

SUBALTERN ANTI-COLONIAL NATIONALISM IN PAUL SCOTT'S *THE RAJ QUARTET*

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ABSTRACT

*This paper investigates anti-colonial nationalism of the Indians in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* from postcolonial perspective. The study uses the subversive strategy of the subaltern agency which writes wrongs of the colonizers and actions of the colonized. It reflects upon such actions of the Indians in *The Raj Quartet* which channel their resistance against colonialism as *Quit India* movement, massive uprising of the Indians, creation of the Indian National Army (INA) and the political struggle of the Indian politicians. The concepts of the 'subaltern' help this endeavour to bring the Indians to the centre and write back to the Empire. This study aims to prove that the Indians destabilize the colonial administration and intimidate the British Raj which led the colonialists to think that decolonization is imminent. Though their anti-colonial struggle is least organized but enough to crumble the walls of the Empire. It suggests that the Indians achieve consciousness by rejecting the equivocation of the British.*

Keywords: *Anti-colonialism, Nationalism, Subaltern, Decolonization, Colonial ideology, Hegemony*

INTRODUCTION

This study probes into the issue of anti-colonial nationalism of the Indians in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* to highlight them as action-doers and capable of subverting the colonial power structure. The word 'subaltern' is much debated concept in Postcolonial theory as Spivak (1992) declared that the marginalized groups or the subaltern cannot record their resistance. She raised the question that why the official history of India did not record the subaltern resistance put to the colonial rule (Morton, 2003). But her contention itself subordinated the subaltern. Hence, using the concept of the subaltern agency which develops the subversive perspective of reading a text, the Indians may be seen as the active action-doers hence they intimidate the British Empire. The word anti-colonial means opposition to colonialism. It refers to the "political struggle of colonized people against the specific ideology and practice of colonialism" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1992:14).

Anti-colonialism is the point on which different forms of opposition concentrate and expresses their resistance to colonialism. This struggle is often expressed in the terms of 'anti-colonialist nationalism' (Loomba, 1998:191). It opens a ray of hope to the subservient

people of India and unite them for their cause of decolonization (McLeod, 2007:75). Paul Scott noted that “the Indian nationalists of British India” wanted to get rid of “the inequities of the raj” and hence resistance and agitation were undertaken (The Day:203). The colonizer-colonized have complex relations as the colonizers tried to justify their adventure by assuring the native that colonizers were civilized and developed people. While colonized were ascribed all the negative characteristics of human nature and civilization (Said, 1978). Seemingly, the British-Indian relations also reflect this drama. The Indians did not invite the British to make them civilized and developed rather the British saw it “The Jewel in Her Crown” (The Jewel: 32).

Nevertheless since colonization of India in 1857, the Indians tried to get rid of the British using all options of oppositions and negating the stereotypical concepts of the British. In the colonial discourses which reflect this scenario, the colonized are supposed to be marginalized and hence their anti-colonial nationalism is not recorded. Spivak (1992) deliberates on such relations between the colonizers and the subaltern in which she argues that the subaltern cannot speak. But the concept of the ‘subaltern agency’ helps the study to retrieve their resistance and centralize the group while using the subversive strategy of reading from below *The Raj Quartet* (Prakash, 1992). This study raises such questions whether resistance supports the subaltern centralization by proving them as action doers instigated by their sense of anti-colonial nationalism. It seeks to answer whether the text records the resistance of the natives and whether the *Quartet* looks for the sense of decolonization. How far the subversive strategy is successful in turning back the supposed Euro-centrism in *The Raj Quartet*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of the ‘subaltern’ is used for the people of inferior rank or hegemonized group. The Subaltern Studies group extended its application to the colonized people. It look at the history and colonial discourses to be either dominated by the colonizers or the elites (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1992). This concept “explore[s] the ways of representation and modes of resistance [which] are used as fundamental weapon of colonial power to keep colonized people subservient to colonial rule” (McLeod, 2009:17). This subservience or hegemony of the superiors marginalizes the colonized or metaphorically they become ‘invisible’ to the colonizers. Such a history or fiction cannot record the contributions made by the subaltern (Spivak, 1992). Now it is up to the postcolonial intellectuals to re-study such history or fictions and correct injustices made with subaltern (McLeod, 2009; Loomba, 1998). Subaltern Studies re-write the Indian history linked with the colonial encounter in order to voice the colonized people and write back to the Empire from the subaltern perspective or ‘reading the text from below’ and ‘against the grain’ (Prakash,1992). In order to re-write such a historiography, researchers should note that

“what is important in a work is it does not say” (Hawley, 2004:426). According to Leela Gandhi (1998:2), ‘Subaltern Studies’ is “an attempt to allow the ‘people’ finally to speak on the jealous pages of elitist historiography and, in so doing to speak for, or to sound the muted voices of, the truly oppressed.”

Hence some of the postcolonial critics treat *The Raj Quartet* as the raj revisionism and raj nostalgia sequence while some others as anti-colonial sequence. Salman Rushdie (1991), Jason Mezey (2006) and Benita Parry (1975) criticize Scott for his Euro-centrism and colonialism. While Mahood (1983), Haswell (2001), Morey (2000) and Michael Gorra (1997) strongly reject such views. For Haswell (2001), Scott condemns racism and colonial ideology through the “rape script unlike” while “imperial forces are subverted” through certain characters (18). Morey (2000) argues that the *Quartet* responds to postcolonial theory while distracting from the earlier conventions and anti-colonial discourses. Gorra (1997:24) also regards Scott as a postcolonial novelist and argues that “the *Quartet* itself mounts a critique of its own Orientalism.” which means “to resist colonialist perspective” as Boehmer (2005) also argued. Morey (2000:12) argues that Scott’s novels employ both interrogative and oppositional techniques which help to subvert the essentialism of the imperial narratives.” Thus the opposing contentions necessitate re-studying the *Quartet* from a comparatively recent perspective of the subaltern agency in order to resolve the gap in the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research within the domain of postcolonial theory. In order to write back to the Empire, it uses the concept of the subaltern in order to develop ‘a sense of opposition’ to the colonial perspective. Hence the text is ‘read from below’ to voice the seemingly marginalized strata of the novels. Such a model redresses the Indian nationalism by ‘writing the wrongs’ of the British. As the *Quartet* portrays the British-Indian relations, hence such a methodology can aptly be applied to analyse anti-colonial nationalism of the Indians in Paul Scott’s *The Raj Quartet*.

DISCUSSION

Colonialism in India was a historical juncture which led many British writers to record colonizer-colonized relation on the pages of history and fictions. One of them is Paul Scott who fictionalizes the last years of colonialism in India (Haswell, 2011). Some writers identified themselves with colonizers either implicitly or explicitly while others vacillate in-between the colonizers and the colonized. The primary motives behind colonialism were the plunder of the foreign resources, establishment of profitable trade and exploitation of the indigenous population. In the *Quartet* Brigadier Reid himself expressed that “[a]part from the strategic necessity of holding India there was of course also the question of her

wealth and resources” (The Jewel:305). Such practices were necessary for sustainability of the British Empire. But the factors that instigated this desire were the commercial ventures and the spirit of discovering profitable lands. McLeod (2007) argues that “[c]olonialism was a lucrative commercial operation, bringing wealth and riches to Western nations through the economic exploitation of others” (7). Mr. White admits that one of the main aspects of ‘the British-Indian affair was to exploit India’ (The Jewel: 340).

Colonialism is not a smooth process as Kipling (1987) portrays in his stories and fictions. It faced hard opposition of the natives and did not comply with the colonial ideology as estimated by the colonizers. Seemingly, the British in the Quartet implement ‘war times’ laws to subdue anti-colonialism of the Indians which are commonly decoded as ‘no trail without lawyer and appeal’ (The Day: 78). The beginning portion of *The Jewel* clearly embodies the rising sense of nationalism and resistance among the Indians with the backdrop of British actions and reactions. Ashcroft et al. (1992) argue that “paradoxically, anti-colonialist movements often expressed themselves in appropriation and subversion of the forms borrowed from the institutions of the colonizers and turned back on them” (14). By the time of World War II, the Indian nationalism gets more gusto and poses a great intimidation to the British raj. The omniscient narrator noted that “the political situation sizzled dangerously from the March of 1942 throughout the summer and finally exploded in August with violence that set people talking about new mutiny” (The Towers:49).

Brigadier Reid was also conscious to the “increasing unrest in India” (The Jewel: 286). Many Indians sepoys were fighting on the side of the Japanese forces against their own ‘masters.’ In August, 1942, Indian National Congress passed Quit India resolution which Malcolm described as “striking another blow for India’s independence” and a “call to nation-wide insurrection” (The Day: 26-7). The British retaliate by arresting “prominent Congressmen all over the country [...] under the Defence of India rules” from Gandhi to local members (The Towers:51). These massive arrests led to the ‘spontaneous demonstrations’ by “the leaderless mob” that languished the British administration for three weeks (The Tower: 51). Mr. Chaudhuri told Miss Crane that even the municipal officers in Dibrapur were arrested under Merrick’s orders. Resultantly, “crowds were collecting and threatening to attack the post office and the police station” (The Jewel: 55). The telephone line of Mr. Chaudhuri’s bungalow was also cut down. In spite of the outburst of riots, Mr. Chaudhuri told Miss Crane that he would accompany her if he could detour any risk. She saw him worried about her and the school children since there was a real trouble and threat from the Indian nationalists.

On the way to Mayapore, Miss Crane and Mr. Chaudhuri came across the Sub-Inspector Govindas Lal’s “truck, upside down on the roadside where it had been overturned” by

rioters and possibly he has been abducted (The Jewel:63). It suggests the worse nature of anti-colonial nationalism of the Indians in the Quartet. Contrary to the stereotypical concept of deceit and treachery, Mr. Chaudhuri sincerely warns Miss Crane about the coming danger of riots in the way ahead. When the rioters appeared on the road, they dragged Mr. Chaudhuri out of the car and accusing him as a native informant. They started beating him until he became unconscious and died. Then her Ford was overturned and blazed it. She was slapped until lost her senses. When she recovered, she leapt towards Mr. Chaudhuri but he was dead. She sat down in the mud of rain beside his dead body and took his hand, "I am sorry it was too late" (The Jewel: 69). Mr. Chaudhuri's death suggests the failure of her liberal humanism within the domain of the British Raj. Colonialism is itself a dissident force to cancel any such attempt of humanism. While Gorra (1997) argues that this incident shows the British failure in their "self-appointed mission to protect" the natives (18).

He adds that the British cannot justify itself in India as its presence is itself a threat to India while the "imperial mission itself cancels itself out, dies of its own contradictions" (18). Such portrayal reflects the anti-colonial nationalism and resistance of the Indians and their sense of decolonization. After the incidents of Mr. Chaudhuri's death and the Bibighar affair, the situation in Mayapore deteriorates more. These incidents spark Mr. White's rage which leads him to subdue the natives with an iron hand. Consequently, atrocities of the British fuelled the Indian nationalism. Brigadier Reid took over the charge of the city who revived the days of General Dyer. The narrator juxtaposes Dyer's cruelties with that of Reid's. There was no 'public whipping' as of General Dyer's times but there were arrest and imprisonments "with or without trial" (The Jewel 71). There were "controlled shooting" of the unarmed civilians (The Jewel 71). John Riddick (2006:91) also suggests that these incidents were foreshadowing the "Indian independence." Scott seems to revive the two main events of Dyer's times in the Quartet which paved the way towards anti-colonial nationalism. However, Gorra (1997:22) makes a judicious analysis of these major incidents and argues, "If the Amritsar massacre became one of the energizing moments in the movement for Indian independence.

Bibighar made the English fear that they might be betrayed and destroyed" by the Indians. He adds that "Jallianwallah created the fear that they might themselves betray the trust on which they told themselves their empire was founded." Like the protestors at Amritsar, Hari was entrapped in Chillianawallah house and persecuted without trial (Gorra, 1997:22). It is not a thorough summary of the incidents rather the subversive strategy of the subaltern agency projects this portrayal. It centralizes the active role of the colonized subaltern against the wrongs of the colonizers. Contrarily, Spivak (1992) argues that subaltern has no sense of nationalism as it is the amalgamation of certain subordinated groups, contrary to this the category will not be the subaltern. But the Quartet do not respond to this

proposition. The subaltern may not have vocalized nationalism but they have inherent resistance and rejection of colonialism which unite them for the common cause. In addition, they are living under colonialism which suppresses their vocal nationalism which finds timely outburst in the form of resistance or anti-colonialism. Ludmila observed that the young Kumar's hair curled "even in that state of his insensibility seemed to be furrowed by anger" (The Jewel: 137). His anger suggests his "determination to reject" the British colonialism which leads him to such a state of degradation (The Jewel: 31).

Hari's anger "was the expression you often saw on the faces of young Indians in those days. But in Kumar the expression had unusual strength" (The Jewel: 137). Similarly Vidyasagar seeks martyrdom for the cause of freedom. He devoted his life for the 'freedom-work.' He was ready to face all consequences of his freedom-work as the "part of the sacrifice" for decolonization (The Jewel: 368). After the Bibighar affair, Hari Kumar and other boys were arrested by the colonial administrators and were taken to an unknown place. The text records the outbursts of riots and the resistance to colonialism through Ludmila's perceptions. She said that these arrests "had caused the riots in the town" (The Jewel: 160). Riots are not uniformly organized and hence close to the sense of the subaltern' scattered struggle against colonialism. The Indians were conscious to the British atrocities as "the riots were worse because of the rumours of the terrible things that were happening to the boys arrested after Bibighar" (The Jewel: 160). In addition, the Indians knew how to pressurize the British and develop in them the sense of insecurity. Ludmila thought the English hold the belief that after Bibighar none of their women was safe" (The Jewel: 160).

This worse situation of the natives' resistance seemed out of control which led Mr. White to call in "the military before it was actually necessary" (The Jewel: 160). Hence, it is suggested that Spivak's (1992) contention is not applicable in the case of The Raj Quartet. Hari's dilemma of 'Commer' or 'Kumar' seems to be resolved by taking the sense of nationalism and losing his 'English identity' while starts working for the Mayapore Gazette. He can be found in strong opposition to the English service. Haswell (2001) suggests that the injustices and prejudices of the British after the Bibighar affair corrected his 'doubleness.' Her assertion suggests that the wrongs of the colonizers turned his Englishness into anti-colonial nationalism. Next, Hari justifies the anti-colonial resistance by the time of World War II. He states that the British "[f]ailure to state [independence] as a definite aim, with a definite date, has led a lot of Indians to believe that independence should be insisted on now" (The Jewel: 270). He realized that the Indian would not be deluded further by the equivocation of the British.

The British did not think seriously about granting independence to India as Mrs. White discloses to Mr. Reid that her husband avoids violence against the natives since “he knows that the people who oppose us now are the same we are going to have to live with and feel responsible for afterwards” (The Jewel:323). Hari’s constant invisibility to the white people with his westernized values nourished his anti-colonial nationalism. He writes to Colin that “the British look upon [the Indians] as their own private property” (The Jewel: 275). He adds that “the arch imperialist, Mr. Churchill” opposed all the liberal reforms to be granted to the Indian Empire (A Division: 17). Mr. M.A. Kasim also writes that “Churchill has made it clear that the rights and freedom embodied in the Atlantic Charter do not apply to India” (The Day: 48). It suggests the transformation in Hari’s character from ‘Commer’ to ‘Kumar’ and his hatred against the opportunist policies of the British leaders. The divide and rule policy of the British for the extension of their rule is also expressed in the text. Mr. Malcolm tries to convince Mr. M.A. Kasim to resign from the Congress.

Although his urge seems justified but it is untimely as Malcolm intends to mitigate the pressure of the Quit India resolution. M.A. Kasim is offered two incentives but he rejects it on the eve when the Indians want to “create a nation capable of getting rid of them and capable simultaneously of taking its place in the world as a nation” and “every internal division of our interests hinders the creations of such a nation” (The Day:29). Seemingly, Hari expresses that since the last twenty years, “the English have succeeded in dividing and ruling” as the British only counterfeits with Indians’ ambitions of self-government (The Jewel:275). The Englishmen’s excuse for the disorganization of India is disapproved by Hari while the diction also suggests that Scott holds the same belief. The British expressed that India had been disorganized and at arms when they captured it. Thus, “they can’t be blamed for the fact that it is disorganised now” (The Jewel: 276). Hari writes that the British take the credits of all the improvements in India but did not take the responsibility of unifying India in two hundred years.

Consequently he asks, “Can you claim credit for one without accepting blame for the other?” (The Jewel: 276). Hari’s account for the Quit India campaign coincides with Mr. Reid’s which seems to justify the Indians’ cause of anti-colonial nationalism. It is suggested that the British introduced political system in India in order to produce mimic political leaders who would not be a threat to the Empire. But the Indian leaders turned into the resistant subjects, posing danger to the Empire with a demand of complete independence. As Mr. Reid observed that “the country was in the grip of rebellion” while in Mayapore and Dibrapur “two dastardly attacks on Englishwomen were made, within a few hours of each other” (The Jewel: 291). Hence the study hints at the anti-colonial nationalism of the Indians, resistance to the British Raj and the political unrest among the

natives, not only through the experiences of the Indians but through the British also. Such portrayal helps to authenticate the subaltern as action-doers and conscious beings not totally dependent upon others' representation.

This paper dismantles the Kiplenesque bend of mind and the supposed civilizing mission of the British characters which help to legitimize the Indians' cause of decolonization. As Mr. Reid projects the white man's burden by feeling proud of the British rule to lay down the structures of civilized life in India. But the dual nature of his mission is clearly reflected in his description of the cantonment and native town across the river. His development and civilization can only be felt in the cantonment in contrast with the native town, languishing under exploitation. He expressed that these young officers as White were inexperienced and served a year or two in India which gave them "only a very sketchy idea of the problems of administering Imperial possessions abroad" (The Jewel:298). In the prevailing shadows of the World War II, he said that his white race "had already laid down their lives to protect India from both Nazi and Japanese tyranny" and began to quote from the master of white man's burden, Rudyard Kipling. It suggests his Kiplenesque bent of mind and instead of saving the British Empire, he claims to save India. The British captured India by force without provocation of the natives. Accordingly soldiering and applying force against the natives play a pivotal role in British-Indian history.

The British forces followed General Dyer's policy of Amritsar in 1919 while the civil authority adopted political measures as paternalism and sympathy with the natives. This contrast is visible in the narratives of Mr. Reid and Mr. White's. He says that "his drama Reid and I played out was that of the conflict between Englishmen who liked and admired Indians and believed them capable of self-government, and Englishmen who disliked or feared or despised them" (The Jewel: 338). In spite of the fact that Mr. White projects the British version of the Indian history, the text contains the cause of the Indian nationalism and justification of their uprising. Besides the anti-colonial nationalism, Paul Scott suggests that Indians were right in demanding independence hence they are also humans and want to live freely. Seemingly, Mr. White said that he was antagonized by "Reid's simple soldier attitude" which meant to "straighten us all" as he did with the Indians (The Jewel: 337). But their mutual interest in colonialism prevent them from potent disclosure of their discord which may be due to the threat from Japanese on the Burma front and the Indian nationalism.

The Raj Quartet refers to the important incident of blowing up the bridge by the British and the consequent disillusion of the Indian soldiers. The abandoned Indian officers and soldiers "in the lurch" were captured and consequently many of them later joined the Indian National Army or INA, sponsored by the Japanese to fight against the British (The

Towers:137). It is dramatized through the character of Sayed Kasim and many others. He muses that it is stupidity to serve such an army which has deserted them and decides to rebel against the British army. Captain Mohan Singh of INA convinces the Indian soldiers that “the days of the British imperialism were over and that the duty of every patriotic Indian was to form an army to help the Japanese drive them [the British] from India for good and all” (The Towers: 136). Thus the Quartet recounts the resistance of the Indian National Army against the British army which shows that it played a significant role in the weakening of the empire. In addition, the members of the INA considered themselves freedom fighters while the British viewed them as traitors and disloyal. Scott touches upon this neglected aspect of Indian historiography to explore its effects on the demise of the British Raj.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that *The Raj Quartet* records anti-colonial nationalism of the Indians and their struggle against the British Raj. It points out the resistance against colonialism although in terms of the novels as ‘riots’ yet reinforces Indians’ cause of decolonization which is explicated by Loomba (1998). The paper highlights all those actions and reactions of the Indians which negate the supposed civilizing mission of the British. This essay has shown that a subversive strategy developed by the subaltern studies to correct the misconceptions about the Indians centralize the natives. This study shows that the *Quartet* is hegemonized by Hari, Mr. Chaudhuri, M.A. Kasim and Ahmad by “their dignity and power of choice” contrary to the conventional model. In addition, the self-contradictory nature of the British characters minimizes their stature. Even they alienate their own missionaries as Miss Crane and Ludmila who deviate from the strict pattern of colonialism (Haswell 2001). Moreover, Mr. Reid and Mr. White, prototypes of colonialism admitted the anti-colonial nationalism and the threat to their Empire. They tried to subdue the resistance of the natives in the manner of General Dyer but the hard opposition compelled them to admit the subaltern’s cause of decolonization.

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