Chapter-III

THE DAY OF THE SCORPION
(Deterioration of Relations, Confusion and Bewilderment, Violence and Brutality)

Introduction

The first novel, The Jewel in the Crown, describes the doomed love between an Indian boy and an English girl, Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners. The affair touches the lives of other characters in three subsequent volumes, most of them unknown to Hari and Daphne. Involved in the larger social and political conflicts the characters destroy the lovers. As the scorpion, encircled by a Ring of Fire, will sting itself to death, so does the British Raj hasten its own destruction when threatened by the flames of Indian independence. In The Day of the Scorpion (1971), a sadistic policeman, Ronald Merrick who arrests and prosecutes Hari, insinuates himself into an aristocratic British family as World War-II escalates.

Scott recreates both private ambition and perversity and the politics of an entire subcontinent at a turning point in history. In The Day of the Scorpion, to put the case behind him Merrick sees an opportunity in the Second World War. To enjoy a certain superiority and potential to rise even further in social rank Merrick seeks an opportunity through Teddie meeting Layton family. On the cover page of the novel, it is described that India, August 9th 1942. The morning brings raids and the arrest by British police of Congress Party members. Amongst the prisoners is the distinguished ex-Chief Minister Mohammed Ali Kasim. Loyal to the party’s central vision of a unified free India, his incarceration is a symptom of the growing deterioration of Anglo-Indian relations (cover page of the novel).
Scott takes the title *The Day of the Scorpion* from the haunting childhood memory of Sarah Layton, the novel’s main character. Sarah recalls the day a scorpion surrounded with a circle of fire. While the Layton sisters watched the scorpion arched its back and appeared to sting itself with its deadly tail before the flames could spread. The image of the scorpion’s suicide becomes a metaphor for the English within India’s circle of fire.

**Deterioration of Relations**

Scorpion is very much a continuation of the Crown. In *The Day of the Scorpion* an old Raj family comes newly on the scene, the Laytons of Pankot, an imaginary hill station in India. One of the main characters in the novel is Sarah Layton. Sarah recalls the day that an Indian servant discovered a scorpion surrounded with a circle of kerosene and set the fuel. The Laytons sisters watched the scorpion’s suicide arching its back; sting itself with its deadly tail before the flames could spread. The image of the scorpion’s suicide troubles Sarah. Her emotionally unstable sister has placed her newborn son in a similar circle of fire by the end of the novel. Sarah also knows the fate of Miss Crane who burned herself to death in a ritual form of sati. An army captain, Ronald Merrick, a self-made man of the lower middle class and the former police official in charge of the Daphne Manners case, begins to insinuate himself subtly into the Layton family.

At the beginning of the novel *The Day of the Scorpion*, Mohammed Ali Kasim, ex-Chief Minister of Ranpur is arrested by the British Police and sent to prison at Premnagar Fort after a brief interview with Governor Malcolm. After Daphne’s death Lady Manners stays on a houseboat in Kashmir. Hesitantly Miss Sarah Layton goes to
the houseboat to see Daphne’s child. Keeping aside the prejudices of her *pukka* class Miss Susan admires the child.

Affected by the Quit India Movement the British administrators at Mayapore do not take things lying down. They try to break the freedom struggle by encouraging the Muslim leaders of the Indian National Congress. They made to believe that notwithstanding the apparently secular nature of the organisation, it is really a Hindu-dominated organisation and once their (the Muslim leaders) purpose is over, they are almost certain to get a raw deal from the Congress. Sir George Malcolm puts forth to Mohammed Ali Kasim the arrested Congress leader who is a Muslim:

> You knew what was going on in the districts, and knew that most of what the Muslims said was going on was gross exaggeration, but you recognised the dangers and were appalled at the evidence you had of what actual communal intimidation did exist. You saw that whatever the Congress professed to be a national party, a secular party, a party dedicated to the ideal of independence and national unity, there were people in it who never see it as anything but a Hindu and who were coming into the open now that they’d got power (pp. 13-14).

Every instance that came to the notice of a Muslim discriminated against or Muslim children being forced to salute the Congress flag or sing a Congress hymn in school lead to another wedge driven between the two major communities. The relations used to deteriorate.

Colonel Layton, the commanding officer of the first Pankot Rifles, headquartered in Pankot and Ranpur is the patriarch of the Layton family. Colonel is the product of Chillingborough, the same exclusive school that Hari Kumar and the brother of Daphne Manners attended. As the Laytons enter the story, the Germans are holding John Layton prisoner after being captured in the North Africa Theatre of war.

*These lines from the text hereafter shall be mentioned with the page numbers.*
The imprisonment of Colonel John Layton is symbolically yet another sort of imprisonment of the Raj. Like any devoted Englishman Layton firmly believes in the racial and political supremacy of the builders of the empire and its values of paternalism, self-denial, sacrifice, and love of truth and justice. Sarah brings out the symbolic implication in the following extract:

Now that Aunt Mabel had confirmed what she already suspected about the death of the scorpion she was able to link one truth with the other: which was what the last thing she would want her father to do, if he lost a battle was fall on his sword. It was an awfully impractical thing to do. And it would be impractical of the scorpion to kill itself. After all the fire might go out, or be doused by rain. It was more practical of the scorpion to attempt to survive by darting its venomous tail in the direction of what surrounded it and was rapidly killing it. Just as brave too. Perhaps braver, after all there was a saying: Never say die (p. 80).

This image links the truth about John Layton’s situation in war and the truth about the scorpion in the circle of fire together. Sarah thinks of her father to die bravely in the war than to commit suicide like a coward. She idolises the courage of the soldier in a military situation. Soon after his release, he aspires to see Khan Muzafir Khan, an INA prisoner, because of his deeply-loved ideal of man-bap – a British being father and mother to the Indians. Khan’s suicide makes him sad and melancholic. He, however, thinks there is point in seeing Khan’s bereaved wife and children who live in a nearby village. The dangerous military situations in which Captain Bigham and Captain Merrick are placed during the war are similar to Colonel Layton’s imprisonment. They are the “scorpions” caught up in the circle of fire of destruction.

Miss Barbara Batchelor (Barbie), a retired missionary school teacher joins the aged and sad Mabel Layton at Rose Cottage as a paying guest. Barbie is a simple, down-to-earth woman, who believes strongly in her god and in Christianity and has clear ideas
about right and wrong. In all her years of missionary work she troubled in converting the children in her charge to Christianity. Above all, Barbie has identity crisis and wants to be useful by having a role in society. She hears rumours of an attack on two English women in Mayapore of whom one Edwina happened to be her friend.

Barbie comes from a working-class background and this, as well as her taking up space in Rose Cottage are causes for resentment on the part of Mildred Layton. Her egalitarian attitudes, based on her communal Christian beliefs, are a source of annoyance and exasperation to Mildred. Both Batchelor and Aunt Mabel receive invitation cards from Mrs. Bingham for a wedding reception at the Officer’s Mess at Pankot. Miss Batchelor buys a set of silver spoons and sends them through Sarah to Aunt Mabel. When she attends the reception with Aunt Mabel she sees the spoons missing from the wedding gifts displayed there and becomes disappointed. After a few months, Aunt Mabel dies and Mrs. Bingham gives birth to a male child, Teddie. She vacates Mabel’s room and seeks shelter in the house of the Peplows. She personally visits the mortuary and begs Mrs. Mildred to bury Mabel’s body beside the grave of her first husband at Ranpur. Mildred disregards Barbie’s words and buries the dead Mabel at Pankot. Paul Scott’s novels are realistic portrayal of life. The world, which the novelist creates, is a copy of the real world around him. It is people with men and women, who think, feel and behave as men and women do in real life. Dr. Traverse and Captain Samuels treat Mrs. Susan’s madness. In her state of madness she attempts to christen her baby in a ‘circle of fire’ and Minnie, her maid rescues it from danger. Aunt Fanny admits her mistake in allowing Sarah to sleep with a man called Clark. Mildred presses her for carrying out Sarah’s abortion in Calcutta.
In *The Quartet* Scott employs many narrator characters and their different points of view of the *Raj* with greater density and verisimilitude. The use of history in fiction and the theoretical views about the novel in the literary kinship of Scott and Madox Ford, an English novelist is one. Ford speaks of creating ‘mental reflections’ of reality through the eyes of the central character i.e. Christopher Tietjens, whereas Scott claims to set up ‘a series of human images’ through the eyes of his central character. Both used several narrators and their points of views to get close to the truth of the fictional matter. For Ford, to conclude from an analysis of his own art, a character is the beginning of the creative process; whereas for Scott, image is the beginning of the creative process of the novel. Both differ in the treatment of history. ‘Affair’ is the centre of a Fordian novel, while a ‘situation’ is the centre of a Scottian novel. The novelist desperately deals with human situations against the background of social, moral and political upheaval and dehistorised literature with imagined characters.

To shed new light especially the relationship between the different members of the Layton family Barbie serves the main narrative purpose. She also adds herself during the critical phase of Susan’s marriage, widowhood and childbirth. The fact that the crumbling edifice of a doomed society destroys her throws a shadow of pessimism across the whole spread of the narrative.

Lady Manners and Mabel Layton have one important thing in common. After the Bibighar affair, Lady Manners feels bound by loyalty and immerses herself in a dignified and silent understanding of an alien country and loves to look after Daphne’s child. The hawkers come round her house-boat to tempt her making a final purchase when she prepares to leave Srinagar. She gives her custom to a man who sold her something three
years before, watching “his touchingly dishonest eyes whenever he looked up to emphasise the truth of the lies he was telling her” (p. 51). “Mabel sent one hundred pounds to the fund for the Indian widows and orphans but refused to contribute to General Dyer’s pension fund at the time of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre” (Armstrong, Simon, H. p. 153).

Life becomes internalised as she refuses to pander to social convention. Ending her days tending the roses in the garden of Rose Cottage in a “celebration of the natural cycle of seed, growth, flower, decay, seed” (The Towers of Silence, p. 207). The irony of her situation is left unstated, whereas Lady Manners underlines the irony of her own by placing an announcement of the birth of Parvati underneath the death of Daphne’s in the paper. She also takes pains to observe the tradition of signing the book at Flagstaff House in Pankot. The account of the Bibighar affair she hears in the prison by Rowan and Gopal confirms what she has already from Daphne’s journal, and strengthens her resolve to end her association with a regime that has caused herself and other innocent people so much suffering:

But it isn’t the best we should remember. . . . We must remember the worst because the worst is the lives we lead, the best is only our history, and between our history and our lives there is this vast dark plain where the rapt and patient shepherds drive their invisible flocks in expectation of God’s forgiveness (p. 315).

The two most obvious victims of The Quartet are Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners, identified as such by Lady Manners as she watches Kumar weep for niece in the Kandipat goal:

She opened her eyes again. The twin rivulets gleamed on his prison cheeks, and then the image became blurred and she felt a corresponding wetness on her own - tears for Daphne that were also tears for him; for
lovers who could never be described as star-crossed because they had had no stars (p. 302).

Daphne describes in her journal how the black man-white girl relationship remained taboo. In addition to being black, Hari’s main problem is his complete loss of identity on arrival in India. He becomes invisible even to his best friend. He feels an Englishman’s sense of disorientation at being suddenly immersed in an alien culture because of his colour, to take advantage of the few measures white people take to prevent their sense of identity. Scott’s choice of name for Hari Kumar is very important - ‘hari’ is Sanskrit for ‘Vishnu’, as in ‘harijan’, people of Vishnu, or untouchable; Scott therefore gives an inherent indication of Kumar’s destiny, a social outcast in a foreign land: “his father had succeeded in making him nothing. Nothing in the black town, nothing in the cantonment, nothing even in England because in England he was now no more than a memory” (The Jewel in the Crown, p. 254).

Mildred promptly returns Barbie’s set of spoons because of her hatred for her. Informing Colonel Trehearne by a letter Barbie determines to donate them to the Officers Mess. She even goes over to Captain Coley’s house to hand over the spoons but finds him sleeping with Mildred. Shocked at such a sight she hurries back to the Peplows house in pouring rain. Temporarily she was hospitalised on account of pneumonia. After recovering from illness she goes up to Rose Cottage to collect her trunk. There she meets the wounded Merrick to whom she hands over the picture of the Queen. While returning, she meets with an accident and seriously injured and admitted in hospital. As a result, she gradually loses her power of speech and dies of shock on the day of bombing Hiroshima, visualising the death of the empire.
Barbie is haunted by the suicide of her friend and former colleague, Edwina Crane, who in *The Jewel and the Crown* was witness to a brutal murder during rioting on the road from Dibrapur. Barbie is a figure of fun among the best of Pankot’s English society. They mock her and roll their eyes at what they view as her hystericis and spread rumors that she is a lesbian. However, Sarah Layton, especially, and her sister Susan have affection for her.

The rioters in Scott’s *Jewel* fight under the ‘slogan of independence’. While *Jewel* presents the actions of the rioters, the actual governance behind the strikes surfaces in *Scorpion*, an important, extensive dialogue transpires between the English Governor and the Indian Congressman Kasim, who has been arrested for inciting the strikes. Kasim defends his party’s motives to build a nation completely severed from the manipulations of the British. With Gandhi, the nationalist leaders stirred laborers into rebellion. The Governor argues that India has been essentially independent since the Parliament consented to bicameral assemblies under the Government of India Act, 1935, and to the ensuing national elections in 1937. The Governor says to Kasim,

The old battle was for Indian independence and although you may not think so now, Indian independence became a foregone conclusion in 1937, when men like you became provincial ministers. Getting rid of us was still part of your programme but getting rid of us was no longer the battle. The battle was to maintain and extend the area of your party’s power . . . You’re fighting for political power over what has been conceded. It’s logical. It’s essential. It’s an inescapable human condition. When you all resigned the power you got, in the belief that you were striking another blow for India’s independence, you weren’t striking a blow for that at all. You were striking a blow at your own existing and potential political power (p. 12).
While the rioters in *Jewel* come across as the united “masses” against the coloniser’s reign, in truth, the proletariats were manipulated tools for and by the national bourgeoisie.

Trinh T. Minh-ha in her writing *Woman, Native, Other* one of the theoretical attempts on post-colonialism warns of the dangers in the “massification” of the Third World under the guise of defending freedom. She writes,

> Do the masses become masses by themselves? Or are they the result of a theoretical and practical operation of massification”? From where onward can one say of a free work of art that it is written for the infinite numbers which constitute the masses and not merely for a definite public stratum of society? (p. 12).

She continues:

Like all stereotypical notions, the notion of the masses has both an upgrading connotation and a degrading one. One often speaks of the masses as one speaks of the people, magnifying thereby their number, their strength, and their mission. One invokes them and pretends to write on their behalf when one wishes to give weight to ones undertaking or to justify it. . . . Yet to oppose the masses to the elite is already to imply that those forming the masses are regarded as an aggregate of average persons condemned by their lack of personality or by their dim individualities (pp.12-13).

Indian officials like Kasim lives in luxury, the untouchables remain neglected in the drains and alleys, left to the mercy of a humanist such as Sister Ludmila. Mohammed Ali Kasim presents the view of the Indian National Congress. He presents a congress party, which is in sharp contrast to the one presented by Reid. The two attitudes show the difference between themselves in the attitude of a nationalist and that of an imperialist. The objective of the Indian National Congress, as is implied in M.A. Kasim’s conversation, is not merely to ensure the exit of the British, but also to ensure a place of honour for India among the nations of the world. Political independence is a pre-
requisite for an Indian to find an honourable place among the nations of the world: The idea, you know, isn’t simply to get rid of the British. It is to create a nation capable of getting rid of them and capable simultaneously of taking its place in the world as a nation.

The second aspect of the Indian view of the Indian National Congress is its unifying capacity. The Congress successfully effects the unification of all people in the country. It has given it strength to continue the nationalist movement and bring it to a successful conclusion:

This is why we go on insisting that the Congress is an All India Congress. It is an All India Congress first, because you cannot detach from it the idea that it is right that it should be. Only second is it a political party, although one day that is what it must become. Meanwhile, Governor-ji, we try to do the job that your Government has always found it beneficial to leave undone, the job of unifying India, of making all Indians feel that they are above all else Indians (p. 18).

Paul Scott has presented this combined effort honestly. The unflinching dedication towards the cause of India’s independence is distinctly perceived in *The Raj Quartet*. B.Pattabhi Sitaramayya in ‘*History of the Indian National Congress 1885-1935*’ quotes that:

Edwin Montague made the following memorable announcement in the house of Commons regarding Responsible government as the goal of British policy towards India. The policy of His Majesty’s Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have directed that substantial steps should be taken in this direction as soon as possible (p. 228).

The events themselves show the lure of Responsible Government was only a ruse of the British Government. It was only to buy time till World War-I was over. The
British Government had no intention of leading India towards Responsible Government. Instead of Responsible Government, the Indian contribution towards the victory of the Allies was returned with the aspiration of the Indians. This breach of trust created a permanent fissure between the British and the Indians and consequently, strengthened the demand of the Indians for complete independence.

Confusion and Bewilderment

Mohammed Ali Kasim’s incarceration is a symptom of the growing deterioration of Anglo-Indian relations. The Laytons, the long serving British family struggle to come to terms with their Anglo-Indian past. With growing confusion and bewilderment the British are forced to challenge the violent and brutal years that lie ahead of them.

Literature reflects the spirit of the age and therefore in the literary history of prose, the style of every period is the outcome of various complexes and influences. Anil Kumar Verma in his writing Paul Scott: A Critical Study of His Novels analyses Scott’s writing that:

Paul Scott produces not the novel, but a highly furnished, perhaps even over-crowded room with a view of all outdoors. Such a method is based upon the piling up of background triva. These details create the world of histories. It is as if he were insisting that—in this place, at this time, under these precise circumstances, his people lived and acted, and in no other place or time or environment of races could the same events have led to the same end. The portrayal of the social background emerges as one of Scott’s major values as a writer. He is a historian to an era (p. 158).

Scott’s novels are like a motion picture depicting on a grand scale the vast socio-political terminals of an age of Indian struggle for freedom.

Scott often seems to use his characters like reactive chemicals, placing them in careful opposition to each other to produce a calculated effect. The meetings between
Sarah and Merrick particularly through the way in which they react to each other reveals about both characters. Certain phrase Merrick uses at the Mirat guest house makes Sarah conscious of their different social backgrounds and she is frightened to realise “that she could respond, as automatically as Aunt Fenny, to the subtler promptings of the class-instinct” (pp. 219-20). This kind of sobering self-discovery is all part of the terrible dissatisfaction she feels both about her own character and the social situation of which she is a part. An irony of her position is that no matter how hard she fights against the pressure of the situation. There is the danger of appearing to be what Sarah calls, “a hard-bitten little memsahib interfering in other people’s lives to stop herself shrieking with the boredom and frustration of her own” (p. 380). This kind of fear leads Sarah to adopt a more defensive stance for her own protection and self-respect. Sarah worries a lot about becoming like her mother, and fights against the physical manifestations of this tendency. Even her way of sitting is becoming noticeably like that of Mildred, and the positive decision to change the angle of her body serves only to accentuate the similarity: “She had sat up, put her glass down, leant forward and folded her arms, but that was becoming a habitual attitude too, and just as defensive” (p. 118). Sarah admires something about her mother. Sarah is hurt by the silence that surrounds the subject of Sarah’s abortion. But sees the point because she recognises that this silence and apparent indifference is her mother’s only chance to hang on to the composure and fortitude necessary to maintain the ‘standard’ or what she calls “the angel’s face in the dark”. Sarah follows her example and carves “angel faces of her own and only at moments of acute distress had impulse to tear the fabric of the roof and expose the edifice to an empty sky” (p. 131).
Sarah is aware of the fact that rounds the rapid collapse of Raj and its increased effort to keep up appearances as though nothing was happening. The realisation of how little people like the Layton’s actually ‘matter’ is a strong contributory factor to Susan’s mental illness, and Sarah sees a possible explanation in the fact that people quite simply ‘don’t really believe in it any more’. Sarah is not prepared, however, to join its collective conspiracy of pretence and illusion, but the price she pays for her individuality is high:

Sarah tapped ash carefully into the glass ashtray and felt put off by the site of the stub of her previous one, marked red by her lipstick, a sign of her personal private life, her none-too-hopeful message in a bottle cast back up by an indifferent tide on an island on which she sometimes felt herself the only one who still wanted to be rescued (p. 149).

In opinions and meditations of other characters, especially Nigel Rowan and Guy Perron Paul Scott utilise the same technique for revealing certain angles of Sarah’s character as he uses for Merrick. Rowan first sees Sarah while in the company of Bronowsky in the Nawab’s private railway-carriage, and makes an observation that seems to invite comparison between the girl in front of him and old Lady Manners: “Her face had to be studied before it revealed its natural and incontrovertible logic. And then one left instinctively that it would endure, that in old age it would be marked by the serenity of understood experience and the vitality of undiminished appetite” (p.147). The astute observation is an indication of Rowan’s assessment. Scott achieves the double benefit of throwing light on both characters in the same situation with one narrative progression. His technique is scientific in approach. His works display his mastery of language. He does not attempt to judge his characters or to comment on their actions. He merely inserts them into a crucial situation and then pretends to stand back and watch them with the passivity of the scientist. Rowan is also right in his guess about Sarah’s
views of Hari Kumar forged during the Kandipet goal examination. The empathy that develops between Sarah and Rowan is one of the most interesting and a poignant interlude of the concluding novel in *The Raj Quartet*, but their relationship becomes another casualty of exposure to Ronald Merrick.

Sarah begins to develop a strong sense of her own sexuality which tempers her outlook on the world from the moment of her seduction by Clark in Calcutta, a symbolic awakening fated to end in disillusion. The suspicion that her mother has had an affair during Colonel Layton’s absence grows Sarah’s understanding of the complexity of physical needs and physical responses. Much more restrained than Perron might reasonably have expected from Sarah on his return to Indian in 1947 is interesting. When Sarah invites him to go riding one morning, she changes her mind and takes Perron to watch Ahmed hawking instead, an alternative demonstration of the love that can find only abstract modes of expression. Another thing that puzzles Perron is Sarah’s altered attitude to India itself, a place from which it seemed she could not wait to escape in 1945, but where she says she has been very happy since. “The only answer seemed to be: in love with the land itself, after all; yes, in love with that, and content to be here whatever happened. A strange but perhaps logical reversal of her old attitude” (p. 496).

Scott makes this reversal as a temporary state of mind. Entering a period of life an illusion of serenity which by contrast with the one just ended might be described as free, uncluttered, open at last to endless possibilities. This illusion, fed by the place Sarah has found on Mirat with Ahmed, Shiraz and Bronowsky is shattered by the murder of Ahmed Kasim, son of Mohammed Ali Kasim on the train to Ranpur. Her optimism disintegrates. Sarah begins to sound like Susan when Perron asks to see her on the
station platform again, replying with a pessimistic “What is there to see?” (p. 496). It seems that Sarah’s last chance for true happiness died with Ahmed, leaving her to follow the more predictable course of an eventual marriage to Guy, and a life of provincial obscurity in post-war England. Ending to Sarah’s story is unsatisfying and it seems odd to leave unanswered so many questions about a character that has shared the tetralogy’s empathic focus for so long. Scott has evoked this pattern of uncertainty found again in Hari Kumar’s case. The currents of life are awash with unanswered questions and uncertainty, and it is only to be expected that Scott would wish to inject a little of this into his most complex and expansive literary creation. “Perron sat down and composed himself, to let the tide of India flow over him, presently it would ebb and leave him revealed: a visitor who was excluded from the mystery, the vital secret” (p. 496).

Perron is presented as a professional historian through whom many of the political and historical consequences of the events described are analysed. Scott presents Perron as an obvious focus for reader - identification and as the source of most of the Quartet’s humour. Perron makes his first appearance only at the end of the four novels. He never quite attains the status of Sarah. In an attempt to unravel the complexities of the novels, K.B. Rao says that Scott uses “the visual techniques of the cinema. The dramatic narrative techniques for theatrical imagery permeate the novels. When Merrick arrived in India, he thought it all seemed so unreal, like a play” (Scorpion, p. 221).

Susan, the younger sister of Sarah Layton, is of a more superficial character and sees herself only as reflected in the eyes of others. She is astute in the needs of others. She is engage to be married to Captain Edward Arthur David Bingham (Teddie). Bingham is an young officer in the Muzzy Guides. Though a bit of scattered brained he
is honourable and possesses the sense of chivalry expected of him. Miss Susan, being born under scorpio, is herself a scorpion symbolically. The events of stone throwing, the stoppage of the nawab at entrance to the Gymkhana Club and a widow (Mrs. Shalini, Hari Kumar’s aunt) prostrating herself at the feet of major Merrick carry symbolic understones. The stone thrown at Ronald Merrick hits Teddie and injures his cheek. The bridegroom sticks a bandage plaster to it. The following is the picture of Teddie’s kissing his bride on the occasion of their marriage at St.Luke’s Church:

Teddie kissed his bride . . . The kiss, Sarah noticed, was a firm one in spite of the angle at which contact was made. He didn’t wince; but breaking free smiled and touched the wound gingerly as if, in a dump show of apology for the inconvenience of it. Sarah stooped and gathered the folds of the bridal veil, followed the family into the vestry. The organist was playing a tune she thought was probably – ‘Perfect Love’ (p. 164).

The ‘bridal veil’ is one of Scott’s private symbols for Susan’s illusion about marriage, in as much as it acts as an instrument of trapping her like Miss Daphne’s rain cap. The stoppage of the Nawab at the entrance to the Gymkhana Club is the second symbolic event of bad luck. Scott describes the image of Susan’s meeting with the Nawab hints of the forthcoming disaster:

She had a fleeting image of them all as dolls dressed and positioned for a play that moved mechanically but uncertainly again and again to a point of climax. . . . Almost imperceptibility they had moved closer to the group that had surrounded Susan and which had now opened out, leaving her exposed, vulnerable, tiny and tender in the ethereal whiteness of stiffened, wafting net and white brocade, several paces away from the spot where the Nawab’s slow progress had finally come to a halt. For an instant Sarah thought that her mother would allow the presentation to end there—as if her duty were to show the Nawab no more than an image of the bride, an effigy set up to demonstrate the meaning and purpose of an alien rite (pp. 170-171).

The typical meeting between the Indians and the British reveals the mindless behaviour of the English. The ‘net’, one of Scott’s recurrent symbols for imprisonment

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gives out the implication of Susan having been caught up. The word ‘effigy’ indicates her total listlessness about the whole ceremony. The appearance of a Hindu widow (i.e. Hari’s aunt Shalini) and her prostration before Merrick with a plea for alleviating the suffering of her nephew is ominous. It foreshadows Susan’s widowhood, after Teddie’s death in war. Their disastrous marriage is a part and parcel of the Raj’s history.

Ronald Merrick’s madness and a virulent brand of racism are more intensely depicted than Mrs. Bingham’s. Count Dmitri Bronowsky, a lame émigré Russian who serves as the Wazir to the Nawab of Mirat explains that Merrick, in his last days, develops fear and becomes acutely conscious of a dangerous threat from the other side of the racial boundary. When Merrick falls down incidentally from horseback in the nullah while keeping watch on Ahmed Kasimand Sarah, he complains of an ‘imaginary enemy’ throwing stone at him. The following is a lucid picture of his paternalism degenerated into homosexual contacts with a succession of young men:

Aziz was the first young man he had actually ever made love to, and that give him a moment of profound peace, but in the next the kind he knew he couldn’t bear because to admit this peace meant discarding every belief he had. I think he realised that; when he woke up after his first night with the boy. And I think that when the boy turned up the following night he just found himself punished and humiliated. And I believe that when Merrick beat him with his first he was inviting retaliation . . . he sought the occasion the occasion of his own death and that he grew impatient for it (p. 571).

Merrick’s moral degeneration is symbolic of the Raj’s degeneration. Aziz, a victim of sado-masochism, finally kills him because Merrick himself wishes it. It is evident that he enjoys the night with Aziz before he is killed in a dreadful manner. His unnatural death is a form of suicide, representing the suicide of the raj. The description of his mysterious murder has a pictorial quality:
(He was) dead in bed but the whole place was an absolute shambles. The Mosquito net was ripped to ribbons, the bedspreads were all over the place and stained with blood and Merrick was lying on the floor, dressed in his Pathan clothes, but hacked about with his own ornaments axe and strangled with his own sash. And all over the floor there were chalked cabalistic signs. And someone had scrawled the word “Bibighar” across Susan’s dressing table mirror with the same brown make-up stick that had been used to daub his face (p. 571).

The condition of British Raj at the time of World War-II is described as emerging from the twilight and sweeping down the hills with flattering swords.

The short span of friendship of Sarah and Major Clark and their dance symbolises like that of Hari and Daphne. The very presence of the “Furies” in the sky indicates that Sarah is heading herself to self-destruction. The dance of Sarah and Major Clark symbolises, like that of Hari and Daphne, the harmony that arises out of the short span of their friendship. “Major Clark forces Sarah to get into a car and abducts her without informing her as to where they are going. The gutter slang used by him in conversation is guessed by Sarah to be part of ‘the process of seduction” (p. 440). Although they do not like Indian music, they still attend a musical concert. She feels enchanted by the exotic as well as erotic atmosphere of the house. The scene of Sarah being caught up in the dimly-lit room is described vividly:

(She) started down at the soiled expensive briefs, those meshes of mysterious and complex cellular imprisonment. She closed the lid knowing that his casual presence and the ludicrous talent he had for casual contemptuous excitement tainted both bath and bedroom. Momentarily she was without a sense of direction. She felt along one wall, searching for another switch (pp. 434-435).

He continues:

Her elongated shadow probed the slant of bathroom light across the floor and up a blank wall. There was no switch . . . over there, she told herself; and was rewarded then by the suddenly visible pale strip of light marking the boundary of the bed room and gallery. She walked towards it, and
stopped . . . ‘you’re going the wrong way’ he said. ‘I’ am over here; his voice came from behind, from some intensely organised, centralised point of reference. She turned and walked towards the silt of light, anticipated the driver home lock and absent key. She jerked the handle. Nothing looked sillier than trying to open a door the person watching you knew was locked (pp. 434-435).

The seduction of Miss Sarah by Major Clark takes place in the locked room, a sort of prison in which the ‘daughter of the Raj’ is caught up. Like Susan, Sarah too works in the Pankot Rifles office. The event of seduction takes place during her stay in Calcutta for the purpose of meeting the wounded and hospitalised Merrick. While going up in the lift of the Grand Hotel, she visualises the Furies:

The Furies were riding across an uninhabited sky, to their own and no one else’s destruction. The real world was a tame, repetitious place of it, when you really looked, was much like another, a chemical accident, a mine of raw material for the creation of random artifacts to house and warm or satisfy the need for sensual pleasure or creation comfort. The lift was one such. It jerked to a stop (p. 404).

The very presence of the ‘Furies’ in the sky indicates that Sarah is heading herself to self-destruction. Captain Bingham and Susan Layton’s romance was short and their engagement and wedding plans came swiftly. The outbreak of war and setbacks in the East mean Teddie is expecting to be sent to the front soon. It was Susan’s elder sister, Sarah that Teddie had met first and shown an interest in. Teddie is not the first man to have found Sarah to be too plain, too blandly intelligent to keep pursuing. Susan, by contrast, is prettier, fun and affable.

Merrick was not Teddie’s first choice as best man, rather a last minute arrangement. They met recently when they became roommates in the army. But Merrick is pleased at the opportunity to ingratiate himself with his social betters. Teddie has no idea of Merrick’s past and, if he had known, it is unlikely he would have chosen someone
as controversial to be his best man. When he learns of Merrick’s past, Teddie finds he cannot trust Merrick to treat Indians justly, which leads to disaster after the wedding when both are sent to the front to halt the Japanese advance. Scott created the characters supremely detailed. Many unforgettable character destinies are shaped by the British rule in India. Paul Scott weaves together by dehistorisising the incidents and the people as well. Sarah’s romantic life stands at a crossroad with limited opportunities for a woman of the master race.

The owner of Rose Cottage in Pankot. Mabel Layton is the stepmother of Colonel Layton. Mabel’s stepson and his daughters address her as ‘Aunty Mabel’. Mabel offers Barbie Batchelor, the retired missionary schoolteacher as houseguest and companion. Mildred, mother of Sarah and Susan resents for occupying Rose Cottage and bringing the working class Miss Batchelor into their lives. After the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in Amritsar most of the British in India contributed to fund the retirement of Reginald Dyer. Mabel contributed money for the Indian victims of the massacre. Mildred sees Mabel as a traitor to her own people. This seems to be a source of friction between step-mother and step-daughter.

On a deeper level, Scott exploited the imagination in balancing the clarity with illusion. The imagination is needed to bring the characters, the historical background and the landscape to life. The Quartet works on suggesting a balance that has been successfully achieved. Paul Scott has earned a world-wide recognition for his realism and naturalism in his style and attitude. Scott’s prose style includes copious details and explanations of his situations. His works display his mastery of language and technique.
Pyree-Jones, David, in 'Scott' Raj: A Great Enterprise in the Making opines about:

Paul Scott that Mr. Scott is far too skilful to draw conclusions; he suggests, he connects and tightens his narrative, wasting nothing. To this purpose, he intensifies his prose from its thoughtful steadiness into something lurid and glowing. So he switches easily between scenes about a trunk or the mess silver into the occult and apocalyptic. From a work like this, Mr. Scott, other novelists and all that care about fiction can take heart (The Times).

It is possible to link the events of the narrative to the imagery and symbolism to the thematic side of Scott.

The first words of the first novel The Jewel in the Crown are in the form of peremptory command: “Imagine, then . . .” (p. 1). This is mirrored in The Day of the Scorpion (at the end of the passage describing Lady Manners) with the further command, “Picture her then” making the reader aware that he is being made party to a hidden contract.

In the context of a wider history Scott was determined to engage with the world of 1942 to 1947. “There are the action, the people, and the place”, he writes on the first page of The Jewel in the Crown. The action, the people and the place are inter-related but in their totality incommunicable in isolation from the moral continuum of human affairs. This ‘moral continuum’ represents the state of British moral responsibility to India as occupying power, which is ambiguous. Scott demands throughout the flights of imaginative fancy by dehistorising literature to measure the events of The Quartet.

The rape of an English girl by a group of Indians is the central image of the tetralogy. It is a more full-blooded treatment of similar issues raised by the ‘non-rape’ described in A Passage to India by E.M. Forster. Scott was conscious that the
atmosphere pertaining to Forster’s time was very different from that of the few years before Indian independence. The explicitly physical rape of Daphne is therefore a natural extension of the unrealised incident in the Marabar Caves. The flexibility of the rape image is central to Scott’s desire for exploring abstract ideas through physical actions. On the whole question of British presence in India, Scott maintains the balance geometrically and the impulse to move outward from the literal to the figurative stems.

There is that old, disreputable saying isn’t there? “When rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it. “Well, there has been more than one rape. I can’t say, Auntie that I lay back and enjoyed mine. But Lili was trying to lie back and enjoy what we’ve done to her country. I don’t mean done in malice. Perhaps there was love. Oh, somewhere, in the past, and now, and in the future, love as there was between Hari and me. But the spoilers are always there, aren’t they? (The Jewel in the Crown, p. 462).

Guy Perron is the character with an integral part of the illusion through his contact with Merric, Kumar, Rowan and Sarah, but tries to maintain his position as an outsider. He refuses to accept an army commission to take the burden of becoming a conventional sahib. Perron’s philosophical analysis of the Indian situation and its history provides the most explicit example of the balance between clarity and illusion:

The sad thing is that whereas in the English mirror there is now no Indian reflection . . . , in the Indian mirror the English reflection may be very hard to get rid of, because in the Indian mind English profession has not been an idea but a reality; often a harsh one. The other sad thing is that people like the Laytons may now see nothing at all when looking in their mirror. Not even themselves? Not even a mirror? (p. 105)

Scott’s obsessive concerns are the idea of possession and the distinction between idea and reality. The circumstance conspires against Perron. Perron tries to avoid being caught up in the machinations of the British raj with objective rationality. Merrick chooses him as an assistant and caught between involvement and detachment from Sarah. Perron’s character proves an ideal medium for Scott’s own thoughts on the insoluble
predicament. Scott represents the slow gathering of events that lead to the independence and partition of India.

“To sustain the illusion . . . you need to balance that with this concern for rhythmic shape and the general shape of the book as a whole” (p. 7). The whole concept of *The Raj Quartet* is bound up with the construction of the narrative in which themes and events are broached. On the first page of *The Quartet*, Scott summarises the whole plot in one sentence: “This is the story of a rape, of the events that lead up to it that followed it and of the place in which it happened.” The novel develops in a very tangential manner with a long prologue about Miss Crane. She is the subject of the rape that is to overshadow the narrative. When the rioters stop the car Miss Crane and Mr. Chaudhuri are travelling in, the threatening language of the mob leader enhances the expectations of rape:

The leader said he did not believe Mr. Chaudhuri. Mr. Chaudhuri was a traitor. No self-respecting Indian male would ride with a dried-up virgin memsahib who needed to feel the strength of a man inside her before she could even look like a woman, and what would Mr. Chaudhuri do if they decided to take the memsahib out of the car and show her what women were for and what men could do? (p. 67).

The immediate threat of rape only disappears when Miss Crane is left at the side of the road with the body of the Indian schoolteacher in her arms. All the individual members of the British Raj find themselves in one or other absurd situation such as marriage, thwarted love, loss of position and power and a longing for death. Most of them suffer and die miserably. Their death signifies the death of the Raj. Scott’s view of the Raj must be seen in the larger perspective. Scott is endowed with an extraordinary talent of creating “Convincing pictures of man at work, subjected to the strain of conflicting responsibilities” (Swinden, p.6). Scott uses Conradian devices of ‘delayed
decoding’ (i.e. the revelation of Daphne’s death to Hari) and also of ‘drafting’ (i.e. Ahmed’s hawking). Compared to Conrad’s *Nostromo* (1904) Scott’s novel exhibits a greater complexity of themes and techniques. Both expose the moral corruption of the British people in different countries—Scott in India; Conrad, in Africa. They share a sad and gloomy common vision of a lost Paradise.

Scott’s description of Miss Crane’s background and the raising unrest of Daphne’s rape in Mayapur serve the dual purpose of establishing the social and political scenario. The bloodshed and the violence in the case of Miss Crane that took place represent the death of an India. She considered herself married to, and which she decides to mourn by becoming *suttee*. A situation long after it has already been touched upon recurs throughout *The Quartet*. Merrick’s choice of Kumar as a victim does not emerge in the first description given by sister Ludmilla. It joins the ex-officio examination of Kumar by Nigel Rowan and Gopal for a true insight into the full extent of Merrick’s persecution of him. The revelation is found in *The Day of the Scorpion* and is seen through Lady Manner’s eyes from the safety of the observation room. The same situation in the last novel is recounted to Perron. Paul Scott uses this technique with the meeting of Bronowsky, Sarah and Rowan in the nawab of Mirat’s special railway carriage. This technique is again used from Sarah and Bronowsky’s viewpoint in the second novel, but over five hundred pages later, in the last novel, through Rowan’s eyes. The addition of an extra dimension enriches the situation under analysis by exploring more of its possibilities, adding to the fullness of the developing picture. This shaped the structural integration of separate novels into one literary concept. The novelist creates an opulent gallery of imagined characters and of the relationship between the two races. His novels
offer interesting studies of India at a period, which was crucial for both the rulers and the ruled. Scott as a master of his craft portrays the social background that emerged during British Raj. The writer set out some ten years after independence to write four novels on the British in India. The narrator captures the events, people, places, etc., and presents his dehistorisation.

Scott attempts to add depth and understand to the narrative describing something quite different. An example of this technique is found in the first novel, *The Jewel in the Crown*, when the stranger explores the MacGregor House. He notices the size of the rooms, and the idea occurs to him that “human thought is in the same danger as an escaped canary would be, wheeling up and up, round and round, fluttering in areas of shadow and in crevices you can imagine untouched by any human hand” (p. 95). The narrative follows the same course as the frightened bird, running against walls, probing the darkness in a desperate search for the freedom of the outside air. This is the basic reason for the introduction of the English stranger, with whose unassuming presence we come to share our discoveries and a natural developing sense of the elusive truth.

Sister Ludmilla is described remembering the events of the Bibighar from the bed where she now lies, a blind old woman, eager to appease the curiosity of the stranger. Reid’s memoirs are set out in unpublished book from (evidence in documentary form); and Robin White’s account is presented as a series of ‘written and spoken comments’ under the direction of the strength of the illusion of reality in the novel. Through the enquires of the stranger, various characters are invited to contribute. Sister Ludmilla’s intimate knowledge of the incident in the Sanctuary sets the worlds of Kumar and Merrick in collision. Daphne’s narrative is infused with a warm mixture of love, humour
and poignant hopelessness. She displaces an articulate awareness of things, both great and small, easily felt but not so easily expressed. For instance, she is sorry for the effect her behaviour has had on Lady Manners. Daphne also regrets that even her apology is inadequate because she cannot be there herself to make it seem human and immediate. Based on violation Daphne, who was just been raped herself sees the relationship between India and England. Daphne despairs of certain character traits in both nationalities: the arrogance of the British and the “indifference of one Indian for another”. The rape has alerted Daphne to the ironies around her, the hopelessness of the British presence in India and the unredeemable nature of her own relationship with Hari. “All that I saw was the danger to him as a black man carrying me through a gateway that opened into the world of white people” (p. 437).

The growth of Daphne’s despair, her search for smiles to explain it more clearly, sets the tone for the rest of The Quartet, and voices (very quietly) Scott’s apparently pessimistic view of the human condition. Her words as she runs from the garden, leaving Hari behind, echo those of Edwina Crane as she cradles Mr. Chaudhuri’s body in the rain, treating a poignantly rhythmic parallel:

I said, “there’s nothing I can do, nothing, nothing,” and wondered where I’d heard those words before, and began to run again, through those awful ill-lit deserted roads that should have been leaded me home but were leading me no where I recognised; into safety that wasn’t safety because beyond it there were the plains openness that made it seem that if I ran along enough that I would run clear off the rim of the world (p. 436).

At the end of the Daphne’s journal and the three letters from Lady Manners to Lili Chatterjee, Scott brings us round in a complete circle to the beginning of the book: “Imagine, then . . .”. The cyclic shape of the first movement is complete and the pattern
is set for the remainder of *The Quartet*. Her death is an indictment of the raj society and of her persecution by the memsahibs - but Scott tempers the sadness with a short epitaph:

Asleep, Barbie no longer dreamed. Her dreams were all in daylight. Do not pity her. She had had a good life. It had its comic elements. Its scattered relics had not been and now can never all be retrieved; but some of them were blessed by the good intentions that created them (p. 396).

Perron adds an extra dimension through a combination of close contact with other characters. He is the medium through which the final rhythms of *The Quartet* are explored, while proving to be a natural source of refuge for Sarah.

Scott had found his peculiar theme overflowing into other and wider channels all the time. Throughout the novels Scott reflects his awareness of the vulgarity and obsolescence of the English middle class. Naik, M.K. in *The Image of India in Western Creative Writing* states on Paul Scott’s style of writing that “They go on the continent or stay at home, but everything his Englishmen and women display that philistinism and complacency which ultimately becomes an inverted shyness -- harness or cold taciturnity as of death itself” (p. 23).

Paul Scott follows the intertwining lives and thoughts of several people through a period of massive turbulence and upheaval in *The Day of the Scorpion*. It is described that “the crumbling of an empire and the changing attitudes discernible in those who—some of them for generations have served it as soldiers and administrators. England is still in command in India, but the war and its outcome are all that have to be lived through before the final with drawl” (*The Times Literary Supplement*, p. 975). Language has an important bearing upon literature. The fact is that thought and expressions are inseparable; the one is made to suit the other.
Sister Ludmilla summarises a narrative technique of *The Quartet* when she says of the Bibighar that it is as if “time were telescoped and space dovetailed” of there being “no definite beginning, no satisfactory end” (p. 344). It becomes difficult to isolate each individual incident from the continuum of the first reading. The feeling is similar to that experienced by Sarah as she tries to remember the events of the summer after Susan’s wedding: “She found it difficult later to remember things in the order they happened. There was a scene in which they became interchangeable” (p. 344). The first interrogation scene at Kandipat and its effect is different. For instance, when one knows that Rowan is feeling from the description in the last novel. The scene of discovery is lessened, but as if to compensate, the awareness of depth and intensity is deepened. Molly Mahood is right when she describes how the rhythms of *The Quartet* are evoked in the Gaffur poem at the end of the last novel, *A Division of Spoils*. The last stanza contains a symbolic transcription of the three main sacrifices of the tetralogy:

Fleeting moments: these are held a long time in the eye, The blind eye of the ageing poet, so that even you, Gaffur, can imagine in this darkening landscape the bowman lovingly choosing his arrow, the hawk outpacing the cheetah, (The fountain splashing lazily in the courtyard), the girl running with a deer (p. 8).

The bowman is Philoctetes, or Hari; the hawk evokes memories of Ahmed and his death on the train; and the girl is Daphne, running with the deer as she ran from the shadows in the Bibighar Gardens in the opening sentence of *The Raj Quartet*.

“For the long-serving British family, the Laytons, the political and social ramifications are immediate, disturbing and tragic. Some, like Ronald Merrick, believe that true intimacy between the races is impossible; others such as Sarah Layton, struggle to come to terms with their Anglo-Indian past”([www.randomhouse.co.nz](http://www.randomhouse.co.nz)). With growing
confusion and bewilderment, the British are forced to confront the violent and often brutal years that lie ahead of them.

**Violence and Brutality**

The ‘real’ imprisonment of Hari is symbolic of the imprisonment of ‘anglicised’ India as he is the epitome of Lord Macaulay’s dream of a ‘brown’ Englishman. His love affair with Miss Daphne Manners ends up in an unfortunate event of rape, for which Ronald Merrick, a police officer jilted previously by Daphne, arrests him as one of the suspects. During the interrogation in Kandipat jail the prejudiced Captain Rowan in the presence of Lady Manners reviews the Bibighar Case. The picture of Hari Kumar is drawn imaginatively, in the following words:

At first she did not detect it—there was no sound of it expects . . . this curious unemotional expulsion from the deep set eyes of the rivulets that coursed down his cheeks . . . She had a sudden, astonishingly strong compulsion to touch him. No one ever cried for Daphne herself; and this one person beside herself she could not reach. Between them there was a panel of thick glass and downwardly directed slats of wood and metal. The barrier that separated them was impenetrable. It was as if Hari Kumar were buried alive in a grave she could see down into but could not reach into or even speak to, establish a connection with of any kind (pp. 292-293).

A rare moment between an Indian and a Britisher pictures a deep love and sympathy unknown to themselves. Hari Kumar’s tears for Daphne are his tears for the England he had loved and lost and lady Manners tears for Hari are tears for the whole of India, which her niece loved. Because of the physical and the social barriers, Hari Kumar and Lady manners cannot reach each other to express their love. She realises the inhumanity of the Raj which punishes Hari Kumar for his love. While going out of the
jail, Lady Manners feels that she is heading herself towards her own ‘grave’ (p. 307).

“Her death foreshadows the death of the Raj itself” (Badigar, p. 60).

Scott ironically addresses Mildred as a ‘creature’ that exemplifies the moral degradation of the ruling class in British India. Mildred’s adultery almost runs parallel to her daughter’s seduction by Clark. The repeated scenes of abduction and seduction suggest that the individuals be caught up in the circle of passion’s fire, which drives them towards moral disintegration. Another dominant metaphor which supports and amplifies the significant recurrent symbol of the prison is the ‘circle of fire’. Scott uses the recurrent symbol of the christening shawl of butterflies with all these different sorts of imprisonment in which the raj has sent itself. It is decorative cloth used to wrap around the baby at the time of christening. This symbol of imprisonment is exactly similar to the symbol of the cage of stuffed birds of paradise in The Birds of Paradise (1962). Aunt Mabel tells Sarah that Claudine, a blind and poor relation, made it. Scott describes the situation as follows:

Sarah moved her hand under the lace. Astonishing. There was a motif of butterflies. They were alive, fluttering above her hand. ‘It was an old chateau. Very old.’ ‘Where her family lived?’ ‘Yes. There was a tower.’ A pause.’ She lived there. An old woman making lace. She was blind. She’d made the lace all her life. I think she was a poor relation or an old retainer . . . Claudine made it, you tell from the butterflies (p. 356).

He continues:

So we climbed the tower and went into the room right at the top where she lived and worked. She ran her fingers over the lace, and put her hand under it, like you’re doing and said ‘Oh, oui, pauvre papillon. C’est un de mes prisonniers.’ And then something I didn’t understand, but which they told me meant her heart bled for the butterflies because they could never fly out of the prison of the lace and make love in the sunshine. She could feel the sunshine on her hands but the hands wove nothing but a prison for God’s most delicate creatures’. Gently Sarah withdrew her hand. The butterflies were still’ (p. 356).
The illness and downfall of the empire are significant in the images of Perron and Pervis’s madness and nauses. On their arrival in India both Perron and Pervis get a feeling of nausea. Both represent the changed attitude of the new generation of the British in England that India is the whiteman’s burden. Their illness, too, is the illness of the raj, as is made plain in the metaphorical passage given below:

Of strong constitution himself, Perron, who had not maintained his health in India without almost valetudinarian attention to the medicinal needs of his body, had even so not been free of the shortness of temper that was one of the side effects of an overworked and easily discouraged digestive system. The insight this had given him into the possibility important part or chronic diarrhea in the bowls of the raj was one of the few definite academic advantages he felt he had gained by coming to India (p. 25).

The humiliation inflicted by Merrick on Khan, an INA soldier, which drives him to hanging himself to death. The uneasiness of Pervis increases to such an extent that he too ultimately commits suicide.

The degeneration of the Raj, as Scott visualises, is mainly a case of moral degeneration. Perron gives a clear picture of the homosexuality of the British soldiers in the barracks of Pankot Rifles, as he records in his personal diary:

I indicated the Red Shadow (now some ten yards away, starting, wagging his head at me) and explained that he was a notorious thief . . . not touched by hand because he was suffering from a venereal disease now in an advanced, irreversible and highly infectious stage. A situation which made him reckless of his own life and the lives of others, especially the lives of young people (of either sex) under of twenty (p. 241).

Ronald Merrick’s assistant is symbolically addressed as ‘the Red Shadow’ because of his dangerous nature. At the same time, Perron often calls Corporal Dixon “she”. This picture of young boys being supplied to the soldiers suggests the decadent state of army life in India. It resembles the slow death of the raj. Scott suitably
compares Perron’s own empty bed, covered with a mosquito net, to a ‘catafalque’ in the passage quoted below:

There was a smell he hadn’t noticed before. A foul, sweat smell. He glanced round. In a moment or two the smell seemed to have gone. He sat down and poured tea. He glanced up at the rafters; then it a cigarette, smoked the recollection of the smell away. The shrouded bed looked like a catafalque. There was a sudden flash of lightning that lit the bathroom momentarily and distorted the shape of the bed (p. 501).

The smell referred to the rotten anglicised India, which Hari Kumar previously represented. Hari Kumar poses as a wounded Indian hero left behind in an obscure place on account of his suppurating wound. Philoctetus, the Greek warrior’s suppurating wound.

Colonel Layton’s nausea is certainly that of the Raj, because he represents it by being a colonel in the British-Indian Army, a part of the empire. His pocketing of bits of bread to eat later and delayed responses is due to long imprisonment during the war. Sarah aptly brings out his sickening response to the tied-up hunting dogs at Trahearne’s house:

Father was the only person at the table not talking, and at the moment I became conscious of the dogs. I became conscious of this too, aware of the nervous intensity of the silence in which he listened to the cries of those chained animals. He stopped eating . . . It was the effect of the barking dogs that left him unable to eat another mouthful, unable to speak or even to move, because of what the dogs reminded him; what locked up, they represented. But sometimes when the sound of the dogs reached a crescendo his knife and fork shook (p. 353).

The “barking dogs” remind Colonel of the ‘prisoners of war’ and make him recall his dreary experience of the prison camp. They are described as ‘victims of the natural disaster’. Later Mildred requests Colonel Trahearnes’ wife to let them free. Sarah
describes this act as an ‘intimation of freedom’ which may imply the release of the imprisoned Indian leaders during the freedom movement.

The ex-Chief Minister of Ranpur, Mohammed Ali Kasim’s imprisonment is as much metaphorically important as it is historically significant. Being a staunch Congressman, Kasim involves himself in the Quit India Movement and in obedience to Gandhi’s words resigns his portfolio in the provincial government. Governor Malcolm advises Mohammed Ali Kasim to be in the British Government and offered a place in the Secretariat. Kasim disregards the Governor’s words and obeys the nation-wide call to go to prison. Metaphorically it is his love for undivided India that impels him to suffer incarceration for two years. During his imprisonment of course he is separated from his wife and children.

Novels like *Sunlight on the Broken Column* by Attia Hosian, *Waiting for the Mahatma* by R.K. Narayan, *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal either directly starts with the partition holocaust or begins with the Freedom Movement. *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar is the novel which focuses on the terrorist aspect of the Freedom Movement carried on by such historical characters as Subash Chandra Bose, Chandra Shekar Azad and other revolutionaries. Although these characters are not directly presented, the character of Debi Dayal, Shafi Usman and Basu are created as the models of the typical revolutionaries. They had been understanding covert activities like burning down an isolated government building, removing fish plates or railway sleepers, causing derailment of a goods train or destroying the British aeroplanes. Like a true historian, Malgonkar shows convincingly, how the freedom struggle to oust the British from the Indian soil, throwing into shade the basic Indian fight for freedom from the British rule.
Like Paul Scott, Malgonkar involves his characters in such incidents and events that can reveal their individual psychology.

The varied implications of the process give the four books their unity and provide a nexus between the disparate characters. Hari Kumar is himself sexually assaulted by Merrick in the course of his interrogation. Chaman Nahal’s Azadi has rightly been called by Bhatia as “a powerful portrayal of an individual’s torment caused by the workings of certain historical forces” (p. 229). The novel not only exacts the hopeful dawn of Indian independence and the tragedy of the partition, the mass massacres and the vast influx of refugees, but also weaves these important historical events within the fabric of a fictional narrative, describing the family members of Lala Kanshi Ram.

Scott actually uses his rape and its aftermath as a metaphor of divide and rule. The Hindu boys who are flogged, fondled and framed by the British are also given beef disguised as mutton by their Muslim warders. An author who sought merely to counterfeit Forster would not attempt the ramifications of this blasphemy (which recalls the British sponsored dietary violations leading to the 1857 Mutiny). Some phrases are common to both. For instance, “Bridge Party” occurs in both Forster and in The Day of the Scorpion. It means not a card game, but an official, sponsored mingling of English hosts and Indian guests. It conjures up appalling scenes of obligatory hospitality and contrived politeness, but it was obviously common colonial argot and therefore available to both authors. Like Scott, Forster was preoccupied by the Amritsar massacre, which actually occurred between the time of his trip and publication of the novel.

The rough treatment of Marcella Sherwood brought out the beast in General Dyer in case of Amritsar. He commanded the floggings and the shootings as well as issued the
order that all Indians traverse the street where it happened on their hands and knees. Edwina Crane, the missionary lady who is ill-used by the rioters in *The Jewel in the Crown*, is told by their leader that he will not rape her because he would not ‘waste his strength and manhood on such dried up old bag of bones.’ Daphne, too, is unmistakably depicted as plain and awkward. This must owe something to the famous court scene in *A Passage to India* where the prosecutor, Mr. McBryde, gives his opinion that the dark skinned desire the fair, but never vice versa. Forster and Scott employ rape as a literary metaphor. Turton, the District Collector, remarks in *A Passage to India*. Scott’s portrayal of Sarah and the Layton family, as well as in his careful depiction of Daphne is faith to Forster as well as to history on this point. The political context of *The Raj Quartet* is strikingly more modern than that of *A Passage to India*, but here again Scott has borrowed in order to build. He actually sets himself to answer the question that Forster poses on his penultimate page of the novel where Aziz exclaims:

> Clear out, all you Turtons and Burtons. We wanted to know you ten years back - now it’s too late. If we see you and sit on your committees, it’s for political reasons, don’t make any mistake . . . Clear out, clear out, I say. Why are we put to so much suffering? We used to blame you, now we blame ourselves we grow wiser. Until England is in difficulties we keep silent, but in the next European war-aha, aha! Then is our time . . . “Who do you want instead of the English? The Japanese?"

The ‘jeered’ is perfect - Fielding fancies he has asked a clever and unanswerable question. Scott has now managed to answer for a book published in 1924 that was not a bad pre figuration. The English distrust of the educated class in which they are supposed to take pride and the paltriness of their justice when they’re own caste is threatened. Scott took the English experience in India up to the conclusion that Forster could only
anticipate. In the course of doing so, he created some imperishable moments and characters.

Christopher Hitchens in *A Sense of Mission: The Raj Quartet* opines that:

“The British came to the end of themselves as they were,” made a point that is easily overlooked. In its post imperial mode, Britain is often described by reformers as ‘living on borrowed time.” For all its attempt at conveying a sense of urgency, the phrase has rather a comfortable ring to it; redolent of some dowager in Brighton with expensive ailments and an income from a principal which, however depleted, will nonetheless last her time. The achievement of Scott is to have shown how much of that “borrowed time” belonged to other people (p. 126).

Scott takes the commonplaces of Anglo-Indian literature, the motifs and the myths, and reveals their inadequacy for a writer after decolonisation: particularly a writer whose concern is to dramatise the actual moment of decolonisation. Most importantly, it jolts the reader out of any complicity with the generic traditions bred by previous fictions. Thus, *The Day of the Scorpion* opens with a modern-day view of the British administrative centre, Ranpur. An example of the wholesale transplanting of English values and characteristics typical of imperial settlement occurs not only in the complex, hierarchical system of administration set up. But also in the reported description of Ranpur as ‘Aldershot with trees planted’, each road and building having, “an air of being turned inwards on itself to withstand a siege” (p. 11). However, such transplanting is reported to be less striking than the hurried vacation of such towns by the colonials after the Second World War. Civic buildings such as Government House are less impressive than the sense that in places likes Ranpur, ‘the British came to an end of themselves as they were’. And the ‘humpy graves’ in the cemetery of St Luke’s record the early demise of many colonial settlers, ‘with all that this suggests in the way of unfinished business’ (p. 12). The Layton family, who comes to personify the life and sense of mission in
Pankot continue to maintain their status in the strict, regimental hierarchy which characterises the life of the womenfolk too. While her husband is a prisoner of the Japanese, Mildred Layton upholds the increasingly hollow convention of matriarchal visits to the wives of her husband’s native troops. In this atmosphere, Scott constantly refers to such gestures as ‘performance’, a sense of going through certain preordained, yet meaningless motions. The Anglo-Indians are aware that such motions are meaningless: from the detached Mabel to Mildred’s daughter Susan who garbs of the perfect memsahib. The Laytons hold the imperial fort. Scott forces his characters to compare the prison where they live unto the world of imagined former glories and legendary feats of bravery and sacrifice. Through the words repeatedly used to define them they become representative of types of Englishness. Such a method here becomes a radical, disruptive tactic, running contrary to the source of power or, perhaps, reflecting the breakdown of that power.

Lady Manners, in the first novel, *The Jewel in the Crown* and Mabel Layton, in *The Day of the Scorpion* has one important thing in common. They both belonged very much to the Raj before making a conscious decision to turn their backs and walk away. After the Bibighar affair, Lady Manners feels bound by loyalty and love to look after Daphne’s child and immerse her in a dignified and silent understanding of an alien country. As she prepares to leave Srinagar, the hawkers come round her houseboat to tempt her making a final purchase. She allows herself to be tempted, and gives her custom to a man who sold her something three years before, watching “his touchingly dishonest eyes whenever he looked up to emphasise the truth of the lies he was telling her” (p. 51).
Mabel’s turning took place many years earlier at the time of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre when she refused to contribute to General Dyer’s pension fund. Instead she sent one hundred pounds to the fund for the Indian widows and orphans. From that moment, her life becomes internalised as she refuses to pander to social convention, ending her days tending the roses in the garden of Rose Cottage in a “celebration of the natural cycle of seed, growth, flower, decay, seed,” (The Towers of Silence, p. 207). The irony of her situation is left unstated, whereas Lady Manners underlines the irony of her own by placing an announcement of the birth of Parvati underneath the death of Daphne’s death in the paper. Manners also take pains to observe the tradition of signing the book at Flagstaff House in Pankot. The most significant thing she does is to effect Kumar’s release from goal. Bibighar affair she hears in the prison confirms what she has already from Daphne’s journal, and strengthens her resolve to end her association with a regime that has caused herself and other innocent people so much suffering:

But it isn’t the best we should remember . . . We must remember the worst because the worst is he lives we lead, the best is only our history, and between our history and our lives there is this vast dark plain where the rapt and patient shepherds drive their invisible flocks in expectation of God’s forgiveness (p. 315).

The two most obvious victims of The Quartet are Hari Kumar and Daphne Manners, identified as such by Lady Manners as she watches Kumar weep for niece in the Kandipat goal:

She opened her eyes again. The twin rivulets gleamed on his prison cheeks, and then the image became blurred and she felt a corresponding wetness on her own-tears for Daphne that were also tears for him; for lovers who could never be described as star-crossed because they had had no stars (p. 302).
Daphne describes in her journal how the black man-white girl relationship remained taboo, and how this per and Hari outside the protection of the Raj over the rape. In addition to being black, Hari’s main problem is his complete loss of identity on arrival in India, a loss so complete that he becomes invisible even to his best friend. He is unable to speak the language, feels an Englishman’s sense of disorientation at being suddenly immersed in an alien culture, but is unable, because of his colour, to take advantage of the few measures white people take to prevent their sense of identity. Scott’s choice of name for Hari Kumar is very important. ‘Hari’ in Sanskrit is ‘Vishnu’, as in ‘harijan’, people of Vishnu, or untouchable; Scott therefore gives an inherent indication of Kumar’s destiny. A social outcast in a foreign land: “his father had succeeded in making him nothing, nothing in the black town, nothing in the cantonment, nothing even in England because in England he was now no more than a memory” (The Jewel in the Crown, 254).

Scott’s prose style is objective and it includes copious details and explanations. As Allen, Walter, an English critic and novelist, in The English Novel says about Paul Scott that

Paul Scott makes use of the ‘flashback which is a theatrical and cinematographic device. “This technique is often of great interest and complexity, in its use of flashback and multiple time-sequence. This technique enables the writer to decline incidents, which occurred prior to the opening scene of a book. The use of this device upsets the chronological order of events. The story does not move uniformly forward in time, but travels back in the past at one or more stages and reappears in the present. Recollections, narrations and dream sequences and reveries are the various devices used by a writer to depict past incidents. This technique is used most skillfully” (p. 355).
Paul Scott has made subtle use of the technique to enable the reader to enter the inner life of a character straightaway and to know his thoughts as they arise in his mind in various parts of his novels. According to Dorothy Van Ghent,

this technique is a modification of the subjective point of view. It is not a departure from traditional convention, for even Fielding used this point of view when he wanted to show ‘from the inside’ how a character’s mind worked. But it is an employment of the subjective point of view throughout the entire novel - instead of sporadically, as in the older English novels and it follows more devious and various paths of consciousness than traditional novelists were concerned with (p. 267).

Paul Scott uses the device by which thought associations are rendered in a considerably logical progression. On occasions unsparing in its study of personal dramas and racial differences, *The Raj Quartet* is at all times profoundly humane, not least in the author’s capacity to identify with a huge range of characters. It is also illuminated by delicate social comedy and wonderful evocations of the Indian scene, all narrated in luminous prose.

**Conclusion**

The Bibighar case was at the centre of *The Jewel in the Crown*, the first novel in Paul Scott’s *The Raj Quartet*. In *The Day of the Scorpion*, Ronald Merrick sees opportunity in World War-II to put the case behind him and try to reinvent him by joining the army. Despite of setbacks, his Merrick’s ruthless ambition to rise above humble origins has not eased. He still sees in colonial India the opportunity for someone like himself to enjoy certain superiority and the potential to rise even further in social rank. Merrick takes the opportunity meeting Teddie, and through him the Layton family.

The members of the Raj’s like Sarah, Susan, Mohammed Ali Kasim, Captain Teddie, Colonel Layton, Ronald Merrick and Sarah Layton are all caught up in their
circles of fire. As a symbol of creation (i.e. love) as well as of destruction (i.e. death) the
author uses the archetypal image of fire.

The title of the novel comes from a memory from the sister’s childhood, being
shown a scorpion placed within a Ring of Fire. The scorpion appeared to sting itself to
death. They saw this event differently; perhaps its fate was something else. As the
scorpion encircled by a Ring of Fire stings itself to death, so does the British Raj hasten
its own destruction when threatened by the flames of Indian independence. His
imaginative stamina copes unlaboriously with a very large enterprise. *The Towers of
Silence* (1971) follows on from the story line in *The Day of the Scorpion.*