

**A STUDY OF INTERPLANETARY (POST/NEO)COLONIAL VOICES IN KIM
STANLEY ROBINSON'S *MARS TRILOGY***

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Abstract:

Future in science fiction is influenced by several threads in connection with global and interplanetary imperial ventures. Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy* is the exemplary and clear exploration of interplanetary colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial voices. In general, the term 'post-colonialism' studies the colonial process and the struggle for freedom by former colonies for the distinct identity. The publication of *Red Mars* revived the debate on the imperial perspectives. Several aspects like exploration, acquisition, colonization and exploitation of a new space planet called Mars reflect multiple interplanetary colonial, neocolonial and postcolonial voices in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*. An interplanetary (post/neo)colonialism offers new and innovative dimensions to science fiction. The present research paper aims at exploring multiple threads of the reflection and exposition of Interplanetary (post/neo)colonial threads in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*. The present trilogy under study carries several defining factors of interplanetary (post/neo)colonialism. How the terraforming of the Mars by the first hundred group of scientists, engineers and explorers along with new migrants into the green and blue Mars create Interplanetary (post/neo)colonial threads in the trilogy is the nucleus and gist of the research paper.

Keywords: Interplanetary colonialism, science fiction, neocolonialism, post-colonialism, hegemony.

The ideals and views regarding expansion and colonization of new planets through imperial ventures are common in science fiction. So, it can be called as the fiction of interplanetary expansion. In Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's views on science fiction, the aspects of technology play a significant role for imperial expansion as "all sf takes place in a cosmos (world view) in which the development of technology provides the momentum for imperial expansion and control" (Csicsery-Ronay, 2003: p.238). In brief, several aspects regarding colonialism, neocolonialism, post-colonialism and imperial politics by the natives of the Earth (earthlings) are seen in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars Trilogy*. The considerable concreteness and the sense of plausibility for the Martian terraforming are reflected in the colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial journey.

Robinson's *Mars Trilogy* (*Red Mars* (1993), *Green Mars* (1994), and *Blue Mars* (1996)) is appreciated as 'a landmark in the history of the genre' by *New York Times*. The colonization project in the trilogy begins with the arrival of the 'First Hundred' on the Mars as "Genetically engineered micro-organisms, or GEMs, had been on the scene only about half a century when the first hundred arrived on Mars." (Red Mars, 2016: p.130) The first hundred is the group of the original 100 scientists, engineers and explorers in the Martian expedition. The prime objective of the group is the terraforming of the Mars where colonization of the Mars is an inevitable process as "Beginning in 2026, this near-future narrative compresses the traditional gap between the time *Red Mars* was published (1992) and the far-future setting of much sf dealing with the colonisation of the solar system." (Pak, 2016: p.184)

The trilogy opens in the year 2026 and ends in the year 2206. This is the year (2206) where extraterrestrial and interstellar journey is very common. In this long journey of almost two centuries, the imperial ventures are constant and incessant. On the other hand, the conflict over the constant imperial project is also seen in the trilogy, but there is an inextricable link between the last and the next imperial project. New alien planets are touched by new emergent colonies that revive the history of colonialism. In the first novel, *Red Mars*, the several socioeconomic, socio-cultural aspects run towards the postcolonial awareness.

An obsessive passion for Mars is the determining factor in the first novel of the trilogy.

This passion reflects the colonial threads in the trilogy. The selection committee focused on those scientists and aspirants as “who cared about going to Mars so passionately and monomaniacally that they would devote years of their lives to achieving the goal.”(Red Mars, 2016: p.139).

After the ‘first hundred’, many citizens of China, India, Japan, Arab League, Nigeria are interested to colonize the Mars as Chris Pak writes “Later colonists from China, Japan, Switzerland and other countries, as well as various Arabic groups who derive their identity from religio-cultural sources (for example, Bedouin and Sufi), emigrate to Mars, introducing further nationalistic and cultural considerations to terraforming.”(Pak, 2016: p.169) In the treaty for the Mars inhabitation, many countries showed interest as “They want to open up Mars to individual governments, outside UN control.”(Red Mars, 2016: p.216).

The establishment of Martian colony represents an example of colonialism as Patricia Kerslake *Science Fiction and Empire* registers his opinion “Robinson’s insistence that characters represent only the attitudes allowed them by historical and social precedent strengthens the reader’s view of the Martian colony as an archetype and the process of colonialisation as paradigmatic.”(Kerslake, 2007: p.149) The colonization of other planets like Mercury underscores another example of interplanetary colonization as “For a time there, at the beginning of its colonization, Mercury had seemed to be very flush. Not only did the colonists have metals, [...] had the possibility of tapping a great deal of solar energy. (Blue Mars, 2016: p.252)

The beginning of interplanetary colonization of Mars underscores an inception or beginning of a new colonialism as Patricia Kerslake *Science Fiction and Empire* remarks “Robinson thus presents us with an image of neo-colonialism populated by idiosyncratic but compliant characters, tightly wrapped in historical example and suspended in the ether of the future.”(Kerslake, 2007: p.149) Here, the idea of neocolonialism is occupied by strange, unusual, and new views of the migrants towards the Mars.

Postcolonial perspective is reflected in the ventures established by the Russian migrants. In the discussion of the first hundred migrants from Russia to Mars frequently discuss many themes related to postcolonial perspective. An encroachment on the new by establishing imperial power has the long history in the world. After the acquisition of land through imperialism, the exploitation of its natural resources is the dark agenda. There is the repetition of the same imperial intrusion on the Mars for its natural resources as Patricia Kerslake writes “That he chooses to bind the Martian colonists to a predetermined course of planetary exploitation is in itself an act of savage irony, ruthlessly mimicking humanity’s imperial blindness and its mismanaged colonial past.”(Kerslake, 2007: p.150) In this statement, the Martians blindly adopt the imperial policy for their benefits.

The British Indian colonial and postcolonial imaginations seem to be reflected in the Mars colonization. It means the elements of orthodox colonial evolution remain dominant in the trilogy. The imperial doctrines dominate the idea of the trilogy. The empirical cycle in the trilogy moves from colonialism to neocolonialism. It further moves to postcolonial world. Here several waves of migrants from various continents of the Earth continue more than one century. Various political and historical models of colonialism are seen in the trilogy.

The conflict over the Mars colonial development between two factions influences the imperial atmosphere in the trilogy. Ann Clayborne, a geologist does not support the terraforming of the Mars as she openly declares “We are not lords of the universe. We’re one small part of it. We may be its consciousness, but being the consciousness of the universe does not mean turning it all into a mirror image of us.”(Robinson, 2016. p.214) On the other hand, Sax Russell is in favour of the terraforming of the Mars. He is the physicist who says “We can transform Mars and build it as you would build a cathedral, a monument to humanity and to the universe. We can do it, so we will do it.”(Robinson, 2016. p.213) In this intellectual conflict, the writer adheres to the imperial tradition. Application of science and technology is very dominant in the process of colonization of the Mars. In order to survive on the Mars, the colonization of the Mars with prime focus on terraforming is unavoidable. Appropriation of the Martian natural resources underscores the tendency of the colonizer’s policy towards the colonized land.

Neocolonialism is reflected in the trilogy. The term 'Neocolonialism' means "the control of less-developed countries by developed countries through indirect means." (Britannica, 2022) In this definition, different types of hegemonic power pressures like economic, political are exercised by the developed nations. In the trilogy, there is the birth of mega-corporations (Transnationals) like "Armstrong, Subarashii" (Blue Mars, 2016: p.96) after 2050 in the world. They attempt to rule the earth especially the developed, developing, underdeveloped and highly populated poor countries as "Subarashii and Armstrong and Praxis were each bigger than all but the ten largest countries or commonwealths, and they really put out the funds. Money equals power; power makes the law; and law makes government." (Red Mars, 2016: p.249) Here, an exploitation of such countries through the economic power is the hidden objectives of the mega-corporations.

Postcolonial aspects are seen in the trilogy. The terraforming of the Mars into the green and human habitable planet underscores the journey from the colonial to postcolonial planet as Kerslake writes "Thus Robinson's greening of Mars is not simply a tangible change but an analogy of the imperial passing into an emergent postcoloniality" (Kerslake, 2007: p.) The futuristic world introduced in the trilogy has two sides: pessimism and optimism. These two sides are also an inevitable part of postcolonial perspectives which is reflected in the trilogy as Patricia Kerslake remarks "...a future which, Robinson suggests, sways between the poles of pessimism and optimism, with the ultimate outcome of a postcolonial functionality" (Kerslake, 2007: p.156) In the end of *Blue Mars*, there has been the next generation of the colonizers. The Mars-born natives (Martians) reach at the postcolonial realization, who understand that the meaning of life is in the present Mars, not in its past.

In brief, several defining threads in connection with interplanetary colonialism, neocolonialism, and post-colonialism exhibit the changing paradigms of new imperial and economic power in the upcoming future world. One striking conclusion of the present research paper is the consideration of terraforming the Mars as inhabitation rather than colonization. This view highly accepts the new land as indigenous and native land rather colonized land. The neocolonialism seems to be a new and invisible form of subjugation, exploitation and depletion of weak countries by the powerful mega-corporations. The postcolonial futuristic life is full with several indispensable approaches. Here, the next generation of the Mars considers the Mars as a land of the meaning of life rather than the resource.

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