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Aesthetics in the Services of Colonialism. The Picturesque in the Indian Context

ABSTRACT

The theme of the article is to analyse picturesque aesthetics in the context of the colonial conquest of India. In the first section, the term, background and basic principles are explained. The analysis conducted on various sources revealed that the aesthetic was important for the formation of specific attitudes, which in turn were significant in the process of the colonisation and maintenance of the Empire. There are two principal spheres in which the picturesque acted as a colonial strategy: the taming and appropriation of the landscape as well as the antiquisation1 and dehumanisation of the Indians. Each of them, though often at an unconscious level, aimed at the transformation of India for the needs of the British, then the segregation and establishment of control over them.

KEY WORDS
picturesque, colonialism, British art, aesthetic

TERM

The term picturesque in England began to be applied from the beginning of the eighteenth century, as an anglicised form of the French word pittoresque or Italian pittoresco. Initially, it was not specifically connected with the landscape; instead it was used to describe a certain type of scenery or human

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1 Antiquisation is a term invented by myself to describe the strategy of considering reality as a relict of the ancient past.

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activity, which was suitable for painting. Gradually it started to be used as an aesthetic term. Over time it was employed more widely to describe and define different phenomena. On the ambiguity of this term, John Ruskin wrote:

Probably no word in the language (exclusive of theological expressions), has been the subject of so frequent or so prolonged dispute yet none remained more vague in their acceptance, and it seems to me to be a matter of no small interest to investigate the essence of that idea which all feel, and (to appearance) with respect to similar things, and yet which every attempt to define has, as I believe, ended either in mere enumeration of the effects and objects to which the term has been attached, or else in attempts at abstraction more palpably nugatory than any which have disgraced metaphysical investigation on other subjects.

BACKGROUND OF THE PICTURESQUE

The aesthetics of the picturesque were founded on the basis of nascent nationalism in England in the eighteenth century. Paradoxically, this was largely accomplished through references to ancient civilisation. A “man of taste” had to be familiar with ancient culture and read the classics. It was believed that only by referring to them could one fully experience the beauty of the landscape: “a person conversant with the writings of Theocritus and Virgil will relish pastoral scenery more than one unacquainted with such poetry”, thought Richard Payne Knight. Reading Virgil, who described the Italian landscapes with admiration, inspired British artists to seek beauty in their home land. An important factor was also the political situation in continental Europe, as wars prevented the wealthy English from embarking on their Grand Tour to Italy and the Mediterranean; therefore, emphasis on the British landscape grew. The British landscape was considered to have a higher status than the Italian. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the classic poets began to be superseded by local writers describing the local landscape. As time passed, there were fewer references to ancient authors, and if they were still quoted it was in an anglicised form. There was also a growing opposition to following and transforming ancient patterns to suit different needs, with the criticism that, among other things, what suits Italy sometimes seems ridiculous in cooler climates. Gradually poets changed their style and they searched for inspiration.

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in their own culture\textsuperscript{5}. The same applied to landscape painting. Critical voices were heard that

\[\text{[\ldots] in a country so profusely beautified with the amenities of nature, it is extraordinary that we have produced so few good painters of landscape [\ldots]} \text{ Our ever-verdant lawns, rich vales, fields of haycocks, and hop-grounds, are neglected as homely and familiar objects. The latter, which I never saw painted, are very picturesque, particularly in the season of gathering, when some tendrils are ambitiously climbing, and others dangling in natural festoons; while poles, despoiled of their garlands, are erected into easy pyramids that contrast with the taper and upright columns.}\textsuperscript{6}

In this way, the growth of English nationalism directly led to the creation of a school of landscape painting in England.

Another important factor regarding the growing interest in the local landscape and picturesque were the rapid economic changes in the countryside. In the corresponding period when picturesque aesthetics underwent formation (1790‒1815), as a result of the war with France, food prices surged in a short period of time. This was one of the reasons to cultivate new lands under enclosure. Enclosing a number of small landholdings to create one larger farm changed the social relations prevailing throughout the country – the land gradually passed into the hands of wealthy owners, while the poor were deprived of theirs and thus became subjugated to the rich. Consequently, the social relations transformed significantly, the poor became poorer, and the owners grew rich quickly on the back of cheap labor. The enclosures were one of the main factors that destroyed the whole structure of English peasant society embodied in the traditional village\textsuperscript{7}. The picturesque, which referred to the idyllic past began to cover, or blur the uncomfortable reality of enclosure, converting it into an enjoyable spectacle for the rich social strata. Therefore, building nostalgia for the old order worked as a tool which helped to maintain the new\textsuperscript{8}. For this reason, landscape paintings in the picturesque idiom might also be interpreted as an early capitalistic strategy of

\textsuperscript{5} M. Andrews, op. cit., pp. 11‒12.

\textsuperscript{6} H. Walpole, \textit{Anecdotes of Painting in England; With Some Account of the Principal Artists; and Incidental Notes on Other Arts}, Vol. IV, London 1862, p. 121.


masking the cruelty of social change to eliminate any potential discomfort of the ruling classes.

THEORY OF THE PICTURESQUE

The main theoreticians of the picturesque were: William Gilpin, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight; additionally, this was also a subject of interest for writers or critics such as William Hazlitt. Above all, they expressed admiration for the local landscape and searched nature for “that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture”9. For this purpose, as Gilpin repeatedly stressed, it was imperative to go on trips and learn to perceive the landscape in terms of scenic beauty. He attached weight to diversity and contrast, while stressing the importance of light and shadow. The artist was compared to a decorator, who selected from the treasury of nature individual elements and juxtaposed them in an appropriate way to achieve such or such an effect. The purpose of the picturesque was mostly to evoke happiness, admiration, wonder and excitement rarely of an intellectual nature. As William Hazlitt noticed, its aim was to surprise, not to give satisfaction to the mind10. This sensual approach to the landscape meant that Gilpin focused not only on ornamental details, fragments of nature, but also on colour and light, as essential ingredients that make up the picturesque.

In distance especially this is the case hills and vallies are deranged: awkward abruptnesses, and hollows are introduced: and the effect of woods, and castles, and all the ornamental detail of a country, is lost. On the other hand, these ingredients of landscape may in reality be awkwardly introduced, but through the magical influence of light, they may be altered, softened and rendered pleasing11.

For William Hazlitt, the picturesque is a sharper and bolder impression of reality12. The artist then transformed reality into an object of aesthetic pleasure. “These painting also separates; and, in its imitations of objects, which are pleasing to the eye but otherwise offensive, exhibits the pleasing qualities only so that we are delighted with the copy, when we should, perhaps, turn

11 W. Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*, London 1782, p. 44.
12 W. Hazlitt, op. cit., p. 279.
away with disgust and abhorrence from the original.”¹³ In the search for the right elements, the artist could choose either from nature or man-made objects. “A painter’s nature is whatever he imitates, whether the object be what is commonly called natural, or artificial […] In the hands of such a master it furnishes almost as beautiful forms, as any in the whole circle of picturesque objects?”¹⁴ The scenic landscape, besides buildings (frequently gothic ruins), can contain staffage as well. The theorists defined what types of human figure and what kind of presentation could achieve the desired effect. They treated them as “the ornament of scenes” so there were no need for an accurate anatomical study of them. Instead, the artists tended to consider general shapes, dresses, groups, and occupations.¹⁵ As social groups, the poor, gypsies, banditti – that is, people from the lower strata who were marginalised or entirely excluded – were willingly presented (Fig. 1).

Picturesque aesthetics were an expression of longing for nature, for an idillic world occurring somewhere on the outskirts of civilisation. It was a particular escape from the increasingly modernised world, from industrialisation. The imaginary reality did not present nature as it looked but rather its own constructs, according to needs.

THE PICTURESQUE AS A COLONIAL STRATEGY

The picturesque as a colonial strategy worked on two main levels: the taming and appropriation of the landscape as well as the antiquisation and dehumanisation of the Indians. Most endeavours were conducted with the purpose of adapting India for the British, then detachment and the establishment of control over them. Some researchers believe that the picturesque can not be regarded as a tool that was always consciously used for the purposes of colonisation.¹⁶ This opinion may be grounded in fact, but only to a certain degree. It should be noted that the picturesque, consciously or not, performed such

¹³ R. P. Knight, op. cit., pp. 70‒71.
¹⁵ Ibidem, pp. 44‒45.
functions and although certainly not all cases show full premeditation, it was a subliminal tool for manipulation and power, operating on many levels. It was used on local ground in order to separate themselves from the lower classes – a kind of dehumanisation by turning them into aesthetic objects and a way of extending authority over them. In India it was used in order to subjugate and dehumanise the local inhabitants and ultimately to conquer and rule over them. So one might consider this in terms of a sophisticated strategy of colonial conquest and power.

SUBJUGATING AND APPROPRIATING THE LANDSCAPE

One of the basic assumptions of the picturesque was to take a fresh look at nature and transform it according to certain criteria. With this aim, it was necessary to search for new sites or forsake knowledge of a particular place and perceive it in line with established aesthetics.

The first source of amusement to the picturesque traveller, is the pursuit of his object the expectation of new scenes continually opening, and arising to his view. We suppose the country to have been unexplored. Under this circumstance the mind is kept constantly in an agreeable suspense. The love of novelty is the foundation of this pleasure. Every distant horizon promises something new; and with this pleasing expectation we follow nature through all her walks. We pursue her from hill to dale; and hunt after those various beauties, with which she everywhere abounds.

India met these criteria in full. Moreover, it was believed that only an artist unfamiliar with this country could show it accurately. William Hodges thought that the best person to describe India was an artist passing through because, unlike their compatriots who live there, he might take a fresh look. However, those who had been there longer and had knowledge of it were unable to properly present it. So from the very beginning of landscape paintings of an Indian theme, the condition of a fresh perspective – undistorted by any knowledge of the country – was most important. Consequently it excluded showing the true reality and imposed from the beginning its own perception which would modify and transform what was actually there. Thomas Daniell was also of such an opinion,

18 W. Hodges, Travels in India, During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, & 1783, London 1793, p. IV.
who believed that the task of the artist was to bring to Europe this picturesque beauty of his favourite regions. Thus it was about presenting to the audience in the metropolis new land in a familiar way. From the beginning they had somewhat subjugated India in their own spirit and dragged it into the European orbit. India was presented in the same way as the Lake District or the Highlands. These works have the same kind of composition divisible into three grounds with the focus mostly on one of them with others subordinate to it. They varied from paintings of British landscapes in terms of details such as human figures dressed or behaving differently or by depicting other types of architecture. Its forms were also soon pulled into the orbit of British aesthetics and given the value of scenic beauty. So after the initial amazement of their different shapes, they were quickly packaged into a well-known classification. Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck believed that it belonged to the sprightly category, which corresponded to the picturesque.

Daniel’s Views of Hindostan, also, would furnish many beautiful exemplifications of the sprightly [...] Such a scene would be the sprightly; or, perhaps, like Daniel’s Views of Hindostan, might be considered as a sort of mixture of the sprightly, with a slight tincture of the sublime. [...] The different effect given by unity or diversity of colouring, has been already remarked with respect to Daniel’s views of Hindostan. The same observation holds good in regard to dress as to architecture.

This landscape reorganised in the spirit of the Indian picturesque worked on two levels. One was the transfer and presentation of a distant country in a manner familiar to the public in the United Kingdom. This was of great importance to the mechanics of colonisation, initially made on psychological grounds. In the beginning the aim was to subjugate and somehow organise a foreign space. This process gave a sense of power. What is important – this was stimulated and controlled by official policy. The artist who came to India in the second part of the eighteenth century had to obtain official permission from the East India Company. They had to submit an official application which was closely scrutinised. Moreover, each artist was obliged to provide


a reliable guarantor as the Company refuted responsibility for the unemployed who needed to be supported or repatriated\textsuperscript{22}. Having been chosen, they had to provide paintings according to the needs of their employers or potential buyers – in other words, the British in India and in the United Kingdom. Some, like William Hodges, who was Captain Cook’s the official painter of the second voyage to the Pacific, was paid 350 pounds per year by the admiralty to produce paintings of his journeys that would promote commerce and the empire\textsuperscript{23}. In India he was employed by Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal, who, during the artist’s two and half year stay in India, granted him an annual salary and later in England he purchased many paintings of Indian subjects. Moreover, he arranged for the artist to receive a salary from the East India Company\textsuperscript{24}. One might come to the conclusion that these artists to a large extent were cogs in the machine creating the empire, serving its interests and building its vision in the conscience of the British nation.

After the incorporation of India into the Empire, the picturesque continued to serve as a means of presenting, but to a much broader imperial audience and no longer of a strange land but of their own territory. The aesthetics were comfortable, although they distanced all the awkward aspects of the conquered country, providing a feeling of comfort and giving a sense of superiority and power. In this spirit, India was presented to European readers in \textit{Picturesque India: A Handbook For European Travellers}, by William Sproston Caine\textsuperscript{25}. At the very beginning of the book the author stressed that he will not discuss any problems “awaiting solutions” as his book contains “no controversial matter, either political or religious”\textsuperscript{26}. Aesthetics thus became a comfortable rhetorical strategy used to describe others and provide detachment from them.

The Indian picturesque landscape also worked in the opposite direction. The superficial resemblance to views from home that resulted from aesthetic assumptions was aimed at making the British in India miss home and maintain strong ties with their country of origin. Through these efforts they turned an exotic landscape into a nostalgic one; the picturesque became a bridge

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibidem, p. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibidem, p. IX.
\end{itemize}
that connected the British with their families. In consequence of this people looked at India through the prism of their own country. Dr. John Leyden, from Scotland, wrote the following:

The grotesque and savage scenery, the sudden peeps of romantic ridges of mountains bursting at once on you through the bamboo bushes, the green peaks of the loftiest hills, towering above the forests on their declivities, and the narrow cultivated stripes between the ridges, all contributed strongly to recall to memory some very romantic scenes in the Scottish Highlands.

The aesthetics of the picturesque contributed significantly to such a reception of foreign scenery. The evocation of a longing for their home land was subliminally aimed at discouraging the men from settling in India. As Lord Valentia mentioned

[... ] nothing could have a stronger tendency to hinder the European from establishing themselves in India, than the prospect of a speedy return to their native climates, while the scenes of youthful days were fresh in their remembrance, and the ties of friendship, and of kindred, neither broken, nor forgotten.

Men settling permanently in India was dangerous from the point of view of the Empire. The aspect that posed the most concern was the prospect of marrying local women. The natural consequence was the appearance of children of mixed race. Such people, straddling the border between two worlds, threatened the purity of the British race, whose maintenance was guaranteed by a clear distinction between themselves and the Indians, thereby making it easier to govern them. Observing the situation of the Spanish colonists in South America who embarked en masse on relationships with local women, losing racial purity, and subsequently their colonies, the British would not allow this to occur within the territories conquered by them. Various strategies were undertaken to prevent this. The most obvious were regulations, such as the prohibition of mixed marriages. Others were less direct and acted more on a subconscious level. In this category were aesthetics and later the rhetoric of the picturesque that idealised

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29 G. Annesley, V. Viscount, Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt: In the Years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806, Vol. 1, Printed for F., C., and J. Rivington, 1811, p. 257.
the homeland, transforming it into the magical land of one’s childhood, thus provoking a feeling of longing. So somehow the separation of races was favoured, maintaining a national-racial distinction, thereby keeping power.

Building strong ties to the home country and causing longing was also to encourage the return of those men who had married British women. One of the assumptions of the colonisation policy was in fact to present themselves in front of the conquered nation from their best sides. It was socially acceptable to show weakness or old age, so it was necessary to ensure that the colonialists were all young people, healthy and full of energy. Therefore, the officials were sent off to retire to the United Kingdom, while the remainder were encouraged to leave India in their later years, so as not to spoil the ideal image of the British nation. Such strategies served to evoke longing, in which a considerable part was played by aesthetics and the picturesque rhetoric.

ANTIQUISATION AND THE DEHUMANISATION OF THE INDIANS

The process of conquering the Indian landscape was accompanied by the extension of control over the residents of India. This proceeded on several levels. The first was the perception of them as the living relics of an ancient past. The notion that Indian civilisation was in the past associated with the European had been mooted ever since the times of the first Portuguese who came to India seeking there “Christians and spices”\(^{30}\). These Christians supposed to have been converted by St. John, who went to the ends of the earth to convert pagans\(^ {31}\). In later descriptions, the Indian civilisation was compared to the Biblical. In The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Several Nations of the Known World: The ceremonies of the idolatrous nations, Bernard Picart notes that in Indian writings one may encounter a number of passages which may seem surprising at first, but quickly become understandable by comparison with the Western civilisation, because in India there one could find many characters and behaviours from the ancient times described in the Bible and Jewish books\(^ {32}\). Indian religions were


considered to be derived from the time of Adam and Eve and perpetuated by Noah, while the idea of reincarnation has much in common with the opinions of Pythagoras\textsuperscript{33}. Some felt that the Indians were in fact Jews who had turned away from the teachings of Moses and forgotten about God\textsuperscript{34}. The effort undertaken, mainly in the seventeenth century, to include India in biblical chronology, paved the way for later thinkers, both romantics and utilitarians. New discoveries, such as the common sources of Sanskrit and European languages were explained by researchers with the theory that the Indian present is Europe’s past\textsuperscript{35}. The civilisation in India was therefore a remnant of the old, classic one and now she was in a state of collapse. As Edward Said observed, the idealisation of an Oriental past was one of the key strategies in the perception of the Orient, giving rise to the self-portrayal of Europeans as one standing at a higher level of civilisation. This constituted a pretext for colonial campaigns that were aimed at saving these countries from their fall\textsuperscript{36}.

Residents of India as a living continuation of tradition, began to assume the characteristics of ancient grandeur. Thomas Daniell wrote:

\[\ldots\] happily for curiosity [Indian monuments] are often elucidated by manners of the present inhabitants, who with unexampled fidelity have preserved their primitive customs unimpaired by time or conquest; and in their domestic institutions still present the image of a remote and almost obsolete antiquity\textsuperscript{37}.

People were thus treated as historical relics, often viewed as characters from the classic European past. Particularly telling is the title of one book devoted to this subject: \textit{Illustrations of Bible Truth Drawn from Life in India}\textsuperscript{38}, in which, as the name suggests, the author saw a living continuation of ancient times in the current behaviour of the Indian people. The picturesque perception was often combined with antiquisation in the case of women. It was believed that they in particular were a reflection of Europe’s past (Fig. 2). On the basis of observing their appearance and behaviour, it was thought that in ancient Greece women had to look the same because their sculptures looked like contemporary

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{33} J. de Thévenot, A. Lovell, \textit{The Travels Of Monsieur De Thevenot Into The Levant: In Three Parts. The East-Indies}, Vol. 3, Faithorne, 1687, p. 65.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{34} T. Bowrey, \textit{A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669 to 1679}, Cambridge 1905, p. 25.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{35} B. Cohn, op. cit., p. 17.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{37} T. Daniell, op. cit., p. ii.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Indian Mirror: Or, Illustrations of Bible Truth Drawn from Life in India}, London 1878.}
Figure 1. Picturesque view

Figure 2. “The women carry water in goblets on their heads with much grace and elegance: their appearance was picturesque, and reminded me of the Biblical descriptions”

Figure 3. Village and Pagoda below Patna Azimabad, on the Ganges

Source: Lieutenant C. Forrest, *A Picturesque Tour Along the Rivers Ganges and Jumna in India*, London 1824, Pl. XI.
Figure 4. Gwalior Citadel Rock

Indian women\(^\text{39}\). William Hodges stressed this in his memoirs “to a painter’s mind, the fine antique figures never fail to present themselves, when he observes a beautiful female form ascending these steps from river, with wet drapery, which perfectly displays the whole person, and with vases on their heads, carrying water to the temples”\(^\text{40}\). James Forbes likened them to Mesopotamian damsels or Rebeka and Rachael\(^\text{41}\). Women were also aestheticised and compared to ancient statues\(^\text{42}\). Consequently, they were often presented in such a way - like antique figures, wrapped in timeless draperies.

These treatments looked so similar to that of the picturesque landscape – the transformation and integration into the European orbit, thereby appropriating and imposing controls. This transfer to the past, a kind of freezing of time is also evident in frequent method of composing picturesque paintings with staffage. In many instances these scenes were painted from a boat\(^\text{43}\), which was a common means of transport for the British in India (Fig. 3). Such an approach further increased the distance between the perceiver and the perceived, and also clearly stressed the differences between mobile Europeans, and the Indians frozen in time\(^\text{44}\).

The second strategy of imposing control was to present Indians in line with the principles of picturesque aesthetics. They were portrayed similarly to the poor in England and performed an analogous function\(^\text{45}\), becoming a part of the painting, to please the eye of the wealthy recipient. As such, they had to be represented in such a way as not to disgust or disturb. So, depictions of poverty were avoided and the characters had to be presented as neat and tidy, shown from a distance so as not to place undue emphasis on their presence. As the picturesque revealed an imaginary lost idyll, similarly the figures there had to be represented without any clear connection with the present, dwelling

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\(^\text{40}\) W. Hodges, op. cit., p. 33.


\(^\text{43}\) See for example illustrations in the book: Lieutenant C. Forrest, *A Picturesque Tour Along the Rivers Ganges and Jumna in India*, London 1824, in which most of the landscapes are presented from the boat’s perspective.


somewhere outside of the contemporary era (for example painting of William Daniell, Indian woman with a river beyond, private collection). This type of presentation caused dehumanisation; the people of India were merely a motif to decorate the picturesque landscapes, portrayed from a safe distance. Moreover, they were sometimes even an obstacle to achieving the desired effect. Fanny Parks, who was so distracted by their presence, recalled that she felt obliged to apologise to the recipients of her work that she could not fully achieve the picturesque effect.\footnote{F. Parks, \textit{Wandering Pilgrims in Search of the Picturesque}, London 1850, Vol. 2, p. 145.}

Indians were the objects of aestheticisation, transformed by the sophisticated Briton standing at a higher level of development. It was believed that the people of India could be subjected to such treatment, while they themselves were unable to do so because they had no aesthetic sense. They were classified as relics of the distant past, of lower status, incapable of higher sophisticated feelings. However, it was considered that humanity was divided into a chosen class that could experience scenic beauty, while the vast majority did not have such opportunities.\footnote{J. Barrell, \textit{The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt}, New Haven–London 1995, p. 13.} Of course, in India the chosen ones were the wealthy, sophisticated British. David Hume wrote:

\begin{quote}
The great superiority of civilized Europeans above barbarous Indians, tempted us to imagine ourselves on the same footing with regard to them, and made us throw off all restraints of justice, and even of humanity in our treatment of them […] I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men […] to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.\footnote{D. Hume, \textit{Essays, Literary, Moral, and Political}, London 1870, pp. 412, 123.}
\end{quote}

As an uncivilised nation, the Indians did not have any sense of aesthetics, which justified reducing them to the role of aesthetic objects to be judged by a European subject.\footnote{E. A. Bohls, \textit{Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1716–1818}, Cambridge–New York 1995, p. 72.} To confirm this, various stories were cited; for example, Helen Mackenzie wrote that:

\begin{quote}
The Hindustani are very apathetic to scenery. I have never known one stop to admire anything. My husband cross-questioned a chaprassi (from Delhi I think) to find if he had any appreciation for the beauties which surrounded him. Not in the least. He
said the pain in his legs in running up and down hill with messages was not to be expressed, and that if were not for the wants of his stomach he would not stay here a day\textsuperscript{50}.

Some Britons went even further and excluded almost all Indians, even from picturesque paintings. Sir Richard Temple in the book \textit{A Bird’s-Eye View of Picturesque India}, included many illustrations of his own creation\textsuperscript{51}. The artist focused on capturing the scenic beauty of India; the inferiority of its inhabitants was clearly accentuated by only depicting them sketchily, as if they were unworthy of more attention from the author (Fig. 4). Therefore, the dehumanisation process here was at an advanced stage, compared with works of the earlier period. By the end of the nineteenth century, India was almost entirely ruled by the British, and the representation of their inhabitants – reduced to sketchy figures – was the result of a long process of lording it over them, in which the strategy of the picturesque played a certain role.

**CONCLUSION**

Aesthetics, and later the rhetoric of the picturesque was a powerful, though indirect tool of colonisation and power. First of all, the transformation of the Indian landscape artists by even the first landscape painters who came to India led to the subjugation of India and its addition to the British cultural sphere. The authority imposed in this way later became stronger and even more fenced off from the conquered nation. The perception of reality in terms of the picturesque was a very convenient strategy of governance. The natural consequence of drawing people to the realm of the picturesque also resulted in their dehumanisation and reduction to the role of aesthetic objects submitted to the stronger one who thereby imposed his authority. Although they were subtle practices, often not consciously applied even by the artists themselves, considering the issue as a whole and on many levels, it is evident that it was an effective and durable strategy, whose reminiscences are visible even in modern times\textsuperscript{52}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} H. Mackenzie, \textit{Six Years in India: Delhi, the City of the Great Mogul, with an Account of the Various Tribes in Hindostan; Hindoos, Sikhs, Affghans, Etc}, London 1857, p. 173.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Sir R. Temple, \textit{A Bird’s-Eye View of Picturesque India}, London 1898.
\end{itemize}
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