

## **CHAPTER IV**

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The Far Pavilions is a historical novel in the sense that the historical linkages in it such as the Mutiny of 1857, two Afghan Wars, annexation of the princely states in India, reference to the Russian design on Afghanistan and India, etc. are authentic. It is also a novel of Intrigue. Being adept at writing detective stories and mysteries, M. M. Kaye has created a complex plot of action and suspense, in which the life story of her hero, Ashton, is skillfully interwoven. It is interesting to note that most of the Anglo-Indian writers were British Civil Servants, Army Officers or the wives of the civil or army officers. By virtue of their calling these officers and their families were required to maintain aloofness from the natives. M. M. Kaye herself was the wife of the British army officer. She was also the daughter of a British officer in a Criminal Intelligence Department in India. She has an opportunity to travel all over India first with her father and then with her husband. She shows great familiarity with the Indian Hindu and Muslim culture in her novel. She was born in India and therefore like some characters in her novel, Mrs. Viccary and Belinda for example, she had developed an emotional bond with India. However the Indians with whom these writers came in close contact were mostly maidservants, household workers, coolies and sepoys. M.M.Kaye in her novel gives us an idea how most Anglo- Indians such as Major Harlowe

and Mrs. Harlowe, detested the idea of mixing with the Indian community in general. This social separation remained throughout the British Raj in India. Even in Forster's A Passage to India we can see how, in the parties organized by the British Collector, the Anglo-Indian ladies flocked together without mixing socially with their Indian counterpart. The British officers also, excepting someone like Fielding, did not care to mix freely with the Indian middleclasses invited for the party. Forster's message "only connect", given through his novels is directed to the Anglo-Indian community. In The Far Pavilions the visiting lecturer Porson's speech has the same theme. He exhorts the Anglo-Indians to develop friendly relations with the Indians. But this was not possible. From the Anglo-Indian fiction produced during the British Raj, we notice that colonizer- colonized relationship was ingrained in the mindscape of the British.

The Anglo-Indian fiction in general reflects the experiences of the British in India and their attitudes towards India and the Indians. In the fiction of Kipling, for example, the British views and attitudes to India were partial and short-sighted, and brutishly imperialistic. They felt that they had a divine right to rule and believed that they could manage the Indian affairs better even than the Indians themselves. This imperialistic notion had silver-lining in the sense that they felt they had a moral duty towards India. It was their duty to establish a civil service, create standards of administrative

efficiency, national system of railways, discipline and law and order. We find these views echoed in M.M. Kaye's novel also. The patronizing attitude of the British was matched by the feeling of racial superiority in almost all Anglo-Indian fiction. In The Far Pavilions, Uncle Matthew speaks patronizingly of "bestowing the benefits of peace and prosperity on the suffering millions of India." (p/135) Ashton, as a school boy could not understand and share the views of the others such as "the supremacy of the Anglo saxon races, the importance of being well- bred, and the Divine Right of the British to govern and control all coloured (and therefore unenlightened) peoples." (p/135)

Whether it is the fiction of Kipling or Paul Scott or M.M.Kaye, and to whatever period of the British Raj it deals with, we cannot of escape the colonizer-colonized relationship at the centre of it .The British officer stands for efficiency, honesty, incorruptibility, respectability, cleanliness and scientific attitude. The British are there to build roads, lay the railway lines, establish system of impartial justice, prohibit cruel customs and unjust practices, etc. On the other hand the Indian image projected in most Anglo-Indian novels is a bundle of dishonesty, corruption, untruthfulness, cruelty and superstitious beliefs. In The Far Pavilions, Rani of Gulkote is bent on killing the crowned prince, and the Maharaja of Bithor is ready to go back on his word and take the princesses forcibly, cheating them of their promised bride-price. But it is Ashton , the sole British Officer, who stops injustice and compels the

Maharaja to keep his promise. In the fiction of Edward Thompson, such as An Indian Day (1927), it is shown that the British officers could not be bribed to arrange an election, but the Raja of Kenduti and his mother would do it with the help of a corrupt Indian Commissioner. This colonial consciousness in the presentation of characters in the Anglo – Indian fiction continues even in the novels written after the 1960s. We do not miss it in Paul Scott's Raj Quartet also.

However the intensity of this colonial consciousness and the awareness of the role of the colonizer does not remain the same. There is a change in the presentation of characters, Indian culture and tradition. The Anglo-Indian writers after the 1960s have better perspective of the history of the British Raj and deeper understanding of Indian cultural and religious traditions. Besides some of these writers come from different cross-section of the British community. They are not exclusively from the background of military and civil administration. In his book, The British Image of India (1969), Greenberger gives a different account of this change. He periodizes the Anglo-Indian fiction into three eras viz. 1. The Era of Confidence (1890-1910),

2. The Era of Doubt (1910-1935) and
3. The Era of Melancholy (1935-1960). He claims that the images in the Anglo-Indian fiction reflect the attitudes of the British towards India. But we can see that this generalization is too simplistic. The Era of

Confidence he talks about is in fact a euphemistic expression for imperialistic arrogance expressed in the fiction of writers like Kipling. We notice the same arrogance in the attitude of the characters like Ronny Heaslop in E. M. Forster's A Passage to India (1927). The British attitude has not undergone much change. In M. M. Kaye's The Far Pavilions the writer gives a very elaborate account of the ignorance and pig-headedness of the British high-command in the Afghan affairs. Ashton, the hero, is very impatient with the fool-hardiness of the British mission to Afghanistan. We see the same ignorance reflected in the fiction of Forster and later of Paul Scott. The doubt, in the Era of Doubt, that Greenberger talks about was there in the minds of the well-meaning British officers even in the early phase of the British Raj. Only the writers of fiction of this early period did not take notice of either the dissatisfaction among the Indians or the doubts felt by some British officers like Lawrence, about the imperialistic attitude. In The Far Pavilions young Ashton rightly asks Porson :

*“ But what makes you think they (the Indians) really wish to make friends with us ? Can you give me one good reason, one single one, why they should ? (p/620)*

Porson, the liberal, really wants to strengthen the imperialistic hold on India when he advocates friendly relations with the Indian middle-classes. This friendliness is necessary:

*“ to help forge those bonds of loyalty and mutual respect without which our Raj cannot hope to retain its hold on this country.” (P/620)*

Porson was voicing the feeling of the liberals in England, who also did not want to weaken the British Empire in India. The question posed by Ashton could have been posed by the writers of the early phase of the Anglo-Indian fiction. But the fact is that these were mostly the romance writers. They were more concerned with the exotic in India rather than the propriety of the British presence in India or the attitude of the British towards India and the Indians. Naturally the doubt about the British presence in India and the British imperialistic policy expressed in the documents like Sir John William Kaye's account of the Mutiny of 1857 could not find place in their romances. The writers such as Mrs. B. M. Croker, Mrs. Fanny Penny, Mrs. Alice Perrin or even Edmund Chandler were more concerned with fakirs, sadhus and swamis, the snake-charmers and black magic rather than with any soul-searching about the relationship between the Indians and the English. These writers were blissfully unaware of any such problems because India and the Indians were

taken for granted. The titles of their romances such as *The Swami's Curse*, *The Adventures of Akbar*, *A Family Likeness* easily reflect their preoccupation. The generalisation that Greenberger makes can hardly be supported by such fiction.

The British in India were always divided into two groups; the liberals, who wanted to be fair and just, but not without their imperialistic objective; and the brazen imperialists, who wanted to keep their hold on India for economic and commercial gains by hook or crook and considered Indians to be barbarians and corrupt. The liberals were always in minority. If they had any doubt, it was only about the crude behaviour of the administrative officers. In Edward Thompson's *An Indian Day* (1927) we come across a character, Vincent Hamer, who is a newly appointed judge. He is a liberal and treats Indians sympathetically and with understanding, for which he is hated by the other British officers. The Indian freedom-fighters are treated as seditionists by them. But what is more interesting is that in Thompson's novel we for the first time come across an Indian Collector, who is highly educated and also a man of integrity and culture. Before this, there was hardly any Indian elevated to such a position in an Anglo-Indian fiction. There is thus a change in the colonizer colonized relationship. It is shown to be less intense in such fiction. But the liberals are still in minority and the prejudices about the Indians are still there. In Forster's *A Passage to India* we again find Fielding, a liberal,



balanced against the racist and prejudiced agents of the British Raj. Fielding is still a lonely figure. It is to be noted that he is the Principal of a school and not from military or a civil service background. But in Forster's fiction, we find Indian characters presented as individuals with their cultural and social aspects. The bitterness of colonizer-colonized relationship is still there. And this time it is an Indian character, Dr. Aziz, who voices it. Before this, in the Anglo-Indian fiction, there was hardly any Indian character giving vent to such feeling. The British follow a line, a code of conduct, which they must obey. They do not look at Indians in any serious, human sense. As Ronny Heaslop says, they have not come here to be pleasant to the Indians, they have come to rule and govern. Forster is critical of this line of demarcation and the attitude of the civil servants. Forster was neither an ex-army officer nor an ex-civil servant.

Besides he was personally involved in India due to his Indian friends, specially the Muslim friends. Naturally, there is less intense colonial consciousness in his fiction. But was Forster really very different from the liberal character of Porson quoted above? The main point in his fiction is that on account of the "undeveloped heart" the English have thrown away the possibility of holding India. The premise is still the imperialistic feeling about India, to hold on to this country. The Empire is to be lost for want of a smile, as Lionel Trilling says in his E. M. Forster : A study (1944) (p/129).

In conclusion (1) I feel that the Anglo-Indian fiction can be explained better in terms of the colonial consciousness reflected in it and the way the British and the Indian characters are presented by the writers. (2) I also believe that The Far Pavilions by M. M. Kaye represents varied aspects of colonial consciousness of the colonizing British community in India, though the writer herself takes a post-colonial view of the relationship of the two communities. (3) Furthermore, these aspects of coloniality have come out more clearly in this novel because the writer has very clear historical perspective of the British Raj and first hand experience of the Indian culture and tradition. She has been able to do justice to the Indian point of view through the character of the hero, Ashton, who, though English by birth, has been brought up as an Indian and thinks like an Indian.