
Tyranny And Rhythm of Those Days in Paul Scott's

A Division of Spoils

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Abstract:

The story, *A Division of Spoils* is set in 1945 and 1947 in several locations throughout India. Paul Scott's use of history provides the relationship between the historical conscience and the creative freedom of literary imagination. *The Quartet* reveals the backdrop of one of the most turbulent periods of social change in the last days of British India. The English do not have real sympathies for the sufferings of the Indians. Scott paints equally harsh pictures of the British attitude to the natives. The central and provincial elections were held in the beginning of 1946 in accordance with the Labour Party's desire to resolve the political crisis in India. The worst communal riot began on 16 August 1946 in Indian history. The relationship between Hari and Daphne is of the relationship between India and England, especially in the way it tries to cross the colour bar and is crushed underneath the weight of prejudice and discrimination. The author describes through cartoons of Halki the various stages in the ultimate retreat of the British. There was an influx of both British and American multinational companies in India during British Raj and after independence. The story covers the decamping of the British.

Key Words: history, turbulent periods, British attitude, cartoons, decamping of the British

Introduction:

The Raj Quartet stands for Scott's vision of the world. "Paul Scott, beginning as an amateurish novelist wrote *Johnnie Sahib* (1952) and *The Alien Sky* (1953) with the conventional idea of the Novel as story, as propounded by E.M Forster, he later developed his own concept of the Novel as Image in *A Male Child* (1956) and *The Mark of the Warrior* (1958). He also published finely honed novels like *The Chinese Love Pavilion* (1960), *The Birds of Paradise* (1962), *The Bender* (1963) and *The Corrida at San Feliu* (1964)"(V.R.Badiger,p.101). These novels embody the inlaid significant symbols. The Raj's nausea and death are continued in the final volume, *The Division of spoils*, Paul Scott's monumental *Raj Quartet*. Scott, being Kipling's and E.M. Forster's successor, concerns himself in *The Quartet*; with the 'closing years of British rule in India' differ in their choice of the period of British-Indian history.

The Quartet charts over an eight years period, the interaction between British Colonials. Many of them are military. The Quartet begins with an assault on an English school teacher and the rape of young English woman, and ends with the boisterous independence of India and its division into two nations, India and Pakistan.

The story, *A Division of Spoils* is set in 1945 and 1947 in several locations throughout India, particularly in an unnamed province of northern India. The capital of the province is Ranpur. The princely state of Mirat is a nominally sovereign enclave within the province. Pankot, a hill station in the province serves as a head quarter for the 1st Pankot Rifles, an important regiment of the Indian Army. The regiment moves to Ranpur during cool season. At Premanagar there is an old fortification that is used by the British as a prison. Muzzafirabad town is the headquarter of the Muzzafirabad guides another Indian Army regiment.

Paul Scott's use of history provides the relationship between the historical conscience and the creative freedom of literary imagination. Scott uses the imprisonment of Congress members and the civil disturbances at the time of partition to frame the narrative. Employing the device of the cartoons Scott presents the situation of August 1947. In an editor's room, guy Perron, an intelligence operative in India Army, comes across a collection of cartoons by

the Cartoonist Halki with brilliant irony the cartoons present portraits of the major political leaders like Jinnah, Nehru and Wavell etc. Paul Scott's association with India began when he first went to India as an N.C.O in 1943 and during his three years stay in this country; he travelled widely acquiring firsthand experience of life in British India during the crucial forties. He writes "A *Division of the Spoils* is the last in the 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. Three return visits to India during the time the sequence has taken to write" (*Author's note and Acknowledgement*)

Turbulent Periods of Social Change:

The Quartet reveals the backdrop of one of the most turbulent periods of social change in the last days of British India. The British Raj gave English people the chance to live and work like a ruling class. British women need social rules to preserve their sense of social unassailability. Hari Kumar's anglicized background alienated him as unacceptable to the British community. Returned home to India, Hari Kumar, attracted by Daphne Manners claimed to be an upper class. When Daphne Manners declares her allegiance to Hari Kumar the power of the taboo to keep the outsider at bay is challenged. These women need social rules to preserve their sense of social impregnability. Lady Manners, though saddened by her niece death, does not condemn Kumar.

Governor Malcolm tells Mohammad Ali Kasim, the nationalist Muslim about the resignation of congress to their ministries. Scott views that Jinnah is responsible for instigating the Indian Muslims and going against the leadership of Gandhi. Scott explains symbolically by cartoon about the detachment of Jinnah from the other congress leaders and his interest in separate state. V.R.Badiger mentions Scott's use of metaphors to complete the picture of the decaying Raj. The massacre of hundreds of Hindus and Muslims is symbolically foreshadowed by the murder of Ahmed Kasim. The recurrent images, symbols and metaphors like the image of dancing Siva, the image of the sleeping Lord Vishnu, the christening shawl of butterflies, the picture of the Jewel in the Crown, the scorpion in the circle of fire, boxes, nets, veils, fireflies, and garden-help create a rhythmic pattern in this epic novel. Scott's artistic casting his novel in metaphorical mould really compels even the eminent critics to consider it to be a great novel of twentieth-century English fiction (p.79).

The Partition remorselessly divided friends, families, lovers and neighbours in both India and Pakistan the images of Gandhi and Jinnah. But by the assessment of the images of

Gandhi and Jinnah differ with their views. Bapsi Sidhwa and Chaman Nahal have shown the similar perspectives on the calamities of vulnerability of human lives. Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* does not uphold the 'Two-Nation Theory' behind the creation of Pakistan. Bapsi does not stress the belief of Pakistani Muslims in the creation of the Pakistan. Sidhwa tried to distort the image of Gandhi. Bapsi tries to idealize Jinnah's image though it is seen that Jinnah is responsible for the partition. *Ice-Candy Man* is far too subtle to state a direct political view. Sidhwa provides an alternative view of Jinnah and appears to be praising him. Sidhwa seeks the artistic imagination to historical consciousness. Sidhwa writes about the way Jinnah has been treated in India and British histories attempting Indian versions of history instead of a Pakistani version: "And today, forty years later, in films of Gandhi's and Mountbatten's lives in books by British and Indian Scholars, Jinnah, who for a decade was known as 'Ambassador of Hindu Muslim unity', is caricatured and portrayed as a monster" (p.160)

Sidhwa's illustration of Gandhi visiting Lahore in history may not be historically accurate but it is fictionally true. In re-imaging Jinnah, Sidhwa displays the important presence of hindsight in her fiction. Scott's final book of the sequence of *The Raj Quartet A Division of Spoils*, deals with the interlocking events by brilliantly drawn threads. The story opens with the historical end of the Second World War. Scott presents a theory of human history returning again and again to the same key events. The narrator dramatized particular events in individual human history folding and tracing outcomes back to their beginnings. Though the characters dominate the story back drop of a world at war is always present.

Tyranny:

The English do not have real sympathies for the sufferings of the Indians. Scott paints equally harsh pictures of the British attitude to the natives when he writes, "The arises of the Suleimans of India exist to be booted by British Seargent, two for the regiment and three for the Raj. And then the women of the Suleimans of India will laugh like drains, the wild dogs of the hills will yelp their satisfaction and there will be peace again" (p.205).

Proper setting in the Quartet talks about fully dramatized lives of many of the characters. Scott is preoccupied with the effect the loss of India had on the Anglo Indian community, on people like the Laytons and the families in whose circles they move in Mayapore, Ranpur and Pankot. The out-break of the world war in 1939 aggravate the Indian situation as the congress ministries resigned in protest on India being dragged into the vortex of war without

consulting its people. Though Bose was elected President of the Congress for the second time, Gandhian wing in the Congress put up so much of opposition that he resigned on 29 April, 1939 and organized Forward Bloc. “Feeling the pulse of time, the Mahatma in October 1940 declared that he had decided to commence resistance to the Governments war efforts. But Subhash Bose felt that Mahatma did not put his heart in the consequent struggle” (*The Indian Struggle*, p. 348).

End to World War II:

New locations are carefully detailed in the last volume of the *Raj Quartet, A Division of the Spoils*. New characters appear and old characters are not permitted to coast along without appropriate change to match the evolving political scene in 1947. It covers the period between the defeats of Germany in May 1945 to the Independence of India in August 1947. With the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 the British were eager to have good-will of the Indians. In March the Cripps Mission arrived in India to secure by negotiations with the Indian political leaders.

Ronald Merrick turned up in Bombay in connection with an interrogation of Havildar Karim Muzzafir Khan. Muzzafir Khan was ex-prisoner of war captured in North Africa. He had come with a letter from Capt. Purvis for the Maharanee and met Bronowsky and Ahmed. Merrick stayed in Bombay with the Graces. Graces were immensely helpful to Perron when Purvis committed suicide.

Merrick waited to see Sarah Layton and her father and the handful of soldiers released from hospital arrived from Delhi on the Ranpur train and found the Colonel “docile, good humoured, quietly intent on the morning papers with their latest reports of the significance of the bomb of ‘devastating power’ which the Americans had dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on Monday morning” (p.230). On the evening of August 14, 1945 things were taking place of much greater consequence in Tokya, where “the Japanese war cabinet, persuaded by the Emporer, had finally decided to ‘bear the unbearable’. In the past week since the incident in Hiroshima and it’s follow-up in Nagasaki it had become obvious to them that the bomb owning governments said unconditional surrender this was precisely what was meant”(p.231) This brought an end to World War II.

Resolving Political Crisis in India:

The central and provincial elections were held in the beginning of 1946 in accordance with the Labour Party’s desire to resolve the political crisis in India. The worst communal riot

began on 16 August 1946 in Indian history. It began in Calcutta but soon spread out to the districts of Noakhali and Comilla (both now in Bangladesh) where a large number of people were killed. This provoked reprisals in Bihar and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had to fly to Bihar to quell the disturbances. The Constituent Assembly met on 9 December, 1946 and elected Babu Rajendra Prasad as its President. The members of the Muslim League had not joined the Constituent Assembly and in the wake of the communal riot, the tensed atmosphere continued. Sir Cyril Radcliffe was appointed to oversee the partition of India. The Indian Independence Bill was passed without dissent in the British Parliament on 1 July 1947 and on the 15th of August of the same year; British rule in India came to an end.

Rhythm of Days:

Sarah Layton is a strong enough character to withstand Merrick although she is unfailingly polite to him. Sarah and Merrick are at opposite ends of Scott's "moral continuum". Merrick exhibits his real nature, his feelings of inadequacy and his shyness to Sarah when she visits him in hospital. Sarah says to her father that she prefers Merrick if he has moral courage instead of physical courage. Merrick chooses Sarah's sister Susan to be his wife. But he enters his chosen family by the back door, for Susan is emotionally unstable, and even Mildred cannot interfere and risk her daughter's sanity. Susan has had a complete mental breakdown after the birth of her son, Edward Bingham. It is this boy whom Merrick really covets. Edward does not threaten Merrick's self-esteem in any way, in fact, the child's admiration and love are a soothing balm to the emotionally scarred Merrick who can relax and be natural with the boy. Susan care for Merrick and cries when she sees his chafed stump of an arm.

Although Merrick becomes socially acceptable by his marriage to Susan, he never receives the social acceptance he really wants. The alienated Merrick becomes a victim of his own paranoia and the extremist Hindu faction which never has allowed him to forget the Bibighar affair. Merrick's resistance is lowered, however, when his Indian persecutors resort to more subtle methods. The new form of persecution plays on Merrick is only being used as a political pawn to be killed at the most expedient moment. The new form of persecution plays on Merrick's repressed weakness, an attraction for handsome Indian boys.

The relationship between Hari and Daphne is of the relationship between India and England, especially in the way it tries to cross the colour bar and is crushed underneath the weight of prejudice and discrimination. Hari's fading into obscurity at the end of the tetralogy

is the only logical thing that could happen to him, living on the memories of an impossible dream that only ever really lived in the vitality of his father's illusion. The only identity he does possess in India is given to him as a prisoner. After his release proves that outside the walls of his confinement there is nothing at all.

Ahmed Kasim is an example of a physical victim of partition, a horrible paradox when one remembers that Independence was supposed to solve the problem and calm the troubles, instead of acting like the opening of what Scott calls 'Pandora's Box'. The writer's sympathies are not only with the Indians but also with the English people who has devoted life's work to the *raj* and are now no longer needed or wanted.

Anil Kumar Verma in his work *Paul Scott: A Critical Study of his Novels* illustrates

In Feb. 1947, Mr. Attlee, Prime Minister of England, declared that the British government would leave India before June, 1948 and Lord Mountbatten was appointed Governor General of India. After prolonged discussion with the Congress and Muslim League leaders, he put forward his famous June 3 plan in which he suggested the partition of the country into India and Pakistan. The scheme was accepted both by the Congress and the Muslim League and on 18th July, 1947, the Indian Independence Act, 1947 was passed. The Act was a great landmark in the Anglo-Indian relations as it marked the ending of the British rule in India. It was recognition of the rights of the Indians to be free but unfortunately it divided India into two parts: India and Pakistan (p.33).

The British Raj with its self-liquidation ceased to exercise its authority in India but left a deep impact on its people.

Political Cartoons:

Incisive humours with a keen political insight are the qualities of a true political cartoonist. Political cartoons, an inseparable aspect of responsible journalism express a wide range of options. Paul Scott has made effective use of such interesting medium of communication in *A Division of Spoils*. The author describes through cartoons of Halki the various stages in the ultimate retreat of the British. Halki is the pseudonym of a young Brahmin cartoonist whose name is Shankar Lal. He is from Punjab but lives in Bombay. One of Halki's cartoons shows Mohammed Ali Kasim leaving the crumbling Muslim League. According to Halik's cartoon, Kasim has left the Congress in the hope of a better political future with the Muslim League. The sun of the hope of an office is rising from behind the crumbling office of the Muslim

League and Kasim has his eyes on it. Halki tries to bring the idea that the partition of the country changes Kasim's allegiance from the Congress to the Muslim League:

Paul Scott states about Sir Winston Churchill in two cartoons of Halki. By cartoons it is understood that the contemporary princes were attempted to be convinced by Churchill not to join the federation of Indian states. Churchill being an imperialist tries to delay Indian independence. Paul Scott illustrates the hypocrisy of Churchill's attitude towards the national movement in India. Churchill celebrated the demise of imperialist Germany and the fall of its dictator but differs in Indian independence. Churchill encourages communal disharmony in India in an attempt to delay the coming of independence. Churchill is being depicted in one of cartoons wearing "a Jinnah-shaped fez" (p.6). Symbolizing the British leader's preference for the Muslim League leader. Thus, by utilizing the Jinnah factor and the princes, Churchill sought to extend British rule in India.

Lord Wavell was replaced by Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India between 1943 and early 1947. The British administrator of India contributed to the ultimate parting of the Hindus and the Muslims and was denounced in the cartoons of Halki. The cartoonist showed special favour to the Muslim League leaders. In March 1945 the Viceroy flew to London and came back with a proposal. The proposal states that all the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council were to be Indians except Wavell and the Commander-in-Chief. The Cabinet Mission also came during the tenure of Lord Wavell's viceroyalty with the plan to constitute a Constituent assembly to frame the Union Constitution. Among others, the Union Constitution was to be framed by members elected "on a communal basis" (Tara Chand, p.418). Paul Scott contributed all these things to the creation of schism in the country. Paul Scott describes a cartoon of Halki on the Wavell theme that neither the congress nor the Muslim League was enthusiastic about the Cabinet Mission plan.

His Majesty's Government will cease to exercise the powers of Paramountcy. This means that the rights of the States which flow from their relationship to the Crown will no longer exist and that all the rights surrendered by the States to the Paramount power will return to the States.¹ Wavell is unable to attract the attention of Indian leaders. The attitude of Jinnah was one of indifference because he was more interested in the creation of Pakistan than in the independence of a united India. Halki, therefore, presents this leader as not only sitting separately, but also engrossed in a Pakistani journal. Halki presents Wavell sitting on an oversized chair and trying to make out something among the participants. The impression

is that the situation was beyond the control of the Viceroy. The history of the contemporary political condition shows that in the face of the congressmen led by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the political status of the viceroy had become quite insignificant. The interpretation from Halki's cartoon gathers that the existing Indian politicians were not brawling and notwithstanding the reduced political power of the viceroy, they worked together.

Influx of British and American Companies:

There was an influx of both British and American multinational companies in India during British Raj and after independence. Paul Scott rightly opines that the Americans were more successful than British. The author suggests the impression that the future of the economic influence in India of the British and the Americans is quite bright. As a safeguard the British Government had not encouraged large scale industrialization in India as goods manufactured in Britain had in India. Independent India needed a strong industrial base as the foundation of economic prosperity. The poverty of the Indian masses has not made large scale industrial investment possible. As the rate of literacy increased the number of unemployment increased. The British and American industrialists traced these factors. They sought to increase commercial influence in India. The British put an end to the political control. Indian businessmen in Halki's cartoon are symbolic of the collaborations. Indian industrialists with British and American firms. The British and the American entrepreneurs entered Indian market through collaborations with large Indian business houses. *A Division of Spoils* was published in 1975 when Americans had penetrated deep into the Indian industrial territory.

Conclusion:

The story covers in the decamping of the British. The precipitous concession of power fiercely bent on division. The partition of India and the consequent holocaust turned out to be a great reservoir for the novelists who weaved it within the imaginative scenes, stories and settings. The characters were imaginary. So were the events. *A Division of the Spoils* is the last in a sequence of four novels about the closing years of British rule in India.

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