

CHAPTER-II:

IMAGE OF GANDHI

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The Jewel in the Crown (1966), the first of The Raj Quartet novels, deals with the British Indian history when the Independence movement had taken hold of the imagination of all Indians down to the toiling peasantry. Gandhi had launched his Civil Disobedience Movement in 1920, and after the Jalianwallah Bagh tragedy things were taking a violent turn. That Scott gives much importance to the historical developments is seen when he says that 'it would not be awfully wise to write about Anglo-India discounting the actual progress of history'.¹ All the events and the characters in the novel are depicted against the background of the turbulent period of British Indian history. He regards Gandhi as a figure responsible for creating the turbulence in India. Therefore, he 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.*²

Scott fuses fact with fiction in a very brilliant manner in the sense

that for the turbulent historical period he selects equally turbulent events of imaginary nature.

The Jewel in the Crown 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 Manner 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 8 August 1942, a resolution under which the British had been called upon to leave India and Gandhi and entire working committee were arrested, ^{which was b} that followed the civil violence all over the country. Within this point of reference, it is significant to note the image of Gandhi as created by Paul Scott.

Mostly this image is projected through the eyes of some British characters. For example, Miss Edwina Crane changes her attitude towards Gandhi as she holds him responsible for the civil commotion. She removes Gandhi's picture from the walls of her study because she dislikes Gandhi's policy of challenging the British Raj. She distrusts him because she finds the British better masters than anyone else. Before the Quit India Movement she had great respect for Gandhi and had laughed at Europeans who said that Gandhi was not to be trusted. However, she changes her attitude

towards Gandhi because 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 senses or, which was worse, revealing that his philosophy of non-violence had a dark side that added upto total invalidation of its every aspect.*³

Miss Crane's critique of Gandhi appears to be biased because she does not consider Gandhi as a progressive leader of the Indians.

~~Like Edwina Crane~~, Mr Ronald Merrick, District Superintendent of Police, related with the Daphane Manners' case, has ~~the~~ similar opinion 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.*⁴

This is nothing but a distortion of the great Indian leader like Gandhi. By doing this Gandhi aims at saying how good was the presence of British in India.

Scott

Robin White, one more important British character in the novel, 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.*⁵

According to White, Gandhi identified himself with the outcastes of the Hindu religion not from any social awareness. White believes that the caste system probably had a truly religious significance for Gandhi in those days. Gandhi's going to England is treated by White only in terms of his worldly ambition. White thinks that no man is without ambition, but perhaps few men have been forced to doubt the power for good that ambition represents as much as Gandhi was forced to do. White, further, feels that Gandhi was working out a personal salvation in public all the time.⁶ Here through White's consciousness, Scott denies the importance of Gandhi and totally disfigures him. *⊗ please check dictionary*

The character of Brigadier Reid, who ^{is} ~~was~~ assigned with the duty of looking after the civil peace, also contributes to the distortion of Gandhi's image. Reid holds Gandhi responsible for the socio-political crisis and believes that 'after the failure of the Cripps Mission in April 1942 that Mr Gandhi launched his famous Quit India campaign, which looked to the British like an invitation to the Emperor of Japan to walk in and take over the reins of government!'

Upon this he thinks that 'Mr Gandhi's policy of non-violent non-co-operation was a policy that could bring the country to a standstill'.⁷

This comment by Reid brings out Scott's view that Gandhi was the person who obstructed the progress of India undertaken by the British.

The distortion of Gandhi's image as projected through various characters in The Jewel in the Crown further continues in The Day of the Scorpion (1968), the second novel of The Raj Quartet. At the outset it is to be remembered that Scott's novelistic vision is governed by the actual historical happenings which have a strong bearing on his attitude towards Gandhi.

The Day of the Scorpion is the story of the twilight days of British Raj 'shown mainly from the British point in which the real heroine is, of course, India as she passes from one epoch to another'.⁸ 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. In his opinion, the British Raj only was capable of improving the social position of Indians but their task remained unfulfilled due to untimely freedom granted to India. Scott, therefore, morally justifies the British rule in India and denounces the Indian National Movement. Within this point of reference, he creates a distorted figure of Gandhi in this novel as well.

Sir George Malcolm, the Governor of the province, criticizes 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.*⁹

In these lines Scott does not admit the significance of Gandhi's Quit India Movement and distorts the historical fact of Indian nationalism.

Ronald Merrick, who was a police officer in The Jewel in the Crown, reappears in this novel as a military officer. Merrick does not change his attitude towards Gandhi. He 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.*¹⁰

Here Scott also criticizes the fundamentalist forces in Indian politics. He also says that the Congress Party was not a secular party as it professed to be. It did have a Hindu touch.

Gandhi's figure is further criticized by Scott when he calls Gandhi as a man without clear thinking and misguided by the others. He says:

*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.*¹¹

Further Bronowsky, a British officer, treats Gandhi as an insincere fellow. He does not sympathize with him because he considers the policy of non-violence an attempt of moral blackmail and says, "Non-violence is ridiculous. I'm not in favour of it".¹²

This distorted image of Gandhi still continues in The Towers of Silence (1970), the third penultimate volume of The Raj Quartet. The novel 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 Batchelor who was 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 of turbulent nature. At the turn of the year 1942 the war was on India's doorstep. The British lost Malaya, Singapore and Burma to the Japanese. Indian leaders thought that the British defeat in

Malaya and Burma was forerunner to defeat in India and that the British had shown themselves incompetent to defend India. The political situation was sizzling dangerously from the March of 1942, and finally exploded in August with a violence that set people talking about a new mutiny.

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 and 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.*¹³

The distorted image of Gandhi as discussed so far still continues in A Division of the Spoils (1975), the fourth and concluding volume of The Raj Quartet. Here Scott recreates the British Indian history from 1945 to 1947. His stance of the justification of the British Raj is clearly revealed in this novel. He believes due to the rift between Muslims and Hindus India should not be given freedom so early. But it didn't happen so and India achieved freedom. The

great historical event resulted in the violence between the two races. These views have been summed up as follows:

*The political impasse between Muslims and Hindus during the negotiations for British withdrawal and the bloody events that accompanied the birth of the two new independent dominions of India and Pakistan, seemed to prove that the Raj was right all along.*¹⁴

This idea leads us to consider Scott's belief that the Raj held the balance of power between otherwise irreconcilable forces that would lose no opportunity to cheat, to threaten or slaughter one another and the Raj restricted this in the sense that it imposed a single rule of law upon all its people.¹⁵

Scott 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 case of Mirat's subjects he says:



*(they) do not hanker after the democratic millenium promised by Gandhiji on the one hand or the theistic paradise-state on earth envisaged by Mr Jinnah on the other.*¹⁶

In these lines Scott undermines Gandhi's noble attempt of the freedom struggle.

That Scott considers Gandhi's Congress as a Hindu party 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.*¹⁷

Thus, it can be said that the image of Gandhi as portrayed by Scott is totally distorted because Gandhi's achievement is not at all taken into account by Scott. This fact can further be explained by juxtaposing Scott's image of Gandhi with that of some of the Indian writers

in English. The Indo-Anglian writers consider Gandhi as a great national leader. For example, in The Sword and the Sickle (1942), Mulk Raj Anand portrays Lalu Singh as a propagator of Mahatma Gandhi. Or K.S. Venkatramani, in his Kandan, the Patriot (1932), portrays the hero as an exponent at Gandhian ideology. Again in Kanthapura (1938), the image of Gandhi as depicted by Raja Rao is that of Mahatma. The narrator of Kanthapura refers to Gandhi as the great mythical king Rama and says:

*They say the Mahatma will go to the redmen's country and will get us swaraj. He will bring us swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Seeta will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Seeta freed.*¹⁸

In this way, the image of Gandhi as saviour as depicted by Indo-Anglian writers is opposite to Paul Scott's image of Gandhi as a spoiler.

As Scott distorts the image of Gandhi, naturally, he also distorts Gandhi's Quit India Movement by calling it a nonsense. However, it is to be noted that it was a movement of great historical importance. How effective the movement was can be seen in Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers (1947), in which the protagonist, Rahoul, points out the power of the movement:

'Quit India' cried the two million dead of Bengal. The anger was warm in his voice, and he had paused till his speech was cool again. 'Quit' cried all India. 'You have done us some good along with much evil. For the good you have done you have been paid in full. The accounts have been settled. Now for God's sake, quit'.¹⁹

In this way, by refusing to admit the historical importance of the Quit India Movement, Scott distorts a great historical fact of Indian nationalism. In doing so he shows a colonizer's point of view who goes on criticizing anybody and anything that goes against the established order.

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