The Summing-up

The foregoing account will show that in The Raj Quartet, Paul Scott has unravelled with remarkable success the knotted threads of the Indo-British relations during the closing years of the Raj. His analysis of the situation of those eventful years of the Raj in India is hard and unsparing. In the process, he has laid bare to the perceptive reader the hollowness of the much-vaunted claims of imperial obligation and service of the white masters to the subject race. That, however, is not the professed aim of the work. Its primary purpose seems to be to present a number of men and women, British and Indian, caught in the intricate web of human relationships, considered politically incompatible, chiefly at the personal and social levels. That is what lends to the work its essential human appeal. Scott's evocation of the British colonial past in India is impressive in its totality of grasp and fullness and exactness of details. The intricate mixing up of fact and fancy in the work is indicative of real creative power on the part of the author. So is its readability which owes much to the author's admirable imaginative evocation of the past, and the fine entertainment that it provides to the sensitive reader. Two other elements that appeal to the reader of the Quartet are its note of underlying irony as well as of disenchantment, the latter being more pronounced. The critical reader can easily see that Scott has laid bare the illusion of the Englishmen in India with regard to what they considered to be their paradise, and that he has little sympathy for those who have lost it. Thus the work is neither a requiem nor an elegy for the empire that was India. It must be reckoned by all accounts to be a formidable
book on the Raj. It is not stale stuff like many other works on the subject, nor is it another addition to what is popularly called the Raj boom. Nor is the work merely journalistic. The author is not acting here as a political moralist. Scott's *Quartet* has thrown vivid light on the British colonial past, and has succeeded in bringing us closer to the core of the conflict that sharply divided the two nations. In doing so, he has not adopted an ambivalent attitude. As can be seen from Chapter VI, in particular, he is objective throughout. He is not dodging issues to satisfy readers who wish to dodge them. The dominant impression that the reader of the *Quartet* gets is that its concern is not so much to illuminate events as such as to identify attitudes as reflected through human beings caught up in the events. Scott's balance of attitude is matched by his objectivity of presentation of the characters that he has portrayed - both British and Indian. He has shown remarkable sense of fact and perfect imaginative power in their portrayal, thanks to which, all his characters, high and low, have attained an identity of persons of flesh and blood.

What Scott has presented in his work is a slice of the British India, not the Indian India. The vast masses of the Indian people with their perennial problem of a decent living do not find any expression in the work. Their aspiration for freedom also is only tangentially touched. Many readers are inclined to find fault with the writer on this score. But this is not a negative aspect of the work, for it was not in the writer's purpose to present this side of the picture. He is to be praised for carrying out nicely what he aimed at doing.
In the final analysis, then, The Raj Quartet presents a kind of human drama with all its accompanying passion against a locale that is ever alive and exciting. It impresses the reader by its constituent insights of a novelist of consummate skill. His liberal outlook places him beside Forster. Like Forster, again, Scott, too, has provided a kind of a passage to promote understanding between the two peoples and the Quartet will be able to carve a niche for its own in the annals of Indo-British relationships.