British interaction with India began in the seventeenth century when they visited the courts of the Mughals as ambassadors and gradually strengthened their commercial ties in the eighteenth century and finally established the Empire by the middle of the nineteenth century. When India got its Independence in 1947 it had a distinct colonial history. A whole lot of Anglo-Indian literature on the Raj has been written. While Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster write from within the Imperial Age, Paul Scott writes in a reflective vein, depicting and critically examining the British life in pre-Independence days from a post-Imperial space.

The Anglo-Indian literature written in this Imperial period reflects the socio-historical milieu of the times. The early novels were mostly based on the grossly exaggerated reports of the atrocities inflicted on the British women and children by the natives during the Sepoy Mutiny. These novels propagated different myths which were aimed at creating racial distance between the white/ruler and the
natives/rulyed and the most popular was the rape myth. Further, these texts upheld the civilizing mission of the British and glorified the Empire. In the latter half of the nineteenth century there was a spurt of novels called ‘Anglo-Indian domestic novel’ and the ‘station romance.’ These novels were personal in tone and featured the domestic and social life in the Anglo-Indian stations. Such fictions were mostly written by men and women who had the first hand knowledge and experience of the Raj. These novels flourished up to the war. While the glorification of the Empire found its staunchest champion in Kipling, the war ushered in a period of serious doubts which affected the Raj. This phenomenon is prominently incorporated in the later Anglo-Indian writings. The decline of the Empire gave rise to the question of the position of the British in India and the pro-Raj and anti-Raj novels can be seen as a debate on this issue.

What intrigues one is the position of the womenfolk of the colonizers or the women of the Raj—the memsahibs (both married and unmarried). Historically, critics and writers alike have projected them as racist, idle, materialistic, emotional also and as imperialists. But for
many of them the Raj often meant tears, tragic separation from children and husbands and the constant fear of disease and death in an unfavourable climate. The figure of ‘the white woman as tragic exile’ (Sen, p.28) is often ignored.

A British woman undertook the passage to British India under different compulsions. Apparently, India was an ideal ground for seeking suitable husbands who would provide lavish aristocratic lives to their wives. In this context, the white woman is ambiguously located in the colonial space. She enters the colony as the ‘fishing-fleet’ in search of priviledges enjoyed by the ruling race but suffers because of her gender disadvantages inherent in that social set-up. The Anglo-Indian narratives also project India as a means of escaping Britain and its repressive social mores particularly for the young middle-class girls. As E.M. Forster writes in *A Passage to India*, India constantly invites – ‘come.’ It seemed to promise greater independence and also scope for realization of her desire to participate in public sphere where she could use her time and talent. Unfortunately, in most cases she is disillusioned in the end and
realizes that all her notions of escape from such a society and finding a new milieu for herself were just a dream. Yet another reason for women’s emigration from the lower rung of the English society was due to compelling circumstances back home. Many women opted for missionary work as it was considered more dignified than becoming a maid-servant or governess; the only options open to a woman from this class.

Against this social and historical perspective of the memsahibs this dissertation will examine the British women characters in Paul Scott’s The Raj Quartet which includes four novels: The Jewel in the Crown (1966), The Day of the Scorpion (1968), The Towers of Silence (1971) and A Division of the Spoils (1975). Scott weaves fiction out of the history of India ranging from the socio-political upheaval of 1942 to the eve of Independence in 1947. He captures the effect the loss of India has on the Anglo-Indian community, especially the pukka sort. Even more than the historical complexity, The Raj Quartet interests one primarily because it is a woman-centered narrative. It has women as dominant figures in each of the books.
These are the British women trapped in the socio-political impasse. They include the young, old and middle-aged; either married or unmarried. Paul Scott is an insider as he was a wartime cadet officer in India from 1942 to 1945 which enabled him to closely observe the lives of the British women during these turbulent years of the Raj. At the same time he is also an outsider when he recreates their situation after a distance of twenty years or so. The balanced perspective with which he has portrayed his women characters in the Quartet can be attributed to this.

'...your sex is made, Miss Crane, for marriage or for God ...,' says Mr.Cleghorn to Miss Crane in The Jewel in the Crown. The proposed study will attempt to examine Paul Scott’s women characters in his The Raj Quartet in the light of such patriarchal pronouncements. Some important questions emerge from this. Such as: How do these British women in India behave in such restrictive domain? Do they project any defiance of it, if so, to what extent? How are Scott’s women projected as being intellectual/anti-imperialist as opposed to the widely accepted notion of being
emotional/imperialists? In what ways do Scott’s memsahibs differ from the conventional image of the memsahib in India? These questions form the bases of analysis of the British women in *The Raj Quartet*. The following are the chapter-wise division of the dissertation:

Introduction

Chapter 1. Marriage and Memsahib

Chapter 2. British Women and Missionary Life

Chapter 3. British Women in their ‘expanded world’

Conclusion

The Introduction very briefly traces the coming of the British to India as traders and finally setting up the Empire. An overview of the Anglo-Indian fiction since the Sepoy Mutiny and the subsequent transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown is done. The early Anglo-Indian fiction is mainly based on the Mutiny which worked as an effective medium of propagating certain myths complementing the colonialist agenda. Indira Ghose marks:

…one of the main myths of colonialism for which the signifier woman (white) was instrumentalized, the rape myth. This myth – grounded on no evidence – was
deployed in the service of colonial punitive measures and gained authoritative status in colonial historiography. (Ghose, Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of Female Gaze, p.12)

After the 1880s most of the educated men in the Imperial Service and their wives also wrote a considerable amount of fiction featuring the Anglo-Indian domestic and social life. This can be seen as ‘...an act of self-definition, an articulation of self-identity as well as a prescription of this society’s codes of conduct.’ (Sen, Women and Empire: Representations in the Writings of British India, p.73) The dominant mood of the fiction produced in the declining years of the Empire was one of doubts and the sense of loss experienced by these members of the Raj. The mode of portraying the memsahibs in these Anglo-Indian texts is questioned by Paul Scott’s The Raj Quartet when he portrays his women characters against the conventional mode of representation.

Chapter 1 will be an attempt to study marriage and its effect on the memsahibs in the Anglo-Indian society by examining the narratives of the Quartet. Marriage in the British India followed the
broader Victorian ideology. Marriage is the central point of a girl’s life and accordingly her life and education since childhood is directed to achieve an ideal marriage. Further, the women who married the men in the Imperial Service were considered to be contributing towards the consolidation of the Empire by producing future empire-builders.

Scott’s memsahibs belong to the last phase of the Imperial rule in India. Life in India in these last decades of the British rule was never the same as it used to be. ‘The war had disrupted the ideal pattern.’ (The Day of the Scorpion, p.136) The stations were flooded with men but very few were of the pukka sort. The eligible girls were even fewer. The ‘fishing fleet’ had stopped arriving. The behavioural practice of courtship and eventual marriage prescribed for the young girl, termed as the ‘making of the memsahib’ is still followed but dissenting members like Sarah Layton and Daphne Manners also emerge. They are critical of the dull façade of the colonizing men and reject the bland marriage arrangements of the Anglo-Indian society. Class distinctions operate in marriage and love as well in the Anglo-
Indian society but with gender discrimination. Miss Crane, the
governess has to hide her feelings for Lieutanant Orme who is above
her class and therefore beyond her reach. While Ronald Merrick, a
lower class police officer in India uses marriage as a means to rise
above his class in the society and achieve status. Colour
consciousness is even more imposing. It categorically rules out the
prospect of marriage or romance between the English and the natives
as it was necessary to uphold ‘...an imperial culture that was rooted in
defensive racial aloofness and simultaneous cultivation of an
‘English’ colonial identity.’ (Indrani Sen, p. 10)

Marriage also encompasses motherhood. The mother-role of the
memsahib is the most pitiable aspect of her married life. She has to
part with her child very early when they are sent to England for their
education and this creates a break in the close emotional bond
between the mother and child. Sarah Layton attributes the cause of her
strenuous relationship with her mother to this prolonged separation
since childhood. Further, the British woman in India was expected to
respond more urgently to imperial duty than to her maternal instincts.
This is described as ‘the saddest, yet inevitable result of Indian life’ (Sen. p. 10)

The colonial society gives little scope for the personal development of their women. The memsahibs basically play the mother-housewife role with total economic dependence on their men. They accept that their place is in the home. This confined space becomes even more stressful in an alien environment and their social isolation appears more severe. They suffer from monotony with no meaningful activities in the excessive time they have. They try to cope by partying, gossiping and the like. Their boredom is however somewhat relieved when after the war they begin to participate in social work. Even here, Sarah Layton’s view is that for them in India there is no private life; there is only a public life. The ladies who form the social group in the station are bonded rather by location than by friendship. Such bonds hardly lead to any real intimacy because they have to move house to follow their husbands’ careers frequently. The psychological stress on the grass-widows is even more. Some are even on the verge of nervous breakdown. Yet despite all this their colonial
responsibility lay in putting up a brave-front without capitulating to the trying circumstances. Scott shows how the decline of the Empire markedly affects the marriage of its serving men and women. The degeneration and loss of moral spirit in the subsequent batch of Englishmen is reflected not only in their attitude and work but also in their personal lives. Their women are also unable to cope with the changing situation as some of their predecessors had done.

Marriage therefore is projected as the centre point in a memsahib’s life in India. If it lures her to India with its promise of comfort, wealth and status it also demands compromises. It demands sacrifice of her individual self. A memsahib in India was expected to adapt herself to fit into her husband’s career.

Chapter 2 will study the plight of the women from the lower rung of the British society who join the Mission in India either with evangelical ardour or under compelling circumstances back home. However, they end up disillusioned because they realize that neither their proselytization nor teaching is relevant in the given
circumstances. They are unable to fulfill their missionary aspirations. Besides, they have to cope with social discrimination among their own kind because of their status in the society. In their predicament in an alien situation they seek company, love and sympathy but are denied. Eventually they not only loose their respect for the Raj but faith in mankind itself. God, for whose service they had ventured out too seems to be alienated from them. They are under tremendous pressure from all sides. In the process they loose their mental balance and die pathetic deaths. This study acknowledges Jenny Sharpe’s contention that the missionaries are the ‘invisible women of the Empire’ whose life experiences and good work has been ignored in the discourse of the ‘civilising mission’ and therefore tries to do justice in that regard by attempting extensive textual analysis focusing on the lives of two such missionary women working in India.

Chapter 3 will analyse Scott’s woman-centered narrative and disprove the prevailing notion that ‘Almost without exception these women are shown to be totally lacking in sensitivity and intelligence. They are concerned only with the achievement of their own
comfort'. (p.104, Allen J. Greenberger) The British women portrayed in *The Rai Quartet* are liberal women who discover the ‘expanded world’ and try to reach out beyond racial barriers. They belong to different backgrounds and are of different age groups but their experience is more or less the same. They negate the patriarchal construct of memsahibs as racist, frivolous, stupid and idle. Nor are they merely emotional beings or imperializing agents as are generally shown to be. Rather they emerge as intellectuals and anti-imperialists. Unlike the other complacent memsahibs they are very sensitive to the situation around them and they do not conform to the Imperial system operating in India as a ‘working robot.’ They are disillusioned with the degeneration of the Anglo-Indian society. They have their original thinking and are liberal enough to voice it and at times even behave in keeping with their own convictions.

The Conclusion sums up the findings of the previous chapters and attempts to analyse the change in the position of the memsahib in the *Quartet*. 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 reading public in Britain 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 Scott has been able to achieve in the portrayal of the British women in India in *The Raj Quartet* can be best summed up in the following remark of V.R. Badiger 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." (Paul Scott: His Art and Vision, p.6)
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