CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
The historical novel brings the past close to us and allows us to experience its real and true being. ... The historical novel has to demonstrate by artistic means that historical circumstances existed in precisely such and such a way. What in Scott has been called very superficially "authenticity of local colour" is in actual fact this artistic demonstration of historical reality. It is the portrayal of the broad living basis of historical events in their intricacy and complexity in their manifold interaction with acting individuals... ... Scott portrays the great transformations of history as transformations of popular life... But what appears to be a formal-aesthetic or, if one likes, literary-historical matter in fact goes far beyond aesthetics or literary history. ... In their experience of history, in their concrete and living regard for history, Scott and the other classics of the historical novel are much nearer to the real life of the people. ... History for Scott means in a very primary and direct way: the fortunes of the people. His first concern is the life of the people in a given historical period... Both Scott and Tolstoy created characters in whom personal and social-historical fates closely conjoin. ... This indirect contact between individual lives and historical events is the most decisive thing of all. For the people experience history directly. History is their own upsurge and decline, the chain of their joys and sorrows.

- Georg Lukács
The Historical Novel

The historical novel should be just such a novel of manners as a contemporary might have written... Being fiction, it should not consist of history or pretended history... The historical novelist produces an authentic picture of life as it was.

- Ernest A. Baker
Of all the forms of literature, the novel is closest to life in the sense that the drama of life that is continually being enacted on the stage of the world is at once mirrored in fiction in an intimate way. All art explores reality and so does the novel. But it is the exploration of living reality of the everyday life that we have in the novel. When Whitman said, "This is no book / who touches this touches a man", he was only suggesting how the novel grows out of the soil of life, and moves very close to the living reality. It must throb with life.

The age makes us what we are. And if we have to have the image of our own age even in order to understand ourselves better, there is no more immediate avenue than the novel. That is precisely the reason why even the historical fiction presents, at times, clearer and more real historical perspective than history, thus vindicating Aristotle who affirms that "Poetry is higher and more philosophical than history". Aristotle as we know used poetry in a much larger context than what the term ordinarily connotes within narrow semantic bounds. Take, for instance Sir Walter Scott's
historical novels. Making an allowance for his abundant fictitious treatment one certainly gets a better historical view of the history of England in his works of fiction than revealed in many drab and dull history books.

Marxism influenced our approach to history in a good way drawing inspiration from Hegel. It got more concerned with people than historical character who were the protagonists. He saw "the total life of humanity as a great historical process". (1) Even Sir Walter Scott installed as his protagonists imaginary characters rather than the historical ones. For, after all the historical novel is primarily fiction and if the historical dialectics centre round people and not personalities, as a natural corollary fictitious characters dominate the historical novel:

In Scott's most important novels historically unknown, semi-historical or entirely non-historical persons play leading role. Think of Vich lan Vohr in Waverley, and Burley in Old Mortality, Cedric and Robin Hood in Ivanhoe, Rob Ray and so on. (2)

2 Ibid., p.38.
The best characters of Sir Walter Scott are those who in words of Ernest A. Baker come out of his "teeming brain". Even during the XIX century the historical novel largely tended to be an extension of the XVIII century realism. The structure of the novel then came to be historical whereas for people or characters mythical.

The historical novel as a genre is the XIX century product, the post-French Revolution phenomenon. And that is why even Sir Walter Scott's historical novels tend to be an extension of the XVIII century English realism rather than literal approaches to history. Georg Lukacs in his famous book The Historical Novel brings home the point that is quite relevant to our understanding of Paul Scott's vision as a historical novelist.

Paul Scott, more than any other contemporary novelist, native or foreign, was interested in the contemporary historical events in our subcontinent. Maybe, he found the fall of British Empire in India as intriguing and disturbing as the decline and fall of Roman Empire or even more so. But Paul Scott is not a historian; he is an artist. He found
the liquidation of Raj and the events preceding and following our freedom at midnight extremely interesting raw material for his creative experiments. He put no gloss on the historical moments, nor did he twist or distort them to quench our imperial prejudice. He was endowed with, what Lionel Trilling calls, liberal imagination. With impartiality of a Toynbee he views the fall of the Empire, and the disintegration of the subcontinent under its tottering impact. His vision is indeed historical but more than that it is the imaginative vision of an artist, who while reproducing and restructuring history structures up immediate reality. The result is, without favour or fear, without love or hate, he imaginatively reconstitutes historical reality in his novels dealing with the Raj and we have the historical vision of an artist filtered through imagination.

We are too close to the time and space chosen by Paul Scott to be able to see it in proper perspective. But here is a novelist who views in an intimate and cool light of imagination a most turbulent and critical phase in the history of
both the rulers and the ruled of the subcontinent. What a fall was there? The fall of even Roman Empire did not have the kind of political and historical and human spin-off as the fall of British Empire, or the consequent disintegration of the subcontinent scrambling out of centuries of bondage. What is significant is the way the novelist has handled and treated his raw material. The Indian phase of Paul Scott reveals abundantly not only his art but also his vision, which was not without the influence of a Gibbon or a Toynbee. We can have here history cast in a mould of fiction. But because of its utmost immediacy, the texture of history does not tend to acquire the degree of actual historicity, as that of imaginary fiction so far as the people and the plots are concerned. One on the surface gets an impression that here is a fictiondom peopled by the dream children of the novelist. But on close and critical study, one must see a happy blending of facts and fiction, art and history. History acquires a significant place in Paul Scott's fiction particularly when his characters are largely fictitious and not real.)
But the characters like those of Sir Walter Scott are not free. They are almost exclusively products of their heredity, their environment, and their profession; they are dominated by these influences. (3)

Paul Scott shows his characters caught in the "cycle of inevitability" of history. In fact history is a protagonist here incidently shaping individual destinies while making or marring the destinies or nations and people. What we have here is not only the image of India but also the vision of the novelist.

Paul Scott has written ten novels with Indian background. Four out of these form a set and are known as The Raj Quartet. Like Jean Christophe of Romain Rolland, The Raj Quartet is a roman-fleuve (novel of sequence). This set of four novels has historical background. The scale is epic. There the author has set a large number of characters against the background of World War II, Indian struggle for independence, and finally the crumbling of the Indian Empire and the partition of India.

We may approach *The Raj Quartet* from many angles. One of the most obvious is to see it as a study of the British people in India just before Indian independence and the reaction of the Indians. *The Raj Quartet* throws light on the relationship of Englishmen and the Indians on the one hand, and Hindus and Muslims on the other, as well on the freedom of the subcontinent and the trauma gave to the British, Hindus, Muslims and Anglo-Indians.

In responding to a work of art and criticising it the intentions of the artist should not be ignored. For, that furnishes the reader with a vantage position of approach. Paul Scott concluding *The Raj Quartet* bears out the critics who estimate him as a historical novelist thus:

> A Division of the Spoils is the last in a sequence of four novels about the closing years of British rule in India. The characters were imaginary. So were the events. The framework was as historically accurate as I could make it. (4)

In *The Raj Quartet* what Lukacs calls the "public theme" - the last days of the British Raj - is presented in terms of a number of personal histories,

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4 *A Division of the Spoils*, p. 599.
private themes, each having specific moral
significance. But the historical background looms
large on the fate of the chief characters.

In order to understand and evaluate Paul
Scott's vision of India, it is necessary to
understand and estimate him as a historical
novelist. For an artist's vision is an integral
part of his art. In one of the novels he makes
one of the characters say that:

History was a sum of situations whose
significance was never seen until long
afterwards because people had been afraid
to act them out. They couldn't face upto
their responsibility for them. They
preferred to think of the situation they
found themselves in as a part of a general
drift of events they had no control over,
which meant that they never really understood
those situations, so in a curious way
the situation did become part of a general
drift of events. (5)

At another place his Major Tippit says:

I'm a historian, really. The present does not
interest me. The future even less. Only
through art and contemplation of the past
can man live with man. (6)

It appears that in The Raj Quartet Paul Scott has
tried to point out that the situations and incidents

5 The Day of the Scorpion, (London: Mayflower, 1970),
pp. 306-7.

6 Ibid., p. 36.
leading to the independence and the division of the country, were a result of general drift in which the parties shirked their responsibility. Because of the closeness of the period, people have failed to see the significance of the events that took place between 1939 and 1947.

Paul Scott has presented man against an historical background and has tried to understand him in terms of art. But man still remains a mystery. The artist is conditioned by the limitations of his medium. Paul Scott tends to seek in history an answer to man's actions and thus he attempts to probe the mystery of man. That is why he makes Barbara Batchelor read from Emerson:

"Man is explicable by nothing less than all his history". (7)

For a novelist it is impossible to present the whole history of man. He can take a period of crisis and there depict man in action. Paul Scott has selected the crucial years in the history of the sub-continent — when everything was in a terrible flux. In the period of crisis, various human

beings are shown reacting to the events - historical as well as personal. While doing that, in the tradition of Erasmus and other Renaissance humanists, Paul Scott gives the highest place to the individual. For him an individual is a world in himself. Again he makes one of his characters re-echo Emerson:

He should see that he can live all history in his own person... He is greater than all the geography and all the governments of the world. (8)

Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man". Centuries of man's existence has made man richer in experience. Man has progressed much, and in his subconscious he has the experience of the whole history. Individual men not only constitute but also represent mankind. In The Towers of Silence Barbara Batchelor reads from Emerson:

'If the whole of history is one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience. There is a relation between the hours of our life and centuries of time.' (9)

So Paul Scott has chosen the historical novel to interpret man's experience.

8 The Towers of Silence, p.94.
9 Ibid., p.77.
Many writers have tried to explain important landmarks of human history in terms of cause and effect. But all historical events cannot be rationalized in this way. In history there are no ifs and buts. Of the beginnings and ends of historical events one cannot be definite as it is a continuous process. Paul Scott remarks to this effect:

That given the material evidence there is also in you an understanding that a specific historical event has no definite beginning, no satisfactory end. (10)

This is very apt in relation to the history of this subcontinent. It is very difficult to locate the causes as well as the beginning of the process of the 'division' of the subcontinent. In 1947 some people thought that the trauma was over but it was not a 'satisfactory end' and we saw in 1971 a further division after harrowing experience on the part of the people of Bangladesh. Even now who can say that it is the satisfactory end? He selects the particular historical background to prove his own thesis that "a specific historical event has no definite beginning no satisfactory end".

Like Thomas Hardy, Paul Scott also seems to think that "If a way to Setter there be, it exacts full look at the Worst". This polarity is what history offers. As Lady Manners remarks:

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. (11)

The author thinks that history ignores the worst - the suffering of the individual. It is the novelist who reminds the worst, Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet deals with the worst lives lived on a "dark plain". The spotlight is focussed on Kumar, Manners, Ahmed Kasim, Susan, Sarah, Crane, Mabel, Mildred, Barbara, Merrick. They are the representatives of innumerable unknown individuals who suffered and hence have no place in the history of the time. But Paul Scott presents those individual lives. He shows the patient shepherds - Mabel Layton, Barbara, Mr. White, Lady Manners and M.A.Kasim - "who expect of God's forgiveness".

All this has been explored by Paul Scott from the view of a liberal historian. He is free from

11 The Day of the Scorpion, p.315.
prejudice and partiality, and to a great extent
he follows that tradition so tightly that he
comments ironically:

That liberal instinct which is so dear to
historians that they lay it out like a
guideline through the unmapped forests
of prejudice and self-interest as though
this line, and not the forest, is our
history. (12)

Due to his liberalism and objectivity the different
types of characters share our sympathy.

Paul Scott's time sense is akin to T.S. Eliot's
Four Quartets:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

He presents the present moment as stemming from the
past. Thus time has no hiatus, it has a subtle
and integral continuity.

He has used the characters and events as the
essential links of the chain that connects the
present with the past. This is done competently by
Paul Scott. His novels clearly portray India,
the present day India with its past. The present
day problems and situations on the subcontinent

12 A Division of the Spoils, p. 301.
are a direct and general result of the happenings in and around India between 1939 and 1947. The 'Pandora's box' is the spoils of the division of the subcontinent.

The historical novel has always been a mass experience. It is accessible to us without extensive learning. It needs no historical frame of reference on the part of the reader. So is the case with the novels of Paul Scott. There we find ourselves at home. The world that he presents is quite a recognizable one. Especially for the people of the subcontinent, it is a reminiscence. On the subcontinent the sad experience of the partition has been so agonising and extensive that it is easily within our ken. The nightmare of partition has inhibited the very core of Indian memory. Paul Scott's narration of Quit India movement is so vivid that we ourselves feel as if we were moving along with the characters and sharing their experience.

The four novels deal with the grand theme of the end of the British Empire in India. In fact The Raj Quartet is a memorial to the closing
years of the British Raj in India:

Taken together the four volumes should amount to a veritable Taj Mahal of a book: massive and yet specious, a monument eloquently expressive of affection and grief. ... The sequence of four novels is a grand elegy on the decline and fall of the Indian Empire. (13)

The Raj Quartet depicts India in the forties:

When, after several centuries, British influence was coming to a precipitated end, leaving the Indians alone with their ancient complex and still unresolved pursuit of unity and nationhood. For dramatic paradox and the clash of destinies on a personal and world scale, this peculiar period can hardly be equalled in contemporary history, because it encompassed World War II, the Japanese invasion of Burma and threat to India... the imprisonment of prominent Indians for rebellion against the British raj or for traitorous dealings with the Japanese enemy, the beginning of British withdrawal from the subcontinent, and the imminent tragic partition. The web of events in modern India is, the fact not only so intricately interwoven but so extended in scope that one can but marvel at the controlled manner in which Mr. Scott handles the shifting focus of his wide angle lens. (14)

The Raj Quartet not only tells the tale of Miss Manners and Hari Kumar but also tells the history in a multiple perspective: the recent history of Hindus, Muslims, and British caught individually

13 Review in Times Literary Supplement.
and collectively in a fatefully contiguous web of historic circumstances.(15)

The author tries to unravel and reweave the threads of recent events and their conflicting interpretations. This work is

a painstakingly objective record of individual and collective destinies in a period of cyclic decline and fall.(16)

The Observer described Paul Scott as the "prose poet of the raj in decline". Reviewing The Jewel in the Crown Orville Prescott remarked:

Rarely in modern fiction have so many interesting and even bizarre characters been brought to more intense life. Rarely has a time and a place and a political and social crisis been more brilliantly or more dispassionately described. Rarely have the sound and smells and total atmosphere of India been so evocatively suggested. So comprehensive is Mr. Scott's scope, so detailed his focus, so intimately authoritative his knowledge that reading his novel becomes a major experience and a prolonged one.(17)

In the sequence of four novels "private doubts and public menace fuse into a Wagnerian atomosphere".(18)

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16 Ibid.
Not only is the theme big but the writer has also tackled it in a big way. The scale of the novels has been so grand that some reviewers have compared him with Tolstoy. About his success Ian Hamilton says:

To succeed as he has done with no sacrifice of aesthetic, moral, or technical integrity is a breathtaking accomplishment... The scale and effect are Tolstoian. (19)

Paul Scott brings the past close to us. He treats the transitory problems of the subcontinent in the form of a coherent cycle of novels which would embody the historical necessity of the emergence of modern India and its neighbours. He compresses the events into a brief period, full of big changes, following one another in a rapid succession. He depicts each year of development along its historical atmosphere. Paul Scott depicts with a masterly skill the feelings of Indians and Englishmen during the period.

In no case should Paul Scott be taken as an historical novelist in the sense Sir Walter Scott has been. Paul Scott uses history as a backdrop.

He presents history minus historical figures. The dramatis personae are not taken from the pages of history. The historical incidents loom large behind the back of the characters. The effect of the historical incidents is felt in private lives, both in the outward transformation of life and in the inner change of social moral behaviour. There is a connection between individual lives and historical events. While reading the novels we directly feel history. Paul Scott is successful in creating characters and presenting destinies in which the important social content — problems, movements — finds a direct reflection. He presents history "from below, from the standpoint of popular life".

Like Romain Rolland and Durrell, Paul Scott has drawn a picture of a time, mirroring it in the life and experiences of a few characters. The achievement of the author lies in the effort to show artistically the concrete genesis of the time.

Paul Scott has the historical sense (as defined by T.S. Eliot in a different context) that "involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past"
but of its presence". Paul Scott does what in view of T.S. Eliot a poet should do, i.e. he brings forward "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events". In the novels of Paul Scott history is in a flux, and we realise that:

To be conscious is not to be in time
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered. (20)

In the chapters ahead a detailed analysis is made of how the novelist presents his vision by fusing facts and fiction in his novels and how history clearly impinges on the theme, manners, costumes, psychology and social milieu.

The Raj Quartet is a vast and sprawling roman-fleuve about India. The historical background of the novel is dominated by the non historical characters. Besides The Raj Quartet, The Chinese Love Pavilion, The Alien Sky, The Birds of Paradise and Staying On are also set in India of the same period. Most of the novels revolve round a few

English and Indian characters. Through these novels Paul Scott presents the predicament of his characters in a defined historical context with its inevitable strains and stresses.

The novelist's vision of India is both temporal and spatial. He depicts Indian life and major political events and their effect on the individual life minutely and faithfully. While doing this he interprets the currents of history. This interrelation between history and humanity is at the core of the artist's vision.

The historical background of the novels consists of the establishment of the British rule in India, Jallianwalla Bagh, formation of the Congress ministries in the states, Second World War, Quit India Movement, the Japanese invasion on Burma, INA, the Naval mutiny and finally the division of the subcontinent into two independent states and the forces that led to it.

Like Richard White, Paul Scott can say:

that emotion here precedes the idea, that attitudes select the kind of ideas in question... we are human; we are the slaves of our assumptions,
of time and circumstances, we are the victims of our passions and illusions, and... Have you taken your passions, your illusions, your time, and circumstances into account? (21)

Paul Scott presents the vision of India through its history of colonialism with the help of "emotions, attitudes, and assumptions, illusion and circumstances". He gives a sweeping look at the British Empire in India up to the first two decades of this century. The events after the first World War are analysed in detail. The depiction of historical events is closely linked with the vicissitudes of three families - the Laytons, the Kasim and the Kumars. They do not merely represent the facts of history but also signify them.

It is a coincidence that Sir Walter Scott is the first great British novelist to turn to India for the theme of his novel The Surgeon's Daughter and it is again another Scott - Paul Scott (but he is in no way related to Sir Walter Scott) who turns to India for the raw material of his novels. "India is a true place for a Scot to thrive in", declared Sir Walter Scott in the preface; it is

true for Paul Scott also (but Paul Scott is not a Scot). Like Sir Walter Scott, Paul Scott combines history and humanity in his fictional creation. The historical milieu gives authentic touch, whereas the imaginary characters afford him extraordinary freedom to go to the root of human behaviour. History here does not put confines, it lends authenticity and the touch of reality to his novels without historical characters. It is a way not only to explore a new dimension of history, but also to humanisation of history that we see the strength of Paul Scott's art of fiction.

The novelist's vision finds expression in his *The Raj Quartet*, along with *The Alien Sky*, *The Birds of Paradise* and *Staying On*. He presents imaginary stories with some history in the background. The recent history of India is quite confused, still Paul Scott has tried to steer his course without losing balance. What Lowes Dickinson says of *A Passage to India* "a classic on the strange and tragic fact of history and life called India" is true of the novels of Paul Scott also. Paul Scott's novels could be prescribed for a course in modern
Indian history. In a way Paul Scott has revitalized the recent history of India. He has reconstructed the recent past of India, and while presenting his vision he has been loyal to the historical background.

As in Forster, the theme of Paul Scott's novels sums up everything that is related to India - the problems, the Hindu Muslim problem, the Anglo-Indian problem, the problem of poverty and corruption - but he does not provide a solution. All this is done in a competent way. Just as common English readers learn more of English history from the plays of Shakespeare than books of history, the readers outside India would know more of India and Indian independence movement through the novels of Paul Scott than from the "documents" released by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

It has been the tradition with the historical novelists to present the bygone age as a glorious period of history. They tend to paint a rosy picture of the society of the age. Sir Walter Scott in Kenilworth presents a very beautiful picture of Elizabethan England. It is a poetic presentation of the life of the people of Renaissance England.
But Paul Scott's presentation of India of the forties is not romantic as we are very close to the times and the influence of realism is too much on modern art of fiction. The era is almost the day before yesterday for many readers, and its immediacy hardly leaves any scope for any enchanting presentation. Novelists dealing with bygone ages sometimes touch the border of romance, as it provides an escape from the social attitude, but Paul Scott being a contemporary novelist, goes deep into the social attitude of the people. He uses the esemplasticity of his imagination in the context of history and thereby unfolds the vision of India.

Paul Scott has an advantage over Sir Walter Scott, as Sir Walter Scott dealt with the period that he had not seen - Waverley is dated about sixty years back from the date of its writing. But Paul Scott's scheme is larger as he himself lived in the age he depicts. So his creative part fits roughly in the contemporary state. The historical pattern is fixed in the general scheme while the imaginative art (plastic) in the novels is made in tune with the contemporary world. In this fictional picture of India the important thing is that it can be tallied
with the life of the times and the author is accountable for it, as he claims that "the historical framework is correct". The vision can be recognised, it can be verified. The vision is accounted for, as he depicts things from his own experiences of the time as well as from his esamplastic imagination. India is the centre of his focus. It is contemporaneous, immediate and perceptible. He assembles and arranges his large out\_{chronicle} piecing it together with keen observation and experience. While doing all this the author gives a sense of universal knowledge of the story and the people in it. While he unfolds the story of India through crisis, time flies in the background, and lends it historical colour.

A historical novel need not be a historical treatise:

The Historical novelist produces something that in its own way is history, an authentic picture of life as it was instead of mere romance draped in borrowed trappings.\(^{(22)}\)

So is the case with the novels of Paul Scott. His

historical vision *pervades* the story and the story illustrates the history. *The Raj Quartet* is a historical, political, and contemporaneously relevant novel. While reading *The Raj Quartet* we feel "there and here, then and now". The four novels can be considered as essays on India's struggle for independence like the four *movements* of a symphony. They have symphonic structure. Paul Scott has been extraordinarily scrupulous while selecting his material. With extraordinary boldness he clears off the whole mass of material irrelevant to his artistic needs, choosing only the relevant. This lends a proper focus to his vision of India.

Paul Scott has tried to give a view of Indian Empire and India from the vantage-ground of an imaginary world. Like Tolstoy he presents things in a scenic way to create a vista, to make the scene more perceptible and actively visible. After quoting Emerson that "society is a wave", Paul Scott like a historian, tries to unroll the movement of the waves - the time. The ups and downs of fortunes are the result of actual historical change. In fact the world is in a ceaseless motion
like a "wave", nothing is certain, and wealth, social and political positions are highly unstable. As unstability of fortune occupies an important place in the ancient literature, so is the case with Paul Scott, as he upholds the fall of the Whiteman's burden of civilizing the world.

Through his novels Paul Scott conveys a sense of historical reality. Like King Oedipus there is a doom looming large on the characters - Kasim, Sarah, Susan, Barbie, Crane, Manners, Kumar and others are under a curse. The author presents his vision by presenting a link between his "people" and specific political and economic situations of the Imperial period. He notes artistically the various reactions of the common people - seargents, bearers, Congress leaders, Muslims, Hindus, Anglo-Indians, club secretaries, church officials, missionaries and Govt. officials - to the movement of the time. It is a remarkable achievement of Paul Scott. By presenting characters and events with a historical background, Paul Scott transforms his vision into a concrete one. For a serious student of sociology and history the novels of
Paul Scott presents a serious vision of the society as well as the problems. Here we have history transmuted into art. The imagination of the artist once brings to life the events of history. And they are rendered all the more vivid and engrossing by the introduction of imaginary characters who render history alive by springing to life themselves.

Writing about Tolstoy, Georg Lukács remarks:

He created an historical novel of a unique kind out of the real conditions of life in this transitional period, and only in terms of the most general and ultimate creative principles does it constitute a brilliant renewal and development of Scott's classical type of historical novel. (23)

It is applicable to Paul Scott. Like Tolstoy, he selected the events from the "transitional history" of India. In the manner of War and Peace, The Raj Quartet reflects

the historical concreteness of feelings and thoughts, the historical genuineness of the peculiar quality of reaction in suffering and deeds, to the outer world - all this is on a magnificent level. (24)

In historical novels historical figures play a

24 Ibid., p. 87.
very minor role. Ernest A. Baker writing about Sir Walter Scott remarks:

> The characters that give the novel life are, not Waverley and the two young ladies, but those who gave his inventive powers less trouble because they came, as it were of their own accord, out of his teeming brain.(25)

In such novels we rarely come across a historical figure minutely portrayed. In Tolstoy's *War and Peace* no important part is played by a character from history. Napoleon may be there but his character is neither portrayed nor developed. So is the case with Sir Walter Scott, the principal characters are not from the pages of history. They are always the brain childern of the novelist. In *Kenilworth* we come across queen Elizabeth but the image of the queen is the public image. In *The Heart of the Midlothian* and *Old Mortality* the main characters are fictitious.

Paul Scott had to keep his hands off the historical figures of the time as some of the important people were still alive at the time of the publication of some of the novels. If he had depicted the historical characters there was the danger of injuring the sensibilities of the particular persons. There may be something about Gandhi, Nehru, Sardar Patel and Mountbatten, that is presented in casual

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drawing room talks. In person, we see only Lord Mountbatten landing at port Sweetanham. There Paul Scott presents the scene through the pen of Perron. Some of the historical figures are presented through the cartoons of Shanker, sketching the dignitaries in some symbolic but meaningful situations. All this cannot be treated as the depiction of historical characters. Gandhi's "Quit India" resolution is discussed but the legendary figure never walks in the landscape presented by Paul Scott. So is the case with Netaji Subash Chandra Bose and others. They are not the "dramatis personae" of the novels. Their roles - Netaji in the formation and the exploits of the INA, Sardar Patel in the integration of the princely states - are clearly and objectively reported.

So it is in his Indian phase that we find the essential Paul Scott - a novelist with a vision, and hence the focus here is on Paul Scott's India. The novelist consistently maintains remarkable impartiality and he would fain quote from Lytton Strachey:

Je n'impose rien; Je ne propose rien: J'expose.
(I don't impose nor propose or suggest; but I expose - lay bare the facts).
The image of India as it emerges from the novels of Paul Scott has vital integrity. Even if at times he goes wrong it is not the result of intellectual dishonesty, but of the unconscious lacuna of an outsider's view. It is an integral vision that links the Raj novels in a way they seem to be the different cantos of one epic story, the story of a subcontinent disintegrating under the impact of a falling empire, a most traumatic transition from bondage to freedom. In this way Paul Scott presents recorded as well as "unrecorded moments of history". (25) Like Sir Walter Scott Paul Scott presents life in India as if he had lived through the experience himself, and as sure as a contemporary of all the points of manners, social conditions, sentiments and opinions distinguishing the period from any other. This was the first essential of historical fiction as he conceived it. The next was a sufficiency of human figures, the common herd and a sprinkling of the exceptional, the odd, the outlandish, suited for the comedy of humours, but all recognizably the offspring of that age and no other. (27)

In spite of wholesale fiction that A Tale of Two Cities is, its background has such intimate historicity that Dickens is credited to have drawn his raw material

26 The Jewel in the Crown, p. 358.
from the history of French Revolution that eventually furnished him with the milieu of the novel. (28) Loosely speaking E.M. Forster discusses the problem of putting real people into a book by saying that as characters cannot step out of a book and rub their shoulders with us, the real people also cannot walk into a book. This invisible frontier dividing art and reality has to be reckoned with even by the historical novelist whose first love is fiction not history. And an Arnold Toynbee does not care to write a historical novel and a Paul Scott does not venture to write history. Even then it would be apt to quote from the review of Waverley:

The reviewer (Scott or Erskine) in the article in the Quarterly observers, "If sins against good taste are avoided and a true picture of the age is achieved, the novelist takes his seat on the bench of the historians of his time and country". (29)

28 G. Lukács considers that A Tale of Two Cities is an historical novel. See The Historical Novel, pp. 241-42.