

CHAPTER VICONCLUSIONS

This study with an exclusive focus on women characters in Paul Scott's ^{The} Raj Quartet yields interesting conclusions with regard to (a) the inherent limitations of an Anglo-Indian writer in portraying the socio-political encounter between the British and the Indians in terms of concrete human life; (b) the role that women play in dramatising the encounter between two cultures and in throwing up the moral issues implicit in such an encounter.

Taking up the first issue, ^{It can be said} ~~we might say~~ that an Anglo-Indian writer is particularly authentic with regard to the British characters, and that their depiction of the Indian world is necessarily thin and uncertain. The reason is that the British even during the hey days of their imperial power kept themselves scrupulously away from Indian communities and they had tangential relations only with the educated and the westernized. They had, of course, a peculiarly intimate master-slave relationship with their servants and Ayahs. It is only the missionaries who were writers, say, like Mrs. Penny, could get some inward knowledge of Indian culture and society and some writers who spent their childhood and a large part of their later life in India, say, like Kipling, Mrs. Savi and Pumer Godden, had their own imaginative conception of the Indian world.

Compared to these, Paul Scott had an extremely limited contact with the Indian world and so his women characters are inevitably flat and typical, sometimes satirical. As far as British women characters are concerned, Scott is probably the best Anglo-Indian writer from the point of view of the variety of the women that he has portrayed and also from the point of view of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of those characters. It is impossible to find characters like Miss. Edwina Crane, Daphne Manners, the women of the Layton family — Mable, Mildred, Sarah and Susan, Barbie Batchelor and Sister Ludmila in the whole range of Anglo-Indian fiction. Of course, these women characters gain in their complexity primarily because they belong to a tragic phase of the British-Indian encounter (tragic from the British point of view), that is, the last days of the British Raj. Compared to the Romantic women of Meadows Taylor, Kipling and even John Masters Scott's British women are highly realistic. Compared to Adela Quested, the dusky heroine of A Passage to India, we have in The Raj Quartet a down to earth British girl who falls in love with an Indian and goes the whole hog.

A good Anglo-Indian novel is necessarily a novel with a politico-historical dimension. Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet is written primarily as a historical novel depicting the British predicament during the last days of the British Raj and the characters, therefore, enact and reveal the major historical forces of the great period of tragic tension. Most of the major

characters, therefore, represent one or the other aspect of the tragic tension. Some are aware of the historical forces and try to accommodate themselves to the new, but not unpredictable tendencies. But quite a number of them, particularly, the minor women characters are totally confused and suffer from loss of nerve. Those who consider that they have only their individual lives to make, with no consideration for history, ironically fall victims to the forces of historical necessity. Scott's perception of the British world in India is most concretely and pathetically depicted in terms of the destinies of women characters, the men generally having gone to the war doing their last imperial duties. The suffering of the British during this period gets concretized primarily in the lives of the women. And Scott has successfully and authentically created those British women characters who give a local habitation and a name to the various kinds of suffering that the British went through during that fateful period of history.

The Indian world in the novel is in a sense marginal and so are the Indian women characters, the marginality being ^{and} both structural/personal, structurally the centre is occupied by the British and India forms the background. The Indian women characters are further marginalised because of Scott's inadequate knowledge of them.

With regard to the second issue, that of the use of women characters in dramatically revealing the inherent moral

issues of the encounter between the two cultures, Scott's instinctive novelistic genius conceives of the dramatic technique of using woman as the focal point of exploring profound moral conflicts in human life. It is the technique of the great epic, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Iliad. Rightly The Raj Quartet begins with an attack on Miss. Edwina Crane followed by the rape of Daphne Manners. The racial and the historical conflicts between the Indians and the British are effectively explored in terms of the turmoil that is generated by these two events. If Forster used Adela Quested to dramatically reveal the inherent hiatus between the British and the Indians, Scott uses Daphne Manners to present the ambivalent fascination of the British for India and the violence which was ironically implicit in the Non-violence Movement of Gandhi. The historical short-sightedness of the missionaries whom the British politicians had used for imperial purposes is brought home in the character of Barbie Batchelor who thinks that she is doing only God's work in India and ultimately realizes the futility of her work. The degeneration of the imperial values and their basic immorality are presented not only in characters like Ronald Merrick but also in the women characters like Miss. Mildred. Along with the predicament of the British, the end of the Raj generates peculiar tensions among the anglicised Indians and the Eurasians. Their ambivalances are explored through characters like Lili Chatterjee and the ex-Maharanees of Kotala. The positive

aspect of Lili Chatterjee's anglicization is depicted in her taking up Parvati Manners (Daphne's daughter from Hari Kumar) under her wings. Sarah is the only one who, aware of the new historical forces, comes to terms with them by moulding her attitude and life with understanding and wisdom born out of the tragic sufferings of the British during the last days of the Raj.

On the whole, this micro-study with a special focus on a particular set of characters in an epic novel like The Raj Quartet is profitable in understanding its true nature and quality. The greatness of The Raj Quartet lies in the fact that it has the capacity to lend itself to many such micro-studies. My study, I hope, has deepened our understanding of this complex and multi-dimensional novel of recent time.