



## HARI KUMAR – “A LEGACY OF THE RAJ” IN PAUL SCOTT’S THE RAJ QUARTET

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Paul Scott is certainly the most outstanding of all the English novelists who have written about India and its impact on the British and also about the last years of the British Raj in India. He has constructed each novel with much thought and care as revelations of human behaviour. *The Raj Quartet* is one of his most enduring works. It is a tetralogy comprising of the four novels, *The Jewel in the Crown* (1964), *The Day of the Scorpion* (1968), *The Towers of Silence* (1971) and *The Division of the Spoils* (1975).

Taken as a whole, The Quartet gives us a panoramic view of India from the Quit India Movement to Partition and Independence. Scott paints on a large canvas which does justice to the great subject he has chosen. At the same time, however, like a miniature artist, he draws every small detail of the complex love-hate relationship between Indians and Englishmen. He does not portray just two over-simplified versions – one British, the other Indian of the Raj. He depicts the viewpoints, impressions and attitudes of the innumerable characters he creates, till the various subtle nuances of British India and of the relationship between the two races are set forth before us.

*The Raj Quartet* is a monumental series of novels dealing with the basic struggle of the human race. It is a richly rewarding, touching and truthful look at a pivotal time in the history of mankind. Paul Scott’s monumental opus is inevitably complex and potentially confusing. Its central action spans a period of five years and is set in an area which went on to become five nations. It consists of more than 300 named characters, including 24 principal characters. In order to comprehend this massive work, it is important to be as clear as possible about its internal structure. The best guide for this is the volume, time period and setting.

*The Raj Quartet* is the epic account of the last years of the British occupation of India. India was the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire, and the relationship of the Indian people and their colonial masters was vastly complicated, to say the least. Paul Scott weaves together the lives of many unforgettable characters whose destinies are shaped by the British rule in India. He recounts the political, personal and historical joys and tragedies of the dissolution of that rule. He has created fascinating characters - Indian and British, Muslim and Hindu, who personify the complex relations which existed between the rulers and the ruled. He does so in away that is never sentimental; never preachy or overwrought.

### **Hari Kumar:**

Hari Kumar is the legacy of the Raj: the man who is neither English nor Indian, and fits into neither society.

Hari Kumar has never been given a chance to know his Indian roots. As a child he is taken to England to study at a prestigious public school called Chillingborough, spending his school holidays with an English family, the Lindseys. This was to help realise his father's driving ambition to see his only son succeed on the same terms as an Englishman. Brought up to feel like an Englishman, Hari has to return to India to live as an Indian, when bankruptcy causes his father to commit suicide. Naturally Hari is devastated. The plight of the westernised Indian, who is a consequence of political and historical factors, is a theme that runs through a great deal of Hari’s father, Duleep Kumar, wholeheartedly believes in the “*intellectual superiority of the English*” (*Jewel* 227) and that Hari’s education at Chillingborough will give him “*the secret of Englishness . . . a magical combination of knowledge, manner, and race*” (*Jewel* 213, 226). As a result of his education, Hari (“Harry Coomer,” as he is known in England) grows up to be utterly indistinguishable from an upper class Englishboy in all but one respect: the color of his skin.

Although physically Hari Kumar is an Indian, psychically he is a true British possibly better British, than Merrick is. Hari was born in India, but he was brought up in luxury in England, as Harry Coomer, and well educated, because his father Duleep Kumar believed that power lay in a combination of knowledge, manner and race. He was convinced of the Englishness as being the best gift he can give to his only son. When his father died and bankrupt, poor Hari was sent home here to Mayapore. Only of course it wasn’t home to him. He was two years old when his father took him to England and eighteen when he came back. “*He spoke like an English boy. Acted like one. Thought like one.*” (TJITC 106)

Kumar, as a member of the Indian race, finds himself in the lower part of the society. From his life in England he is used to the existence in the high society among British people who are equal to him, not superior.

He feels one of them. But suddenly here in India he obviously is not. White society excludes him and black society is alien to him. In India Hari does not know where he belongs. The result of such confusion is his denial of the rules of the society, which does not have any place for him. That is why Kumar dares to approach the relationship with a white woman. On his part it is not love that attracts him to that woman. It is partly the act of his resistance against the humiliation that he takes hard in India. There is a hidden request for the equal rights. This and the fact that she reminds him home – England ties him to Daphne.

As being forced by certain events to live in India, Hari slowly adopts his Indian nationality and he equalize the radical change of his social status. Already when he is sailing to India, people, who were acting like his friends during the voyage, start to show him their backs, as the ship is proceeding near to India. On the ship, Hari puzzles out that his new life in India is going to be completely different from his precedent life in England and that this change will not come to any good. Gradually he apprehends the rules that white people established in India for Indians, for instance when driving in the cycle ricksha, the Indian driver does not want to take him any far because he is Indian and he would not pay much more than the minimum fare tax, or in the shop Hari is ignored by the salesman, when, though he comes first, he has to wait until all the white women there are served. (TJITC 233) Problems also appear in restaurants, because Indians are only allowed to use some of them and in the “permitted ones” there are special less comfortable seats in separated areas for them. (TJITC 258)

But the hardest stroke that hits Hari comes from his best friend from England, Colin Lindsay, who is sent to India as an officer of the British army during the war against the Axis powers. Naturally Hari wishes to meet him, but Colin keeps tergiversating. Later Colin is sent to Mayapore where the encounter of the old friends should take place, but Colin does not even announces to Hari that he is going to come and when they incidentally meet in Mayapore, he pretends that he does not see Hari, who does not even believe it on the first. (TJITC 147) There are probably two factors that can explain Colin’s behavior. The first is the pressure of the British society and its common standards, and the second is Lindsay’s pride. People get used to their privileges fast and they easily adopt the social conditions that are so advantageous for them. It shows itself easy to believe that you are superior to the others especially for men, it is quite natural. Kumar himself comments on this situation as follows : “I am invisible not only to white people because I am black but invisible to my white friend because he can no longer distinguish me in a crowd...yes, Lindsay thinks : ‘They all look alike.’ He makes me disappear. I am nothing...and would not be welcome if I were recognized.” (TJITC 262)

This proves that the British perception of the Indians is highly hypocritical and British approach to them is necessarily full of misunderstandings. In the text Hari Kumar also expresses his regret and despair. Kumar must accept that he has become invisible to the British people in India, even to his best friend which is much harder than to flatten out the physical living conditions, which seemed impossible at the beginning : To Hari, England was sweet cold and crisp clean pungent scent... and England was the park...Waking in the narrow-string bed in his room at Chillianwallah Bagh he beat at the mosquitoes, fisted his ears against he sawing of the frogs and squaw of the lizards...He entered the mornings from tossing dreams of home and slipped at once into the waking nightmare. (TJITC 220) To Hari, India is an alien and backward country, where the terrible heat furnishes the city walls every day, where cockroaches are in the bedrooms and where the bucket is used instead of the bathroom. With the loss of the social status, Hari loses everything and he is not afraid to break the rules and cross the borders, which in the end brings him to prison and takes from him the last thing he has – his freedom.

Hari has, almost against his will, accepted the friendship of a young Englishwoman, Daphne Manners, but when the pair fall in love, their racial divide proves impossible to overcome. When the pair are making love in the Bibighar Gardens, they are set upon by a band of men, Hari beaten, Daphne raped. After the attack, Daphne insists that Hari deny they've been together. His continued denial and silence when interrogated lands him in prison, not on a rape charge, but on a political insurrection charge as Britain struggles to keep control over India intent on freeing itself.

Nearly two years after the attack, Hari finds himself in an interrogation room at the prison, where a lengthy review of his case is conducted while, unknown to him, Daphne's aunt is watching and listening from another room. Through the questioning, Nigel Rowan, an Englishman who actually shared part of his public-school time with Hari, attempts to understand what happened during Hari's arrest and imprisonment. It's here that Hari, has a chance to explain himself.

What comes through, is a man in great conflict and loneliness. Hari's family background is revealed, what led him from India to England with his father at the age of two, his father's hopes and dreams for him and how the whole thing fell apart.

It's wrenching to listen to, particularly when the reader knows, from earlier chapters, Daphne's view of their relationship. When it slowly dawns on him that something bad has happened to Daphne — that she has in fact died while giving birth to the half-Indian daughter conceived on the night of the attack and that she believes to be Hari's child — his agony is wordless, indicated only by silent tears that slip from his eyes.

The other pain is in Daphne's aunt's response. No one but she had mourned Daphne's death, until Hari learns the truth. Together and yet apart, they share a moment of pure agony.

Harry Coomer is the young, British-raised son of an Indian emigrant trying to escape his heritage; Hari Kumar is the Indian man the son is forced to become when his luck runs out and he has to return to his roots, to live with his auntie, in Mayapore, India, during the British Occupation. A handsome, proud, dark-skinned man with a British accent and affections for a white girl, wanting only to get on with his life and be left alone.....

The one voice that Scott endows with future agency at the novel's conclusion is that of Hari Kumar. After he is released from prison, Hari resumes writing for the *Mayapore Gazette* and publishes essays under the pseudonym "Philoctetes," after the archer of Greek mythology who is plagued by a continually festering wound. Near the conclusion of *Division of the Spoils*, Perron is particularly moved by one of Hari's essays in which he ponders the meaning of his past life in England, before coming to India. In one of last scenes of the novel, Perron attempts to find Hari in Mayapore, but only comes as far as his door; unable to enter or even knock, he leaves India without making contact with Hari (1017-8).

Hari is figured as a metaphor for the festering wound left by British colonialism at the dawn of Independence, and his pen name "*Philoctetes*" reinforces this implication. He is the unintentional hybrid creation of the Raj, a product of both nations and cultures, but he neither belongs to nor is completely accepted by either culture. Hari perhaps suffers more than any other character in the *Quartet*, but his story and voice are allowed to endure.

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