interested in the history of the Carian Empire because he embodied their spirit of resistance against the cruel invaders. His ancestors were Armenians, who were the victims of the Ottoman colonization. Even though he disliked the influence of the great British Empire all over the world, he felt internal satisfaction that the Ottoman Empire will collapse because of the World War.

His sympathy was with the Armenian people. He saw the sufferings of his people and wanted his nation to prosper after years of economic deprivation. He shows strong resistance against the Ottomans through his dialogues. No matter how powerful the colonizers are, their rule comes to an end at a fixed time. During the World War, the Ottomans became weak because of rebellions of many groups and the alliance of powerful nations such as Britain and France. Such factors played a vital role in the decline of one of the largest Islamic Empires in history.

“Scylax the seafarer who was sent on the greatest adventures by the Persians, just as I was given permission to excavate the most astonishing site by the Ottoman authorities. We take from the Empire what it has to give- but in the end, our loyalties are with the people we loved first, love most deeply. As Scylax ended his days writing a heroic account of the Carian rebel prince Heraclides, so one day I’ll write of my Armenian cousins, the one braver than me who lived their life in rebellion regardless of the cost.” (Shamsie, 2014, p.25)

In the above lines, Tahseen Bey pays tribute to the great historian; Scylax. He explored major parts of the world. He even aided Darius in conquering the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley. He is a strong character as he openly criticizes the process

of colonization. He considers Scylax a hero, who despite getting a silver circlet, fought alongside his countrymen to save his homeland. Foucault's power is not about tyranny. Power restricts the actions of other people. King Darius knew that his subject; Scylax is a wise man. He wanted Scylax to be on his side. He conferred the valuable circlet to Scylax only to subjugate him and suppress his actions.

The researcher has analyzed the novel, 'A God in Every Stone' using Foucault's mode of Power. Vivian represents the British colonial Empire. She is an archaeologist who seeks pleasure in searching for valuable cultural artefacts. The Ottoman authorities permitted her team to dig the site which is believed to be an ancient temple. The British colonizers took away all the wealth of the colonized lands. The Indigenous people were deprived of their rights to retain their cultural identity.

She feels immensely proud of her superiority over the other races. English people are privileged because of their skin colour, knowledge, and intelligence. Such traits have contributed to their success in an 'uncivilized world'. They exercised absolute power over millions of people by starting a war that benefitted the British Empire because it had ammunition factories. Jewels from different colonies were brought to the colonial Empire to fulfil its ever-increasing demands to support the lavish lifestyle of the reigning monarch and nobility. The British museums store the looted wealth of third-world countries.

The researcher opines that the British Empire exercised not only sovereign power but also disciplinary power over the populations of third-world countries. Western colonizers looted the local populations, but on the other hand, the locals stayed loyal to them. The colonizers introduced their own education system into third-world societies. The English language was used as the medium of transfer of knowledge to non-European people. In this way, western standards were imposed on the indigenous people. They suffered from the inferiority complex because the English supremacists claimed to be superior to them.

Vivian believes in the supremacy of her own colonial Empire. The white people were blind to the sufferings of the innocent people. Their own Empire flourished as a result of immense wealth which was stolen from all the corners of the world. The people from the third-world countries were trained and sent to the Western Front to fight against the enemies of the Empire. The oppressed colonized were trained through different educational programs to defend the Imperial Empire at every cost.

Conclusion

In Shamsie's novel *A God in Every Stone*, the researcher explored the aspects of Foucault's power and the resistance shown by the subjugated people. Foucauldian power has existed in the world since time immemorial. In *A God in Every Stone*, the researcher has explored the aspects of disciplinary power. The British Empire needed strong men to protect it from the forces of the Central Powers. Hence, men from the colonized regions were trained to defend the British colonial empire. The British Sovereign Empire took it upon itself, to reform the third-world countries. Moreover, the researcher has tried to answer the questions mentioned above in the form of textual analysis done in results and discussion section of this paper. The answers to these questions clearly explained the process of colonization that is portrayed through the 'power and resistance' phenomenon in Shamsie's '*A God in Every Stone*' by using the framework of Foucault's theory. In conclusion, "Postcolonial Identity and Discourse: A Foucauldian Analysis of Kamila Shamsie's '*A God in Every Stone*'" is a well-executed research paper that effectively applies Foucault's theoretical framework to analyze the postcolonial themes such as colonization, resistance, power, racism, identity crisis, cultural authority, and

ambivalence within the novel. Different dimensions of power have been explored in the study. This research study will open new avenues for new researchers who want to explore different aspects of power in postcolonial novels.

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