

CHAPTER IITHE WORLD OF PAUL SCOTT'S THE RAJ QUARTET

I

In order to get a proper perspective for the study of women characters in Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet, it is necessary to sketch a map of the fictional world that emerges from his novels. A novelist creates a more or less homogeneous world in which his particular characters — men and women — have their existence and being. This is not an exact replica of the 'universe' of the novelist, but it has generally a parallel existence with the actuality of the novelist's own milieu. His fictional world is created out of the diverse elements which constitute the socio-political process to which he belongs. It is the business of the critic to map the fictional world of the novelist and to discover the principles underlying its creation.

The most important principle of organization that we find in Scott's world is his central preoccupation with the history of the British-Indian encounter in its last phase. The Raj Quartet, for instance, ~~begin~~ with a focus on the socio-political plight of the British in India:

"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

He says that 'they were then still locked in an imperial embrace of such long standing and subtlety it was no longer possible for them to know whether they hated or loved one another, or what it was that held them together and seemed to have confused the image of their separate destinies".² Scott, like Forster, employs the inter-racial tension in the colonial situation to highlight the nature of the British-Indian confrontation. The world that Scott creates in order to explore the last phase of the confrontation is a limited one. In comparison with the complex social structure of the actual world in which Scott lived, his fiction portrays a very limited section of it, since his focus is primarily on the British in India and only marginally on the Indians.

II

Among the British in India are regular Indian Army officers, their wives and children — the children, who are

educated at home and return to India with more liberal minded-
 ness than their parents whose values are those of the hey-day
 of imperialism. In The Jewel in the Crown, for instance, there
 are Brigadier Reid and the Berkshire Soldiers. In The Day of
the Scorpion, we have an Indian Army Officer, John Layton, son
 of James William Layton ICS, the former DC of Ranpur, who is in
 charge of 1st Pankot Rifles, his wife Mildred, daughter of
 Howard Campbell Muir — Lieut General (GS); Mable Layton, widow
 of two husbands—one of Military Service and the other of Civil
 Service; Sarah and Susan, daughters of Colonel John Layton,
 educated in England, and now in India since 1939 — girls with
 liberal ideas; Teddie Bingham, whom Susan marries, is a Muzzy
 guide and gets G3 appointment (operations) to a new divisional
headquarters stationed in Mirat; Donald Merrick presently an
 army officer, previously the DSP of Mayapore; Captain Rowan;
 Tony Bishop, another Muzzy guide, presently acting as ADC to
 General Rankin; Lieut, General Muir's three daughters — Mildred,
 Fenny and Lydia. Colonel Trehearne who commanded the Pankot
 Rifles Depot and Mrs. Trehearne, Captain Kevin Coley, the
 depot adjutant, the oldest captain in the regiment; Bunny
 Paynton who commanded a battalian of the Ranpurs and died in
 Arakan, and his wife Nicky Paynton and so on. In The Towers
of Silence, we have some more Army people among whom Ewart Mackey,
 the Brigade Major whom Reid's successor has replaced; Lieutenant
 Colonel Arthur Grace, and his wife Fenny are prominent. In

A Division of the Spoils, we have a whole host of army officers; Captain Leonard Purvis, a member of an economic advisory mission to the Government of India; Guy Perron, a Field Security Sergeant; Major Beamish, a professional soldier; Captain Strang, Welfare Officer; Lieut Colonel Grace, Nigel Rowan, an ADC, Ronald Merrick, Lieut. Colonel Major Tippet and others. The life of these officers and soldiers is filled with action, danger, death, drill parades, mess parties, and boredom and with the nostalgia for the glory and splendour of the imperial way of life, now gone for ever. Like John Masters, Scott gives an insight into the life of both levels of army people — officers and ordinary soldiers.

The other British group consists of the Indian Civil Service officers and their wives. In the hierarchy of the Governments among the Indian Civil Service we find the bureaucrats, the Deputy Commissioner, the assistant Commissioner, the station staff officer, the people of other ranks, the Civil Surgeons and so on. In The Jewel in the Crown, Mr. Robin White is the Deputy Commissioner of Mayapore District; Mr. Poulson is the Assistant Commissioner; Ronald Merrick is the District Superintendent of Police; and Mr. Brown is the station Staff Officer. In The Day of the Scorpion, Sir George Malcom is the Governor of Ranpur, Colonel Hobhouse is the station Commander, Morland is an officer on the staff of the Deputy



Commissioner, presently posted at the Secretariat in Panpur; and General Rankin is an officer on the staff. In A Division of the Spoils, Nigel Rowan is an ADC of General Crawford; the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Mac Roberts is the senior member of Council, and Henderson is in the Finance Department. Sarah and Susan, daughters of Colonel Layton, join the WAC and work as clerks in Area Headquarters of Pankot as the daughters of Captain Beams, Carol and Christine, have already done. Menon, an Indian, is the District and Session Judge in Mayapore. In The Jewel in the Crown Dr. Macintosh is the Civil Surgeon assisted by Dr. Mayhew; in The Day of the Scorpion, Captain Beams is the Civil Surgeon assisted by Dr. Travers. All these people live in the civil lines, in their own world. In The Jewel in the Crown, for instance, the city of Mayapore is divided into native town and cantonment, the latter consisting of the civil lines, the maidan, the club, the Gymkhana, the General Hospital, and the Mayapore Gazette, Cantonment Bazaar. The Laytons live in Panpur and Pankot, Panpur being the permanent cool weather station of Colonel Layton's regiment, their hot weather station being Pankot itself.

The third group is that of the missionaries. In The Jewel in the Crown, for instance, we have the elderly Miss. Edwin Crane, the superintendent of Protestant Missionary School, not functioning as a preacher of Christian religion but as a teacher of the black pupils, children of India.

Sister Ludmila runs a sanctuary as a private charity for the sick and dying. Miss Williams, Miss De Silva, Miss Smithers and Mr. Cleghorn are also missionary teachers. In The Towers of Silence and The Day of the Scorpion we have Barbara Batchelor, Superintendent of Missionary School, Miss Helen Jolley, and others.

III

The Indian world is comparatively very limited. He is aware of the Hindu orthodox family, the rigid caste system, the untouchables, the servants and the ayahs — but his perception is limited to the kind of people that the British come into contact in their daily life, for instance, in The Jewel in the Crown, a Kashmiri Girl, is a wet nurse to Daphne Manners' child; in The Day of the Scorpion Suleiman is the servant of Lady Manners and Aziz, Mohmoud and Minnie work for the Layton family (Minnie is an ayah of Mrs. Bingham's son, Edgar). There are, of course, some passing references to the Maharanees and such other princely figures. For instance, in A Division of the Spoils, we have Aimee, an ex-Maharanees of Kotala and her niece Aneila. Scott has also portrayed some westernised people. For example, in The Jewel in the Crown, we have Lady Chatterjee who is a westernised Rajput lady, widow of sir Nello Chatterjee. In The Day of the Scorpion we have Mira, who like Lili Chatterjee, is a westernised woman, and in A Division of the Spoils we have

the Maharanee who gives a party and which she does not attend. The Hindu world consists of the Kumar family, the Gupta Sen family and the Prasad family of Mayapore, Duleep Kumar, the youngest son of a landowner, is the only educated person in the Kumar family who struggles to get into the ICS. Kamala, his wife, is the mother of Hari Kumar, who is educated in England and returns to India after his father's death. Shalini is Duleep's sister and Hari's aunt, who is married to Prakash Gupta Sen, brother of Romesh Gupta Sen. Duleep's father becomes a sanyassi. E.V. Luxminarayan is the editor of Mayapore Gazette who has lived through all the great upheavals of modern history. Vidyasagar is at one time an employee of Mayapore Gazette but afterwards joins the Mayapore Hindu. Pandit Baba Sahib of Mayapore is an elderly scholar, who is busy writing a commentary on the Bhagwad Geeta. Gopal in The Day of the Scorpion is an official from the Home and Law Department.

The Indian Muslim world consists of the Kasim family, the Nawab of Mirat, and others. The Nawab's eldest son, Mohsin, is an officer in the Indian airforce; Shiraz is his daughter whose greatest desire is to be 'modern'. Mirat is a place of palaces, mosques and minarets, and it is divided into city and cantonment. Mohmad Ali Kasim is ex-chief Minister, son of Ahmad Akbar Ali Kasim, and Mrs. Kasim appear in The Day of the Scorpion and in the succeeding novels. Sayed, an elder son of MAK (Mohmad Ali Kasim) is the King's commissioned officer, currently a

prisoner of war in Malaya. His younger son, Ahmad, is the social secretary to the Nawab Sahib, and looks after the comforts of the visiting members of the Paj. Rahaman is the head bearer who works for the Nawab. Count Bronowasky is the Chief Minister of Mirat, who is responsible for the separation of the judiciary from the executive, for the reframing of the criminal and civil legal codes and for creating the position of Chief Justice in Mirat.

IV

The above account of the two worlds — the British and the Indian — gives a fairly clear idea of the world of The Paj Quartet. It also indicates that the primary concern of the novelist is to make history living and meaningful and not to explore mere individual destinies. He is interested in this individual destinies only so far as they are related to the historical forces. The period between 1942 and 1947 was a period of complex forces : (a) England was fighting the Second World War — at two fronts, the European and the Asians, against two enemies — Germany and Japan. (b) During this crucial period the British had to tackle with the Nationalist movement in India, which had reached its climatic phase, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi (c) In India itself, after the war was over and after England decided to hand over power, there was the problem of the partition of India, thanks to the continued tension

between the Indians and the Muslims, the result of the 'divide and rule' policy of the British. Paul Scott examines the complex forces of this period from the British point of view, and that is the reason why the British world in the novel is so crowded with the representatives from the Army, the civil and judicial administration, the educational and medical institutions. Again, since Paul Scott is interested in depicting the actuality of history — history in motion — he focuses his attention on the families of these representatives, the wives and daughters and aunts, who, too, helped the sustenance of the imperial regime in India. In fact, if we look at the number of women characters in the novel, we realise the female dominance in it. The dramatic element in the novel is also provided by the women characters. For instance, the fact that the British regime was weakening and that the British people were feeling insecure on account of the phenomenal growth of nationalism, is presented right at the beginning of the novel in terms of an attack on Miss. Edwina Crane by the Quit India agitators. This is followed by a similar, more brutal, attack on Daphne Manners by some hooligans, who took undue advantage of the freedom movement. Scott is thus interested in fusing the individual tragedies with the political and historical forces of that period, and he knows that the dramatic way to do this is to make women the victims of these forces so that the entire community gets into a moral turmoil. A good novelist that Scott is, he uses these moral crises for the exploration of various characters — men and

women — who also are in the grip of there historical forces. Scott's central concern is thus to depict from the inside the conflicts and contradictions of the British predicaments during the last tragic years in India.

The Indian world of Hindus and Muslims comes in only as a background for the presentment of the British tragedy in India. Hence Scott takes up only a few representative families and characters and manages to evoke the Indian ethos in a marginal way. Compared to the British world, the Indian world is inevitably limited. Paradoxically, the Anglo-Indian writer, right from Meadows Taylor to Paul Scott, could not truly get into the Indian socio-cultural complexity, even though the Anglo-Indian administrators successfully manipulated the Indians on a political level. The Indian world in The Raj Quartet is hopelessly inadequate, but it serves the novelist's purpose, which is that of using the Indian world as an instrument for exposing the British world as well as for providing an authentic background for the portrayal of the British tragedy in India. Since the Indian world is itself inadequately presented, it is inevitable that the women folk who inhabit this world are reduced to a minor status, except probably Lady Lili Chatterjee, an anglicized who acts as a bridge between the two worlds — the British and the Indian.

CHAPTER IINotes and References

1. Paul Scott, 'The Jewel in the Crown', The Raj Quartet,
(London : Heinemann, Reissued, 1984), pp.1-2.
2. Ibid., p.1.