

CHAPTER - III

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Paul Scott was possessed by the British Indian History and, therefore, it becomes significant to learn his response to the Indian national leaders. Scott has effectively dealt with the theme of decolonisation and the last critical days of the British Raj. He has used the images of Indian national leaders in his significant work The Raj Quartet which consists of the following novels : The Jewel in the Crown(1966), The Day of the Scorpion (1968), The Towers of Silence (1971), and A Division of the Spoils (1975). The images of Indian national leaders are created against the background of an infinitely complex Indian Society, complexities arising out of its typical social structure, religious beliefs and political ideas. The characters of Indian national leaders are portrayed around the following major events: the resignation of the Provincial Government (1939), the Cripps Mission (1942), the Quit India Movement

(1942), and the Partition of India (1947). This is the major historical context in which Scott has created the images of Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, Subhas Bose and others. Mostly these leaders are directly referred to by their names. Sometimes he also makes use of imaginary names who stand for the real historical personages, but that is seen only in a very few cases.

Scott uses mixed narrative technique in his novels. He starts with the omniscient narrator, who, like the God, looks at everything and everybody from above. But as the novel progresses, there are different characters talking to the reader in the first person. Sometimes there are letters, which is a variation on the first person narration. It is only when the writer is using omniscient narrator, that we can say there is possibility of the writer's views and judgements being expressed. The images of the Indian national leaders emerging in these four novels of the Quartet may or may not be the personal impressions of Scott about them. Yet, Scott's presentation of these leaders, and their images through the fictional characters in his novels can be coloured by his personal experiences as a British army

officer serving in India in those very tumultuous days of Indian freedom movement.

The Jewel in the Crown (1966) the first of The Raj Quartet novels, deals with two events, an attack on Miss Edwina Crane, the supervisor of Protestant Schools in Mayapore district followed by the murder of her Indian colleague Mr.D.R.Chaudhary, and the rape of an English girl, Miss Daphane Manners in the Bibighar Gardens. These fictitious incidents are set against the background of one of the most important historic events, the All India Congress voting in favour of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Resolution on 8th August 1942, a resolution under which the British were called upon to leave India, and Gandhi and the entire working committee were arrested which was followed by the Civil Violence all over the country. Within this point of reference of politico-historical and fictional life of characters we have to examine the image of Gandhi as presented by Paul Scott. Scott himself can tell us what the civilian and military personnel in India felt about Gandhi's activity in India in 1942 and after. His narrator says :

*"In 1942, which was the year the Japanese defeated the British army in Burma and Mr. Gandhi began preaching sedition in India, the English then living in the Civil and Military cantonment of Mayapore had to admit that the future did not look propitious. They had faced bad times before, though, and felt that they could face them again, that now they knew where they stood and there could be no more heart-searching for quite a while yet about the rights and wrongs of their colonial-imperialist policy and administration."*¹

Gandhi's preaching is naturally 'seditious' from the point of view of British military officer. Scott need not feel about Gandhi the way Nahal as an Indian would feel, and admire him. Mahatma Gandhi's movements like Dandi Yatra and Civil Disobedience were interpreted by the British officers, uniformly, as inimical and seditious activities. Even the fictional civilian British characters also felt the same. Edwina Crane, the Superintendent of a mission school, once admires Gandhi, but her opinion radically changes when Gandhi challenges British Raj at the time when the Japanese forces

are knocking at the Indian gate. She interprets Gandhi's call of Quit India to the British as an invitation to the Japanese. She thinks :

*"What looked like an open invitation to the Japanese to come and help him rid India of the British and if he thought that they would be the better masters then she could only assume he was out of his sense or, which was worse, revealing that his philosophy of non-violence had a dark side that added upto total invalidation of its every aspect "*²

Miss Crane removes the portrait of Gandhi from her wall. The British officers appreciate her symbolic action. In the eyes of the British Gandhi's image is that of a scheming and sinister politician, out of touch with his own people.

Mr. Ronald Merrick, District Superintendent of Police, has the similar views about Gandhi. Merrick describes Gandhi as :

"A 'Crazy old man' who had completely lost touch with the people he thought he still led, and so

*was the dupe of his own 'dreams and crazy illusions', and had no idea how much he was laughed at by the kind of young men, he, Merrick, had to keep in order."*³

The British character, Robin White, in the novel also describes Gandhi in the following words :

*"I distrusted Gandhi because I couldn't see how a man who wielded such power and influence could remain uninhibited by it, and always make the right decisions for the right reasons".*⁴

This is nothing but a distortion of the great Indian leader like Gandhi. Here through the eyes of some British characters, Scott denies the importance of Gandhi and totally disfigures him.

The British view of Gandhi further continues in The Day of the Scorpion (1968), the second novel of The Raj Quartet. It is the story of the twilight days of British Raj shown mainly from the British point of view. The novel implies Scott's belief that since India needs a good deal of

progress on the social scale they should not be granted self-rule until they are fit for that. According to the British officers, the British Raj only was capable of reforming the social condition of the caste-ridden Indian society but their task would remain unfulfilled due to untimely freedom granted to India. So, Scott, through his characters, morally justifies the British rule in India and denounces the Indian National Movement. It is from this point of view that Gandhi's role in the freedom movement is interpreted by the British. They felt that Gandhi was inviting trouble for his own country.

Sir George Malcolm, the Governor of the Province, in this novel, criticises Gandhi and his Quit India Movement in the following manner :

"You know the British simply aren't going to forgive all this Quit India nonsense going on while they're trying to concentrate on turning the tables on the Japanese, not-mark you - just to save themselves and their country but you and your country"⁵.

Ronald Merrick, who was a police officer in The Jewel in the

Crown reappears in this novel as a military officer. He does not change his attitude towards Gandhi and thinks that Gandhi's activities were non-sensical and believes that even the youngsters didn't believe in Gandhi. In this respect he says:

" They laugh at Gandhi, you know, all that crowd. All that passive resistance and non-violence nonsense is just a joke to them, just as it's a joke to the militant Hindu wing of the congress and organizations like the Mahasabha and the RSS"⁶.

What Merrick says is in a way true so far as militant Hindus, and Hindu organizations like Hindu Mahasabha and RSS militants believed that only the force, the military action could achieve freedom. But the novelist Scott does not take into account the great masses of the Indian population that were involved in Gandhi's movements. Scott appears to make his characters speak what he himself believed as a British military officer. He criticises the fundamentalist forces also in Indian politics. He does not agree that the Congress party is a secular party as it is professed to be. It does

have a Hindu touch he thinks.

In The Day of the Scorpion, Governor Sir George Malcom has a long dialogue with the Congress Chief-Minister Mohammed Ali Kasim, who has resigned his ministry in response to the call of the Congress party. Governor tries his best to convince Kasim how it is in his interest to avoid arrest, remain free and be of help to his own community. He tries to convince Kasim that the Congress is essentially a Hindu dominated party, and has discriminated against the muslims in forming the government in 1937-39. He tempts Kasim with a position on the Governor's advisory council. Yet Kasim does not agree to leave Congress, or disobey the dictates of the Congress party. He is firm in his conviction about the aims of the Congress, that it should unify India, make all Indians feel as one nation. Scott has perhaps modelled Kasim on Abul Kalam Azad. The episode tells us how the muslim national leaders like Azad were thoroughly nationalists and were not swayed by the politics of the Muslim League or the devious arguments of the British officers.

Gandhi has also been presented from Kasim's point of

view. In his letter to the Governor, Kasim writes :

*"Gandhi, you know, never said how the country was to be organized to withdraw from the war effort. As you know he has never been much of a chap for detail and even those closest to him have often been puzzled to know exactly what it is he has in mind."*⁷

We get this impression from Nahal's The Gandhi Quartet also. Gandhi's movements were the product of his imagination and his hunches. He started them without any planned organization. He kept even his followers wandering. Kasim corrects the Governor telling him how his accusation of deviousness and blackmail was baseless because Gandhi could not have planned violent agitation being himself in prison.

The Towers of Silence is the third novel of The Raj Quartet, which is almost an elegy on the decline and fall of the Indian empire. Scott recreates the turbulent situation mainly through the characters of Miss Barbara Batchlor who retired from her post as superintendent of the Protestant Mission Schools in the city of Ranpur, and widowed Mrs. Mabel



Layton, Lt. Colonel John Layton's stepmother. The historical period that Scott deals with in this novel is the period of World War II. The Viceroy, Linlithgow, had declared India at War, without consulting the Congress. The Congress Party had asked the ministries to resign in protest and Gandhiji had started Quit India Movement. In this novel, Scott denounces Gandhi and All India Congress because he thinks that they were responsible for the total disorder in India. He calls Gandhi a stupid person and Quit India Movement funny one. In this respect he says :

"His demand now that the British should quit India, should leave her to 'God or to anarchy' sounded fine, courageous, desperate and inspired, but it meant that they should leave India to the Japanese who were already on the Chindwin but with whom Gandhi obviously expected to make a political bargain. Unless you were stupid you did not make bargains with the Japanese but war".⁸

These are the remarks of Scott's omniscient narrator, which typically synchronize with the popular British view.

The distortion of Gandhi's image as projected so far still continues in A Division of the Spoils (1975), the fourth and concluding novel of The Raj Quartet. Scott recreates the British Indian History from 1945 to 1947 in this novel. His stance of the justification of the British Raj is clearly revealed here. In this novel, he presents the image of Gandhi against the background of Indian princely states. It is illustrated by taking the example of the state of Mirat. Bronowsky defends the princes's ability to rule the states properly. He holds major Indian political parties responsible for attempting communal riots in India. His belief in the ability of the princes is proved when he says that inspite of Nawab's being a Muslim and the majority of his subjects Hindu the two communities had equal opportunities and were happy as his subjects. Bronowsky further believes that this happiness is evident in their not being attracted by the Indian National Movement led by Gandhi. In the case of Mirat's subjects he says :

"(they) do not hanker after the democratic mellenium promised by Gandhiji on the one hand or the theistic paradise-state on earth envisaged by

Mr. Jinnah on the other".⁹

These lines again express typical British prejudice against Gandhi and wrongly interpret his movement.

The British officers always tried to wean away Muslims from the Congress Party. Scott typically presents this strategy of the British through his British as well as Muslim characters. He presents Gandhi's Congress as a Hindu party as is clearly seen in the words of Mr. Sayed, MAK's son. How the Muslims were suffering under the rule of the Congress is pointed out by Sayed in the following manner:

"They will hand us over to Gandhi and Nehru and Patel and then where will you be, father? How can you trust Congress as a whole? How can you imagine that just because you've been useful to them in the past - a Muslim - will be allowed to remain useful when they have power? They will squeeze you out at the first convenient opportunity. Congress is a Hindu party whatever they pretend. They will exploit us as badly as the British have done probably worse. There's only one answer and that

*is to seize what we can for ourselves and run things our own way from there."*¹⁰

We can see that Scott's presentation of the image of Gandhi is heavily influenced by the general British prejudice against Gandhiji. Scott's fictional characters are mostly Anglo-Indians and Anglo-phyle Indians. They do not show deep insight into Gandhian principles of Satyagraha and Non-violence. Scott's alter-ego, his omniscient narrator, also hardly examines the spiritual aspect of Gandhian leadership. When the characters like Edwina appreciate Gandhiji, it is for his harmless non-violent ways of fighting the Raj. The moment there is a context of war to his actions, they despise him.

Like Gandhi, the images of other Indian national leaders like Subhas Bose, Mr.M.A.Jinnah and Pandit Nehru are also projected through the eyes of some British characters by Scott in The Raj Quartet. But these images also are equally distorted by the British preoccupation with War and the role of Indian leaders vis-a-vis the War. For example, in The Day of the Scorpion, the death of Teddie Bingham is attributed to

the activities of Indian National Army founded by Subhas Chandra Bose. According to the British, the very foundation of the INA lies in the act of treachery. Scott himself regards this great leader as a traitor. The image of Subhas Bose and his Indian National Army is vilified through the characters like Merrick. This is nothing but a coloniser's point of view.

Mr. Ronald Merrick is highly critical of the INA. He describes the formation of INA in the following words. The INA members were known as Jiffs. Basically they were the Indian soldiers who were once prisoners of war of the Japanese in the Burma and Malaya. But later on they changed their attitude and formed themselves into an army. Merrick explains this as their strategy of escaping from being the prisoners of War. He does not allow any patriotic motive to them. They helped the Japanese in their attempt to invade India through Imphal. Merrick's long speech represents the British view of the INA and the way in which INA functioned. He totally neglects its contribution to the Indian national freedom. Since Scott himself was a British military officer it is difficult not to attribute this view to Scott himself.

Ronald Merrick further says :

"And officers like Teddie took it to heart. They couldn't believe Indian soldiers who'd eaten the king's salt and been proud to serve in the army generation after generation could be suborned like that, buy their way out of prison camp by turning coat, come armed hand in hand with the Japs to fight their own countrymen, fight the very officers who had trained them, cared for them and earned their respect".¹¹

Scott draws our attention to the Congress - INA discord which is revealed through the relationship between Mohammed Ali Kasim, a staunch Congressman and his elder son Sayed, the member of the INA, in the context of the coloniser's attitude. Though the father and the son had a common aim, they were never in agreement with each other. Mr. Kasim does not like his son joining the Indian National Army. His staunch belief in the ideals of the Congress is to be seen when he criticises INA in the following words:

*"The Indian National Army? What can that be? A handful of madmen led by that other madman, Subhas Chandra Bose, who was never any good to congress. He always had delusions of grandeur."*¹²

This discord points out how Indians were not in agreement with each other so, according to Scott, Congress leaders were not mature enough to have a self-rule.

The distorted image of Subhas Bose and INA is still continued in The Towers of Silence. Here we can find how Scott's characters speak very harshly about INA in one of the conversations between Mrs Paynton and Mrs Fosdick, the wives of British officers in India:

*"If we ever do win this bloody war we might hang Bose and one or two bigwigs but the rest will just have to be cashiered or dismissed with ignominy. Only by then we'll probably be on our way out in any case and the bloody Indians will have to deal with them in their own bloody way, and they'll probably bloody well make heroes out of them."*¹³

Critical and harsh comments on Subhas Bose and the INA continue further in the last novel, A Division of the Spoils. The Punjab Officer (The British), examining the INA soldier, Havildar Karim Muzzafir Khan says :

*"All Pankot is patient, awaiting the regiment's return from across the black water. In Pankot they do not yet know the story of Havildar Karim Muzzafir Khan who let himself believe in the lies of Subhas Chandra Bose. But soon they will know and they will be dumb with shame and sorrow."*¹⁴

Here an officer is trying to humiliate Karim Khan and make him feel shame for the lies spoken by Subhas Bose. This clearly shows the British attitude towards the INA.

The image of Pandit Nehru is presented somewhat charitably in the four novels. It means Scott portrays the image of Nehru on two levels. Sometimes Nehru is considered a more sensible man than Gandhi because he was educated in the West and had a rational point of view. But he comes in for severe criticism again in the context of his role in the Gandhian movement. We see in The Jewel in the Crown Miss

Edwina Crane removes the picture of Gandhi from the walls of her study as she holds him responsible for the civil violence in the country. After that she transfers her faith to Mr.Nehru and Rajagopalachari, who, she thinks:

*" obviously understood the differeut degrees of tyranny man could exercise and, if there had to be a perference, probably preferred to live a while longer with imperial degree in order not only to avold submitting to but to resist the totalitarian."*¹⁵

In these lines Nehru is shown to be more restrained and sophisticated than Gandhiji. Scott prefers Nehru to Gandhi whenever he compares Gandhi with Nehru. He does not believe in the abilities of the Congress and Gandhi, except probably Nehru. This is reflected in Mr.Perron's talk with Mr.Purvis,a member of an economic advisory mission to the government of India. We learn about this in the following lines given by Mr.Purvis :

"The place is still feudal, Perron,and so far as I can see the only man of influence who's worried

about that is whatever the chap's name is Nehru, but he is a Brahmin aristocrat and can hardly speak any language but English, and against him you have to set the Mahatma and his bloody spinning wheel. Spinning wheel! In 1945. For God's sake, what's the man at? In the past twenty-five years he's done as much to keep the country stuck in the mud with his village industry fixation as the whole bloody raj put together".¹⁶

The image of Nehru is more favourably presented than Gandhi through the eyes of Lady Chatterjee, an anglicised Indian woman. She recounts Nehru's achievement after independence. She does not consider Gandhi as a great leader because he was a saint. This view is to be noted in the following analysis given by Lady Chatterjee:

"You could say that the same thing has happened to Mr. Nehru for whom I have always had a fondness because he has omitted to be a saint. I still have a fondness for him because the only thing about him currently discussed with any sort of lively passion is the question of who is to

succeed him. I suppose we are still waiting for the Mahatma because the previous one disappointed and surprised us by becoming a saint and martyr in the western sense when that silly boy shot him. I'm sure there's a lesson in that for us. If the old man were alive today I believe he'd dot us all one on the head with his spinning wheel and point out that if we go on as we are we shall end up believing in saints the way you English do and so lose the chance of ever having once again in our public life"¹⁷.

Though Scott considers Nehru as a secular person and superior to Gandhi, he is not happy with the post-Independent personality of Nehru. One fictional character, Desai, a young man whose father was lawyer, argues with his father that Nehru was :

"A megalomaniac who had already outlived his usefulness by 1948 but gone on living disastrously in the past and dragging India back to conditions worse than in the days of British because he knew

nothing of world economic structure and pressure".¹⁸

This image of Nehru is presented through an Indian, who accuses the older generation of not learning anything about important industrial and economic matters. This young man was supposed to be an expert on centrifugal pumps. He accuses Nehru-generation of wasting time and energy on fighting the imperial power.

Barrister M.A.Jinnah is one more important pre-independence Indian national leader. The image of Jinnah is very scantily presented in The Raj Quartet. Jinnah's Muslim League ministers do not resign their offices in 1939, at the dictates of Jinnah. As a result Jinnah is able to consolidate Muslim opinion for a separate state in the Muslim majority provinces. Governor Malcolm tells Kasim, the nationalist Muslim, how the Congress was foolish to resign their ministries and how Jinnah was shrewd. We can see that Jinnah is presented by Scott from the point of view of the pro-muslim league separatists, and the nationalist Muslim like Kasim. In the princely states of India, according to Count

Bronowsky, the Muslim and Hindu population is not at all swayed by Jinnah's Pakistan or Gandhi's democratic state.

Bronowsky remarks :

"(they) do not hanker after the democratic milleium promised by Gandhi on the one hand or the theistic paradise - state on earth envisaged by Mr.Jinnah on the other".¹⁹

Scott thinks that Jinnah is responsible for instigating the Indian Muslims and going against the leadership of Gandhi. The Pro-Muslim League point of view is expressed by Sayed, MAK's son who has turned a Leaguist. He says:

"They will hand us over to Gandhi and Nehru and Patel and then where will you be, father? How can you imagine that just because you've been useful to them in the past you - a Muslim - will be allowed to remain useful when they have power? They will squeeze you out at the first convenient opportunity congress is a Hindu party whatever they pretend. They will exploit us as badly as the British have done, probably worse. There's

*only one answer and that is to seize what we can for ourselves and run things our own way from there."*²⁰

This rift is pointed out by Scott in order to establish his viewpoint that the Indians were not fit for a self-rule. This view is further illustrated in the following cartoon which symbolizes the Hindu-Muslim rift.

"This cartoon, unpublished and dated 20. september 1945, was captioned 'Box-Wallah' and portrayed wavel in the garb of an itinerant Indian merchant and purveyor of ladies, dress materials, squatting on his hunkers on the verandah of a European bungalow, recommending his wares to a gathering of memsahibs who bore remarkable resemblances to Bapu, Nehru, Patel, Tara Singh, Maulana, Azad and Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Jinnah was sitting somewhat apart from 'her' collegues, consulting a glossy magazine marked. 'The Pakistan Ladies' 'Home Journal' but none of them was responding to the pleas of the box-wallah or to the sight of the

*avalanche of silks and woollens he was flinging
 hopefully in all directions (lengths marked) 'New
 Executive council - Indian patterns'; Central
 Assembly Dress Lengths (for cold weather wear);
 Constituent Assembly Fashion Designs, For All
 Seasons; 'Provincial Election Lengths Graded
 Prices'; 'Dominion Status Fabrics (Slightly
 Soiled)."*²¹

How Jinnah was interested in getting a separate state and how he remained detached from the other leaders of the Congress is explained symbolically with this cartoon by Scott. This cartoon also explains how the British were interested in introducing certain ideas for the benefit of the Indians, which were neglected by the Indians. The clothes in the cartoon are silky and woollen which indicate high quality. It means, according to Scott, the British ideas were essentially good but since the Indians didn't accept them they were at loss.

We have to note that the Indian freedom movement and the roles of Indian leaders play in it only a backdrop used

by Scott to present the life and experiences of a variety of fictional characters, mostly the British, in the days of the British Raj. The images of the Indian leaders in these four novels are, thus, incidental, and not for their own sake. Secondly, Scott himself was very much a part of this history of India, as a British military officer. His impressions of the Indian leaders cannot be entirely objective. His first novel of the Quartet The Jewel in the Crown, is a metaphor for India as the jewel in the crown of the British king. This imperialist notion, and the coloniser's mental make-up is reflected everywhere in his novels.

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