CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it can be seen that Paul Scott in his *The Raj Quartet* has projected certain changes in the development of his women characters. David Rubin, making a general comment on novels about British India which he says are lacking in humour and hope comments that ‘...a notable exception is Paul Scott, who, here as in so many other aspects rises above the limitations of the tradition.’(Rubin, p.169) What this tradition was is best summed up in the words of Alison Sainsbury who says, ‘...in Anglo-India, what was private was public, and Anglo-Indian women’s lives were organized and ruled by the fact that they lived as part of ruling British enclave in India.’(in Rubin, p.169)

Though positioned as memsahibs in Anglo-Indian society Paul Scott’s characters are however not conventional figures in the true sense of the word. One can mark the
contrast in the conventionally portrayed memsahibs like Kipling’s Mrs. Hauskbee and Forster’s Mrs. Turton with Scott’s memsahibs like Mabel Layton, Lady Manners and others.

Lady Manners directly negates the notion of memsahibs being the agents in creating racial distance between the English and the Indians. She ignores the convention of maintaining white ‘aloofness’ as her liberal husband had done and continues her friendship with the Indians belonging to her class long after her husband’s death. Her intimacy with Lili Chatterjee is a case in point. When her own society rejects her after her niece’s thwarted love-affair with Hari Kumar she is extended hospitality by her Indian friends in the West Hill. Her letters to Lili Chatterjee discussing the prevailing political and social scenario in British India in the eve of the Partition testify her anti-imperialist statements.
Similarly, Mabel Layton acts according to her own convictions even if it contradicts colonial concerns like the idea of white solidarity. Her refusal to contribute to the General Dyer Fund and instead send a cheque of £100 to the fund for the victims of the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre is a very daring act given the circumstances. She does not conform because her conscience does not allow her to do so. However, she is sensible enough to make her contributions anonymously to the various Indian charities for she realizes her behaviour will affect the career of her step-son, John Layton who is a Colonel in British India.

Scott presents Sarah Layton as a perfect foil to her sister, Susan who represents a pukka miss-sahib in Anglo-India. ‘...the difference between herself and Susan was that Susan was capable of absorbing things into her system without really thinking whether they were acceptable to her or not; whereas she herself absorbed nothing without first subjecting it to scrutiny’. (DSC, p.91) Sarah sees herself as a
misfit in that society. She analyses her problem thus: ‘My trouble is...I question everything, every assumption. I’m not content to let things happen. If I don’t change that I shall never be happy’. (DSC, p.131) When her Aunt Fenny tells her that she worries them, Sarah replies, ‘I worry me too.’ (DSC, p.225) Sarah realises that her problem lies in that she does not belong to the generation of her parents and aunts ‘...who seemed to have been warmed in their formative years by the virtues of self-assurance and moral certainty...’ (DSC, p.448) The self-assurance and moral certainty is missing in that turbulent phase of the Raj and it affects her as she is a sensitive girl. Barbie Batchelor comes closest in assessing Sarah’s position:

Looking at Sarah Barbie felt she understood a little of the sense the girl might have of having no clearly defined world to inhabit, but one poised between the old for which she had been prepared, but which seemed to be dying, and the new for which she had not been prepared at all. Young, fresh and intelligent, all the patterns to which she had been trained to conform were fading, and she was already conscious just from chance or casual encounter of the gulf between herself and the person she would have been if she had never come back to India: the kind of person she ‘really was’. (TS, p.293-294)
If Susan fits into the role of a young girl of a traditional Anglo-Indian family, it is because every moment she is making a conscious effort to do so. Her outburst, ‘Stop it! I’m trying, trying, trying to pretend that it’s a nice day. I’m trying, trying to remember that I’m being married to Teddie…’ (DSC, p.223) shows how hard she is trying to fit into the role. Even a serious matter like one’s own marriage becomes a part of this effort. But she does regret that she cannot have independent mind like that of her sister. She suffers inwardly due to it. She tells Sarah that she feels like a mere drawing which anyone can rub out. Infact she suffers from identity crisis. She cannot have an independent self. This is why she always needs someone to rely on. This makes her so vulnerable and easily succumb to men like Teddy Bingham and Ronald Merrick, both of whom her sister had rejected.
Sarah, on the other hand questions every standard behavioural practice prescribed for an Anglo-Indian girl. At the very initial stage, she enters India as a young girl not ready for any ‘romantic encounter’ but with a secretarial course which she hoped would help her utilize her time and be of some use somewhere. She and Susan, both join the Women’s Auxiliary Corps and work as clerks in the Area Headquarters in Pankot. Where she impresses her colleagues with the sincerity and efficiency of her work, her sister Susan takes it as an opportunity to attract as many suitors as possible. Sarah bears the responsibility of her sister and mother while her father is taken a prisoner of war in Germany. After her sister’s marriage she feels relieved of her responsibility and wants to join the war as a nurse. She is unable to go because Susan soon after her wedding becomes a widow with Teddy’s child growing within her. Sarah’s responsibilities increases further. Later she avails of an opportunity to work in the Women’s Hospital in Mirat. Her commitment to humanitarian service was so strong that she
would have even served in the leper’s colony if Count Bronowsky had given her the permission.

Sarah never once goes out of the way in an effort to attract men around her. She does not work on affecting feminine elegance pertaining to looks and mannerisms. As Rowan marks, ‘...that in her unusual, perhaps plain way she was beautiful...’(DSP, p.161) But still most of the sensible men are attracted to her than to her sister. Teddy Bingham and Ronald Merrick both marry Susan though their first choice was Sarah. Her quiet self-reliance and intelligence absorbs men like Nigel Rowan, Guy Perron, Count Bronowsky, Doctor Travers and Ahmed Kasim. She maintains healthy relationship with them as friends. She is generally quiet in the gossip circle of the ladies for she cannot indulge in small talk. The Pankot ladies find her behaviour ‘...less than admirable because it lacked either enthusiasm or spontaneity.’(TS, p.262) On the other hand, persons like Rowan, Count Bronowsky, Lady Manners,
Mabel and Barbie enjoy her company for ‘she spoke well and clearly, in control of a line of argument that was undogmatically developed.’ (DSC, p.166) Such independent outlook is scarcely to be found in the miss-sahibs.

Sarah admires Lady Manners and her Aunt Mabel, who she thinks have knowledge as well as experience to ennoble their personalities. In Srinagar she goes out of the way and visits Lady Manners and Daphne’s child Parvati in their house-boat when for others it would have been unthinkable. She does not indulge in social snobbery. Later she goes and visits Barbie Batchelor in the Samaritan Hospital when others had ignored her due to their class consciousness.

Daphne Manners, Sarah and Susan Layton are young girls in British India on the threshold of marriage. These young miss-sahibs are somehow not so much bothered in maintaining the Victorian code of conduct. Even Susan who
appears the least resistant of them also ignores the tradition when she does not care to wait for her father’s return to get his approval for her marriage with Teddy Bingham. The tradition was that after the girl’s choice of the man she decides to marry, her suitor should have an audience with her father, impress him and get the final permission. Mildred Layton wants that this tradition should continue therefore she is hesitant to give her approval to Susan’s decision to marry Teddy in her father’s absence. ‘...Mrs. Layton would have preferred her husband to be on hand to approve of.’ (DSC, p.132) John Layton had also followed this Victorian practice before marrying Susan’s mother, Mildred. Susan is aware of it but does not care to respect the tradition. She says, ‘She didn’t really want me to marry anyone until Daddy comes back. She wants everything in abeyance, doesn’t she? – because everything is. Everything – especially things about men and women.’ (DSC, p.372)
Daphne Manners totally ignores the white society’s restrictions on feminine conduct by having a love-affair with an Indian and deciding to give birth to an illegitimate child and that too fathered by a native. Sarah Layton, though not as defiant as her is still very much a rebel in her own way. She allows herself to be seduced by a wartime subaltern but is forced to have an abortion. Though she agrees to have the abortion to keep up appearances in a society where a girl is expected to be a virgin when she marries, she decides that at least in private her parents should know about it and most importantly she would tell the man who would marry her about this episode of her life. Such a man, she knows is scarcely to be found among the pukka sort in her society. Sarah is also critical of the Victorian code of chivalry practised by men around her. She feels that the men by behaving in such a protective manner induce the women to believe that their existence is dependent on them. She assesses it thus: ‘...so you became aware of the need to be
grateful to them for the constant proof they offered of being ready to defend you, if only from yourself.' (DSC, p.158)

Sarah rejects Teddy Bingham because he is so predictable and he would never go against the standard rules of society. Even in his subsequent courtship of Susan and marriage to her he seems to behave in a manner for which the script had been dictated by the tradition. Sarah is convinced that Susan and Teddy decide to marry not because they love each other but because it was the expected behaviour which she herself had ignored. She sees no depth or commitment in their relationship. As for herself, 'She certainly had no intention of casually accepting it and becoming thoughtlessly implicated in it, which is what she believed Susan had done.' (DSC, p.158)

Sarah will not compromise like her Aunt Fenny had done. Sarah is surprised when her Aunt Fenny says, ‘Ninety-
nine percent of my life is a compromise. It’s part of the contract.’ (DSC, p.445) Fenny had delayed in choosing her husband among the various suitors who courted her and when time was running out for her she had panicked and said yes to the least eligible of the men who wooed her. Susan’s marriage to Teddy Bingham in such a haste manner perhaps can be attributed to her apprehension that like Aunt Fenny, her time would run out too. The personal compromises that we see women characters like Mildred, Fenny and now Susan are making arise out of the fundamental truth that life in British India was no longer what it used to be.

The war had disrupted the social set-up of the Anglo-Indian society and unsettled the assurance and certainty of the men and women of the Raj. The well-ordered life they were used to was no more possible. The women had come in search of the pukka men who would provide them lavish lives. Neither the pukka men were easily available nor the
lavish bungalows and lifestyle. Men of all sorts were flooding the stations and people were being accommodated everywhere and anywhere possible. Mildred and Fenny who have spent most of their lives in the Flagstaff House now have to live in the congested grace and favour bungalow and the box-like flat in Calcutta respectively. One notes the transition in Fenny from the staunch upholder of the values and traditions of the Flagstaff House to the cosmopolitan values she acquires later in life to suit her husband’s belated success in his career in Calcutta. ‘She belonged, as though in default to having arrived ...to a new order of Indian authority and had apparently, as a result, absorbed and smothered a multitude of sins.’(DSC, p.334) Rather it is Fenny who had asked Sarah to put aside her inhibitions and enjoy the company of Clark, one of the wartime subalterns attending her husband’s courses. She tells Sarah,

‘Don’t be too put out or standoffish if you find yourself in a gang that includes chichis... But you’re not not like that pet, are you? You’ll have a lovely time. Its quite a thing for them to have an English girl,...I shan’t start worrying about you until long after
midnight. Jimmy Clark will look after you...' (DSC, p.451)

The same Jimmy Clark eventually seduces Sarah. She has to go for an abortion due to which she is physically, emotionally as well as psychologically affected. After it she finds that ‘...feelings had somewhat changed. Her capacity to feel or show affection had diminished... such a lonely and love-less experience…’ (DSP, p.143). Such a change in Sarah who had shown so much care and concern to people around her like Susan, Barbie, Mabel and her mother indicates that the personal change in these women is the cause and effect of the changed ambience in British India. Young girls like Daphne and Sarah extend their friendship beyond the race because within their own circle men who share their broad-outlook are rare. They are not willing to ‘compromise’ as Susan or Fenny.

Other groups of English in India, like the missionaries... are rarely treated. Missionaries do
appear as minor characters...Generally speaking, however, their characters are not highly developed. The most important point regarding them is that even when they are most optimistic regarding conversion they have little success. (Greenberger, p.31)

Such a remark throws light on the position of the missionaries in the Anglo-Indian fiction as well as in the Anglo-Indian society. In comparison to the minor missionary characters in most of the Anglo-Indian fiction, Paul Scott’s missionary women in The Raj Quartet are highly developed characters commenting and exposing their vulnerable position in British India in the most compelling manner. Scott is one of the very few writers who have done justice to these ‘invisible women of the Empire’ by portraying their life experiences and good work in ‘the discourse of civilizing mission’. (Sharpe, p.93)

Edwina Crane and Barbie Batchelor are the two missionary women whose life experiences in the mission is extensively dealt with. Crane is Barbie’s role-model. She
derives inspiration from the exemplary work and faith shown by Edwina Crane. But when Edwina ends her life by committing suicide—the greatest sin for which there is no forgiveness Barbie is devastated by it. Her idol’s earlier gestures which seemed so sublime now revealed someone who was overwhelmed by despair and not purified by love. This revelation heightens her own ‘secret sorrow’. Edwina had seemed so strong and sure in God’s service that being associated with her itself had given Barbie the hope of redemption but now through this act Edwina’s inner despair is revealed. Barbie is also constantly guilt-stricken that she has not been able to strengthen her faith in God by her ‘good work’. Her dreams of bringing hundreds into the fold in India remains unfulfilled. Edwina’s teaching also becomes irrelevant in the given circumstances. The resultant disillusionment felt by both is further aggravated as they have to cope with social discriminations and isolation in an alien environment. They loose their faith in mankind, the Raj and eventually in God. In the process they loose their mental
balance also. The pathetic nature of their deaths poses a question about the imperial idea of white solidarity and fraternity.

The image of the memsahib in India as projected in most of the Anglo-Indian fiction particularly in Kipling’s earlier works like *Plain Tales from the Hills* was quite negative. This view was reinforced in the imagination of the British back in England because of the fact that Kipling was the most widely read author at that time. Such a perception of the memsahib failed to present her in the reality of her circumstances in India.

In contrast, Scott has been able to give a more variegated and therefore a more realistic portrayal of the British women in the last decades of the Raj. Perhaps the change in the mode of portrayal of these women in Scott’s fiction can be attributed to change taking place in the socio-
political scenario after the war. The characters evolve as they try to cope with the changed reality of their life in India.

What Paul Scott has been able to achieve in the portrayal of the British Women in India in *The Raj Quartet* can be summed up in the following remark on Paul Scott’s definition of the novel:

The literary artist, on the other hand, recreates imaginatively his version of “human reality” in terms of images. In a way, he implies that the novel is, in a general sense, “an image of human reality”. Finding his own definition a bit unsatisfactory, he tends to agree with Walter Allen who defines it as “an extended metaphor of the author’s view of life”¹.
NOTES

   London: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors,
   1994. p.6