THE DAY OF THE SCORPION
The Day of the Scorpion, the second novel of The Quartet, is not a proper sequel to The Jewel in the sense that it does not begin where the latter terminates. Indeed, no novel of The Quartet is connected to its predecessor as a sequel. Temporally, therefore, The Scorpion has the same point of beginning as The Jewel, i.e. the arrest of important political leaders in the wake of the 1942 Quit-India Movement. In the end, however, The Scorpion moves beyond the closure of the earlier novel by covering events taking place in the year 1944. As it introduces new characters and new themes, The Scorpion elaborates on themes already dealt with in The Jewel and thereby achieves a reinforcement of the same as well as restructuring of certain characters. The semantic possibilities of the novel are regulated as much by the fresh insights into the motivations of the characters already introduced as by the events which bring in the new characters both as the vehicle and the victim of history. Unlike The Jewel whose strength lies in its discursive peculiarity, The Scorpion draws attention to itself by the complexities of its story structure.

The Scorpion is constituted of three independent storylines which neither appear in isolation from each other nor follow each other in a chronological order. Their disposition in the novel through the mediation of the central narrating agent who is identified both as "the writer" (9) and "the stranger" (12) gives rise to multiple points of intersection of the story-lines.
The first story-line centres round the political career of Mohammed Ali Kasim, ex-Chief Minister of an unnamed province. A secular Muslim of the Indian National Congress, he is arrested in the early hours of 9th August 1942, as part of the government strategy to pre-empt the proposed Quit-India Movement. The arrest which opens the narrative proper of the novel is enchained to the next event of Kasim's meeting with the governor of the province. The meeting is the first kernel event of the sequence because it opens up, literally, two alternatives. If he accepts the governor's proposition of resigning from the primary membership of the Congress party, he gets not only his freedom but also a berth on the executive council. If, on the other hand, he refuses, he gets incarcerated. The governor gives him reasons why he should positively consider his proposal: he has already resigned from the working committee of the party because he is not satisfied with its modus operandi and its growing Hinduization. Privately, too, he is in a curious position because his elder son Sayed is a Lieutenant in the Indian Army in the service of the Crown. Kasim refuses the proposal on the ground that its acceptance is tantamount to sacrificing his personal integrity. More than a job, he longs for a nation which he believes can be attained only through the Congress party howsoever deviant its ways and means may occasionally be, because they are in the end directed at realizing an idea,

The idea... isn't simply to get rid of the British. It is to create a nation capable of getting rid of them and capable simultaneously of taking its place in the world as a nation... (29)
A free nation requires politicians as well as soldiers. The fact that Sayed is an army officer does not affect Kasim's status as a politician. Kasim's incarceration at the Premnagar fort concludes the eventualities raised by the first kernel. The second kernel is succeeded by two events: Kasim's meeting with Major Tippit, the Fort in-charge, to make complaints about his accommodation arrangements and his letters to his wife and to the governor. The latter two events are satellites because instead of outlining a further movement of story they merely expand and reinforce what has been established by the earlier kernels— the character-trajecting of Kasim as a level-headed, clear-sighted and pragmatic politician. The syntagmatic arrangement of these events completes the first microsequence of this particular story-line. The next sequence does not immediately follow the first but is hedged off by a temporal distance and the other story-lines.

In the second sequence, Ahmed, the younger son of Kasim and social secretary to count Bronowsky, who is the Wazir of the Nawab of Mirat, meets Kasim at the circuit house. The meeting raises several possibilities because Ahmed not only informs his father of Sayed but also charts out courses of political action for him in the light of the new developments. Sayed, who has been a prisoner of war in the hands of the Japanese, has joined the Indian National Army. Having failed to complete his march on Delhi, along with the Japanese he has been captured by the British. Kasim is faced with two options: he has to either defend Sayed as a patriot or castigate him as
a traitor. If he calls Sayed a traitor, he falls out with the policy of both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League which have to defend him as a matter of political expediency. To call him a traitor is thus as good as committing political suicide. If, on the other hand, he dubs him a patriot he compromises his own personal integrity. To him the INA represents a disruption of the basis of a nation-state as well as his own faith.

What kind of independence will it be when we get it if we can't defend it? And how shall we be able to defend it if there aren't boys like Sayed willing to train and discipline themselves faithfully and steadfastly to inherit that side of our national responsibility? ... What kind of an army will it be if its officers think of their commissions as meaningless bits of paper? It is a contract, a contract. All of Muslim law is based on the sanctity of one man's word to another. You must be prepared to suffer and die for it. It is written. It is revealed. It is in our hearts... (558-559).

Satellites of the kernel event such as these thoughts of Kasim fill in the space between the first kernel and the next one of Kasim's ultimate agreement for a conditional release under the protection of the Nawab. The release is presumably arranged in order to provide Kasim with an opportunity to talk to Sayed. Kasim's release establishes an equilibrium which
paradigmatically replaces the stability of the opening situation—the freedom prior to his arrest. The two situations are not at all identical because even as the last kernel stops the syntagmatic movement of the story, it does not conclude the uncertainties raised by it—whether Kasim would defend his son or not. The semic encoding of Kasim is incomplete on account of this. The completion occurs only in the last volume of *The Quartet, A Division of the Spoils*.

The elaboration in *A Division* of the event introduced in *The Scorpion* is structurally similar to the conclusion in *The Scorpion* of the rumours of the police brutality to Kumar reported in *The Jewel*. This interweaving of character and events, as Julian Symons comments, is a reflection of Scott's organizing skill.¹

The second story-line, which comprises the interrogation of Kumar by Captain Rowan and Gopal, an official from the Secretariat, is in fact a recapitulation of the Mayapore event through the point of view of Kumar. The event has had three principal participants—Daphne, Kumar and Merrick. *The Jewel* offers the version of only Daphne, eliding thereby those of Kumar and Merrick. The novel has even created an area of uncertainty regarding the torture by putting together Vidyasagar's deposition which reports the torture with the account of White which questions the veracity of such a report. In two lengthy verbal engagements in the third storyline, one with Bronowsky and the other with Sarah, Merrick...
provides a sort of rejoinder to what Kumar says about the Mayapore affair. Together, they seek to conclude the uncertainty. Kumar, who has been originally arrested on the ground of having masterminded the criminal assault on Daphne, has been put away under the Defence of India rules for his association with politically subversive elements. Lady Manners, Daphne's aunt, petitions the governor for a review of the case "one year, nine months and twelve days later" (328). She becomes the secret spectator to the interrogation. Cast in the form of courtroom proceedings, the scene is so forcefully dramatic that it is, as K.B. Rao suggests, "a novel within a novel and can stand by itself." 2 The entire story-line as focalized through Kumar consists of a number of enchained kernels or microsequences.

The first kernel is Kumar's upbringing in a totally English environment. His father takes him to England while his son is barely two. The motivation for such an action, i.e. to give him a natural advantage of entering the ICS, functions as a satellite connecting the first kernel with the next. Within the sequence, the kernel and its succeeding satellites structure numerous microsequences because they refer to, and are the outcome of Duleep's early background, his hopes and frustrations in an Anglo-Indian set-up. These have been a part of the structure of The Jewel. These sequences thus have a determining effect on the status of events in The Scorpion. Kumar's alienation from his roots is therefore linked to his return to India after the failure of his father in business and his
subsequent suicide. Since there is no possibility of his completing education, he looks out for a job. This initiates further eventualities: he gets to know Motilal and Vidyasagar, howsoever casually, who not only have nationalist leanings but also laugh at Kumar's Englishness as a consequence thereof. When Colin, his best friend in England, refuses to recognize him in India, Kumar in an emotional stupor decides to shed his Englishness by drinking country liquor with characters like Vidyasagar etc. His drunkenness is succeeded by his retrieval from the wasteground by Sister Ludmila. His confrontation with Merrick the next day on the premises of Ludmila is the single most important kernel event to become the axis round which the entire story-line rotates. Kumar becomes a marked man in Merrick's books. The arrest that follows soon initiates fresh movement of the story: he gets invited to the MacGregor House and gets to talk to Daphne. The casual meeting that flowers into love propels the story in two directions. On the one hand, it prompts Merrick to take an interest in Daphne and to warn her of any association with Kumar; on the other, it drives the duo to the safety of the sanctuary and the Bibighar Gardens for their tryst. Logically, therefore, as soon as Merrick hears of the assault on Daphne on the 9th August 1942, he goes to these places and later hauls Kumar up. The interrogation that follows arrests any further movement of the story and is 'fleshed' by a number of satellites the total effect of which is the revelation of Merrick's mindstyle. Merrick strips Kumar naked in order to inspect his private parts for any telltale sign of a sexual assault; he orders him to be tied to
a trestle and to be caned till he bleeds. He even fondles his private parts. Later on, he bathes his lacerations and gives him a drink of water. The different phases of the persuasion are aimed at securing a confession from Kumar: Merrick wants Kumar to admit to have been guilty of the crime because he is convinced of his guilt.

He said I could forget the girl. What had happened to her was unimportant. So long as I understood how responsible I was for it. "That's what you've got to admit," he kept saying, "your responsibility for that girl getting rammed. If you were a hundred miles away you'd still be responsible." (358).

The interrogation which brings about the closure of this particular story-line integrates the revelation of motives with the solution of an enigma. It contributes to the semic coding of Merrick as a complex character. As Kumar says: "the rape, the interrogation about the rape, were side issues. The real issue was the relationship between us"(357). The interrogation also unravels the mystery surrounding the trial and detention of Kumar. The Jewel has repeatedly postponed the solution by juxtaposing the gossips about the torture and defilement of the detenu and the deposition of Vidyasagar with the questioning attitude of White as well as the refusal of Kumar to make any complaints regarding his torture to the board instituted to probe such allegation. The interrogation also explains Kumar's reticence in respect of the complaints.
By accepting water from Merrick after undergoing the torture and thanking for the same, he has become a part of Merrick's plan to annihilate his uniquely individual identity. The refusal to complain of the ill treatment is thus a metaphorical attempt at a self-repair:

That was one of the reasons why when they asked me if I had anything to complain about I said I hadn't. It was a way of making up to myself for thanking him for the water (361).

The story-line that receives the most sustained narratorial attention involves the Laytons, an established Anglo-Indian army family stationed at Ranpur and Pankot. The members of the family exhibit different reactions to the colonial situation and form an integral part of not only The Scorpion but also the next two volumes of The Quartet. The intra-familial relationships which occupy a large part of The Quartet's fictional space serve as a reflector of the British-Indian relationships. The importance of the Laytons in the overall structuration is brought home by the history of three generations of the Laytons serving the Raj in various capacities. This particular story-line, focalized mainly through Sarah, the elder daughter of John and Mildred Layton, begins with the preparation of the family for the marriage of the younger daughter, Susan. They come down to Mirat, a small princely state, for the purpose. The choice of Mirat as the venue of the marriage integrates the macrosequence of the Laytons' affairs with that of Bronowsky,
Ahmed and Pandit Baba. Sarah goes for a ride with Ahmed. As a satellite, it is paradigmatically akin to her visit to Lady Manners. To go for a ride with an Indian is as unacceptable from the British point of view as the visit to Lady Manners who is considered a social pariah following her decision to stand by Daphne's pregnancy and to shelter her illegitimate child. Together, these two events highlight Sarah's independence of mind as against the conventional attitude of Fenny and the indifference of Mildred. Similarly, the conversation between Bronowsky and Ahmed is another kernel which reveals Ahmed's neutral stance to politics and interracial relationship and determines his behaviour with his father in the first storyline and with Sarah in this. The conversation of Pandit Baba with Ahmed, on that score, reveals a reactionary aloofness of a section of the Indians represented by Pandit Baba. The attitude is responsible for two of the three incidents that nearly spoil the marriage of Susan with Teddie Bingham. A stone is thrown at the groom as he comes to the church accompanied by his best man Merrick. Later, as the newly-wed couple is about to go off on their honeymoon, a woman in a white saree falls at the feet of Merrick begging him for information about Kumar.

These two events form a set of enchained kernels as they help move the story by identifying who Merrick really is. He has been chosen as the best man as a last moment replacement. Moreover, he has taken a wartime commission into the military and has been sharing quarters with Teddie as a consequence.
thereof. He has even concealed the fact that he had been the DSP of Mayapore during the 1942 riots and the trial of six men arrested for the rape of Daphne. The two incidents are, therefore, directed at Merrick; they are what Merrick calls subtle forms of persecution aimed at convincing him that he has made a terrible mistake in the Mayapore case (254-255). The identification necessitates two explanations: one made to Bronowsky wherein Merrick defends his action and reiterates his conviction of Kumar's guilt; and the other made to Sarah wherein he apologizes for the unpleasantness caused at the marriage ceremony because of him.

The meeting is succeeded by both Merrick and Teddie being ordered to the front for active service. As the British forces suffer reverses on the North-East, the situation is further complicated by the sudden rise to prominence of the Indian National Army. Former prisoners of war band together into the Indian National Army (INA) and fight their own compatriots. Teddie dies while trying to save a "Jiff"-"Indian soldiers who were once prisoners of the Japanese in Burma and Malaya, chaps who turned coat and formed themselves into army formations to help the enemy" (447). Merrick is seriously burnt in the act of trying to save Teddie. The death of Teddie pushes Susan, who is at the moment pregnant, dangerously close to the brink of disorientation. Teddie's death and Merrick's injury are a pair of embedded kernels which initiate actions other than Susan's madness. Sarah calls on Merrick at a Calcutta hospital in order to thank him for his effort to save Teddie as well as to
assess the extent of the injuries that he has sustained in the process. The conversation that ensues between the two comprises a host of satellites that not only expand the earlier embedded kernels but also establish a paradigmatic relationship between the two characters. It reveals the difference in their perceptions of the nature of the colonial encounter.

Sarah's visit to Calcutta must itself be seen as a kernel event: when she comes to Calcutta, she is goaded by Fenny to go out with Clark which results in her making love to him. Thus, even as the events are arranged contiguously, the love-making itself organizes relations of comparability between the two sisters. Susan has been "prettier, livelier, always to be counted on to ... making things go" (152). It has been a commonplace knowledge of the Pankot society that "any man first taking an interest in Sarah Layton would presently cool off her and start paying attention to Susan" (150). Even Toddle, who has first struck up an affair with Sarah, soon turns his attention to Susan. Sarah does not mind the desertion which has in fact been a part of a routine ritual, yet notwithstanding her awareness of the tenacity of her self, the consciousness of individuality and resistance to the temptation of surrendering them "in exchange for a share in that collective illusion of a world morally untroubled, convinced of its capacity to find just solutions for every problem that confronted it" (398-399), she is moved to tears by her ungainly appearance. Her spiritual self-sufficiency is offset by a physical want.
For a minute or so, back in the ice box of the bedroom, she sat, smoked, combed out her hopeless hair and drank the second gimlet, smoothed cleansing cream on to her incorruptible Layton face. So uncomely was it (in her eyes) that a wave of pity for it released a succeeding wave of erotic desire to have it loved...(485).

Clark's love, howsoever fleeting, not only makes Sarah whole but also affords her a happiness not otherwise possible. On the other hand, love-making for Susan is a ritual of marriage to which she has to submit as a matter of duty. She complains to Sarah of their mother's lack of consideration in not forewarning her of what to expect in a honeymoon.

'It made me feel she didn't care enough to make sure herself that I knew about the things I had to let Teddie do. She didn't want any of it to happen, so for her it wasn't happening. But at the time it just seemed to me to prove she didn't care, that nobody cared really.' Sarah felt cold. Again she did not speak for a moment or two. Then she asked, 'Is that how you thought about it? That making love was just something you had to let Teddie do?' Susan stopped the smoothing. 'I don't know. I didn't think about it much. All that was on the other side.'(409).
The sudden death of Mabel at Pankot, the next syntagm of the story, is structured like the earlier kernel and is a complex of events. It brings about the premature labour of Susan. At the same time, the shock of watching alone the quiet but inexplicably sudden death of Mabel robs Susan of the last vestige of her sanity. She loses all command of her self and of the reality of the surrounding situation. She entertains a belief that the baby born before its time is incomplete, and that in any case she has let a spirit get trapped inside a body. Such a reasoning follows from her failure to cope with the enormity of her husband's death and her aloneness. As she confides to Sarah,

'At the service I prayed for the baby to die. I want him to die because I don't know how to face it alone. How can I face it with Teddie never never coming back? I didn't want the baby, but it pleased him so, and he wrote and wrote about it, and I could face it like that. But I can't face it alone. I can't bear it alone' (398).

The satellite that precedes the last kernel of the sequence underscores the terrible death-wish that forms a vital part of Susan's unconscious. It pertains to a christening shawl, the lace of which has a motif of butterflies who come fluttering above a moving hand. The blind French woman who has made the lace often grieves for the butterflies who can never fly out of the prison of the lace (427). Susan uses the lace for the
christening of her baby son: 'Little prisoner, little prisoner. Shall I free you? Shall I free you?' Susan had said, touching the baby's cheek with her finger (574).

A metaphoric similarity between the child and the butterfly in the inescapable condition of their imprisonment is established in Susan's disorientated mind. The recreation of a childhood story—scorpions when surrounded by a ring of fire sting themselves to death—is an attempt at liberating a trapped being rather than killing somebody.

After a while the dressing was over. The mother hugged the child to her and then walked out into the bright sunshine of the rain-free afternoon, across the patch of grass towards the wall... And there Susan placed the child on the grass, took the ready-to-hand tin of kerosene and sprinkled a wide circle around it...(and) set fire to the kerosene and the flames leapt, arcing their way around in a geometrical perfection,... (575-576).

The Scorpion like its immediate successor The Towers is to a great extent a psychological novel: it seeks to map out the inner space of the mind. The construction of subjectivity through the representation of consciousness assumes a focal point of the novel. A continual disruption of the story movement by the insertion into physical action lengthy segments of figural thought or what Walker calls "the metaphysical and
psychological sandbanks" becomes a recurring feature of the story-line involving the Laytons. The verbalized thoughts of Sarah occupy a place of eminence in the sequence so that they become a touchstone to value the actions and thoughts of other characters. The central narrator seems to have his self-presence in Sarah who, as Spurling points out, stands as "a sceptical observer, an outsider in Pankot society, without prejudices or preconceptions, startlingly so to more conventional characters." Sarah is the single most important monologist of the novel: her thoughts are expressed mostly in quoted and narrated monologues which frequently alternate in particular textual segments. Lady Manners finds Sarah's brooding "odd and intricate, not at all the result of simple self absorption" (63). The novel identifies this habit of brooding as a part of Sarah even as a child.

And yet (Sarah thought) over here in an odd and curious way we are children. I am aware, coming back, of entering a region of almost childish presumptions—as if everything we are surrounded by is the background for a game. But Susan and I are somehow left out of the game as if even now we are not old enough to be depended upon to know the rules and act accordingly (89).

In this quoted monologue the narrating and the focalizing and experiencing selves are centred in a common subject. What this particular segment forcefully brings out is the capacity
of Sarah, even as a child, to analyze a situation discursively. This capacity is reinforced again and again in the chapter that deals with the history of the Laytons.

Possibly, she thought, the difference between herself and Susan was that Susan was capable of absorbing things into her system without really thinking whether they were acceptable to her or not; whereas she herself absorbed nothing without first subjecting it to scrutiny. Perhaps this was wrong. Perhaps she tried too hard to work things out. She didn't relax. She didn't have a talent for just enjoying herself, which was a pity because she must miss a lot that Susan never missed (105).

The narrated status of the monologue despite the presence of the phrase 'she thought' is evident in the continuation of the past tense as the basic form of narration. The use of a narrated monologue to recount the mental scene of Sarah is obviously intended both to break the monotony of a particular narrative mode and to offer the flavour of variety. The cognitive depth of the fictional mind finds a fitting linguistic expression: Sarah's self-apprehension bursts forth with clipped sentences. She penetrates the mind of Susan with the same depth of perception in order to establish a comparable relation between them.
She thought: That sort of courage is what distinguishes Susan from me, apart from her prettiness, and why men like Teddie have always finally preferred her company to mine. She creates an illusion of herself as the centre of a world without sadness and allows them entry (212).

Once Sarah is traited as perceptive and reliable, the narrator utilizes her as a focalizer for the purposes of narration as well as characterization. The compulsive drinking habit of Mildred Layton, for example, is seen through Sarah's eyes.

Well, she was cheating, Sarah realized. No one looking at her mother would know that about her from her gestures. Would they know the other thing? Would they, by looking at her be able to tell the vagueness, the air of slight distraction, was proof—as Sarah knew it was—that Mrs Layton was ... beginning to work out how long it would be before she could decently have a drink (170).

Despite the third-person reference the language is Sarah's. The use of the word 'well' in a manner of summing up, the questioning attitude by the reiteration of 'would they' and the knowledge that her mother behaves in a particular way when drunk, issue not from the narrating omniscience, but from Sarah's vocabulary and consciousness. This is made evident
when the passage is succeeded by a quoted monologue characterized by changes in tense and person.

You are still attractive, Sarah thought, and you are only forty-five. It is three years since you were with him. And India is full of men. So don't think I don't understand about the bottle in the wardrobe, the flask in your handbag (170-171).

Similarly, it is Sarah again whose vision determines the language depicting the lives of the English people in India.

The trouble was, she thought, that in India for them, there was no private life; not in the deepest sense; in spite of their attempts at one. There was only a public life. She looked again at the faces in the restaurant—ordinary private faces that seemed constantly to be aware of the need to express something remote, beyond their capacity to imagine—martyrdom in the cause of a power and responsibility they had not sought individually but had collectively inherited, and the stiffness of a refusal to be intimidated; group expressions arising from group psychology. And yet they were the faces of people whose private consciousness of self was the principal source of their vitality (171).

The kind of narratorial attention that Sarah hogs bespeaks the
narrator's fondness for the reflective and questioning values that she embodies in her person. But it would be wrong to suppose that there is a total convergence of views between the two because the type of determinacy such a fusion envisages brings about a stasis in Sarah's experiencing self and stunts her growth as a character. The novel upsets such a stasis by letting Sarah revise her assessment of Susan in the light of new developments. Prior to her complete psychic breakdown, Susan confesses to her sister of her role-playing as a mask to hide a deep sense of insecurity.

... Sarah did not know her either— not as Susan— but with something of a shock recognized in the girl crouched on the chair, a sibling whose pretty face and winning ways had been, after all, perhaps, only a fearful armour against the terrors of the night, a shield that was not visible to her but deluded others into believing her protected (399).

A revision of opinion as this contributes to the development of Sarah as a character but does not subtract her authority as the predominant focalizer of the novel.

The preponderance of figural focalization works towards a minimization of the narratorial presence. As has been seen in The Jewel, such effacement is a narrative strategy to reiterate the status of the narrator as a traveller who reconstructs
events on the strength of what is seen and heard. Protracted dialogic segments in which The Scorpion abounds contribute additionally to this effacement. Of the three story-lines in the novel, the one concerning the interrogation of Kumar almost wholly consists of only verbal interactions. Running into almost one hundred pages, it is one of the finest mimetic sections of The Scorpion. The Mayapore affair is reconstructed on the basis of what Kumar says in response to the questions put to him by Rowan and Gopal. Kumar thus becomes both the focalizing and the narrating agent of the section. The central narrator is of course present but only as an agent who functions as a medium of quotation and as a neutral observer. To give one example of such a scenic representation of events will be sufficient indication of the primacy in the novel of what Benveniste calls "history".  

'How long did your interrogation continue? How long were you in fact making this statement that you had nothing further to say?'
'I don't know'.
'Why not?'
'I lost track of things like time'.
'As long as an hour, two hours?'
'Perhaps'.
'Longer?'
'It could have been '.
'You were alone with the examining officer for two hours or more?'}
Gopal re-entered the arena. 'I don't understand,' he said. 'You were not standing all the time but also you were not sitting. What were you doing? Lying down?'

'I was bent over a trestle'.

'Bent over a trestle?'

'Tied to it'. He hesitated, then he added, 'For the persuasive phase of the interrogation'.

A pause.

Gopal said, 'Are you stating that you were physically ill-treated?' (343)

In this section the function of the narrator is confined to supplying the reporting clauses such as 'he said', 'then added' etc. The sentences like 'Gopal re-entered the arena', 'he hesitated' are also the textual indicators of the narrator's neutral presence.

Scenic representation is also the hallmark of the other two story-lines which unfold largely through an alternation of quoted dialogues and monologues. The monologues, as has been noted, belong invariably to Sarah, who is also a dialogic participant in the story-line of which her family is the focal point. She is locked in a verbal engagement with Merrick on at least two occasions: first, when Merrick calls on her at Mirat after the marriage ceremony of Susan; and second, when she herself calls on him at Calcutta after the death of Teddie. In both the engagements Merrick leads the conversation as a
result of which he establishes most emphatically his views of the colonial encounter. By pairing himself with Teddie as a set of binarily opposed characters, he endeavours to privilege his worldview as the ideal paradigm of value. He reiterates his value system by lamenting in his first conversation with Sarah the gradual passing away of an era together with its certainties and stabilities.

... We've become so lofty and detached, so starry-eyed about our own civilized values and about our own common-sense view prevailing that our policy has become one of indifference too. We don't rule this country any more. We preside over it, in accordance with a book of rules written by the people back home (256).

So unshakable is his belief in his chosen mission that he castigates any thought or action that swerves from what he thinks to be the real thrust of the mission. In his conversation with Bronowsky during the marriage ceremony of Susan he characterizes Daphne's courage in giving birth to an illegitimate child as "a direct challenge to every thing sane and decent that we try to do out here"(234). The conversation, which increasingly turns out to be a form of unofficial interrogation of Merrick by Bronowsky on his controversial role in the Mayapore case, is a rhythmic repetition of the official interrogation of Kumar. Analogically therefore, just as the views of Kumar are subject to the scrutiny of Lady Manners so also
the views of Merrick are subject to that of both Bronowsky and Sarah. But whereas Bronowsky is a perceptive commentator and a marginal actor, Sarah is a vital character who gives some of the finest insights into the figural mind.

Conversations play a significant role in the first story-line that deals with the political facet of the novel. A brief outline of the political history of India, especially the chequered relationship of the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League since the adoption of the federal scheme in 1935, is sketched by Governor Malcolm in his bid to persuade Kasim into seeing the folly of toeing the line of a party that has not wised up to the political realities and of going into wilderness for being a part of such a party. Kasim refutes the truncated and lop-sided political reading of the governor. The reasons put forth as the grounds of turning down the governor's proposal are reechoed in Kasim's conversation with Ahmed in which he argues vigorously for the need of an internally cohesive and externally unified country.

The macrostructure of The Scorpion sets up relations of interdependence among the various story-lines through the differentiated points at which the intersection brings out certain events as the stressful kernels. The events are of course conveyed through narration; but since a self-effacing narrator conducts the narration through a multiplicity of figural focalizations, the ideological facet of those figural focalizations that conforms to the implicit norms of the
narrator invests the kernels with their semantic potential and orients the basic thrust of the novel. The interplay of the focalizations serves another purpose: it identifies The Scorpion as a novel concerned with exploring the mindset of the characters who occupy positions on the either side of the colonial equation.

One of the most stressful points of The Scorpion is the erosion of an ideal suggested in the frustrations of Kasim and the death of Teddie. Even though they are paradigmatically grouped thus, both Kasim and Teddie have differing views of the ideal. For Kasim, at any rate, the growth of the INA as an alternative political and military movement stands for the rise of irresponsibility in the political life of the nation. More importantly, it signifies an act of treachery against the appointing authorities as well as the country. It has a frighteningly personal relevance for Kasim; his own son joins the INA. While traiting Kasim the novel underlines a common desire between him and one of his most illustrious ancestors: 'Mohammed Ali...(was) a man in whom perhaps could be detected yet another inheritance, Akbar's old dream of a united subcontinent.'

The INA is thus a metonymic expression of the death of a dream and of an ideal for which he courts arrest in 1942. The sad part of the whole thing is that his own kith and kin connive at assisting this death. On that score, the plaintive cry that greets Kasim's knowledge of his son's desertion to
the INA becomes a proleptic signifier of the ultimate division of the sub-continent attended by an internecine blood-letting. Kasim rebuffs his younger son Ahmed who brings him news of his elder son's desertion with angry and harsh words:

What are you telling me?... That he is not a man to keep his contract? That he is an opportunist? A cowardly scoundrel? Without a thought for his own honour or for mine, or his mother's or for yours? Are you telling me this is the kind of India I have gone to prison for? If you are, you had better leave me here. I do not know that kind of India. I do not know that kind of man. He is not Sayed. He is not my son (559).

A resigned sadness underlies the agitation of his mind because Kasim ultimately recognizes the truth of Ahmed's political analysis: "There is an Indian National Army and it isn't just a few madmen.... A dozen Indian officers helping the Japanese would have no political significance. The British could shoot them for treachery and no one would need to raise a finger in protest. But hundreds of officers and thousands of men do have political significance." (560)

The Indian National Army had been the brainchild of a group of revolutionaries based in Japan and Bangkok. Formed with the intent of liberating India from British subjection through armed struggle, it found its most charismatic leader
in Subhas Chandra Bose who had independently set up an Indian Legion in Berlin for the same purpose. As an army of liberation, it recruited its cadres from the Indian soldiers who were the prisoners of war of the Japanese and the Germans. "The INA joined the Japanese army in its march on India from Burma. Inspired by the aim of freeing their homeland, the soldiers and officers of the INA hoped to enter India as its liberators with Subhas Bose at the head of the provisional Government of Free India." The INA, if anything, had been a profound though external shock to the inertia that had gripped the Indian polity following the suppression of the Movement of 1942. On the British too its impact was no less shattering. It was a cruel reminder of the not too distant World War.

Each volume of The Quartet has a definite historical anchorage. In The Jewel it is the Quit-India Movement of 1942; in The Scorpion it is the Indian National Army of 1943-1944. Unlike The Jewel, however, where the revolt of 1942 is perfectly fused with the fiction, The Scorpion relegates the political developments of the chosen period to the background where they continue to exert pressure on the fictional foreground all the same. It affects the majority of characters in the novel in one way or the other. If it signifies a loss of personal integrity to Kasim, it represents to Teddie the erosion of a stable military tradition, the lore of the Raj, in short a whole way of life.

Brought up on the best of the regimental mystique, Teddie
cannot accept the reality of the INA. He cannot believe that "Indian soldiers who'd eaten the King's salt and been proud to serve in the army generation after generation could be suborned like that, buy their way out of prison camp by turning coat, come armed hand in hand with the Japs to fight the very officers who had trained them, cared for them and earned their respect." (447-448)

Even if the broad facts concerning the desertion of the Indian soldiers are true, he cannot bring himself to believe that a member of the Muzzy Guides, the regiment to which he belongs himself, can be a "Jiff": "No sepoy of the Muzzy Guides would ever turn coat, he'd rather die" (458). But when a captured Jiff turns out to be indeed a sepoy of the regiment, Teddie is visibly shaken. He therefore takes pains to make the man aware of the enormity of his crime—disloyalty" to the uniform of his father and fathers before him" (462). Shamed into realization, the man weeps and begs Teddie to shoot him. The scene does not embarrass Teddie.

He held the man's shoulder and shook him a bit and said "you're still a soldier. Act like one. You've done very wrong, but I am still your father and mother"... Teddie meant it. He really meant it. In spite of what that man had done he felt it was his duty to do his best for him (463).

The restoration of the old equation gives Teddie immense
psychological satisfaction; he feels vindicated that soldiers such as these, misguided as they have been by the false Japanese propaganda that British officers have abandoned their Indian soldiers in the face of enemy advance, will return to the fold at the sight of the officers. Merrick, who reports to Sarah the sight of the reunion, observes that

(Baksh) knelt down and put his head on Teddie's boots and that didn't embarrass Teddie either. I think it moved him. Very deeply. As if something he'd always believed in and put his trust in had been proved. He pulled Baksh to his feet, quite gently, and then they stared at each other. Measuring up. To each other, and to some standard of, well, what worked, what was possible about conduct.... They both understood that Teddie intended to do his best for him. ...(463-4)

Teddie gets killed in an explosion while trying to locate on the Burma border two other Jiffs—both ex-Muzzy Guides— to persuade them to surrender to the authorities and return thereby to the regimental code of honour. Teddie's death, which occurs in the pursuit of an evanescent goal, is thus a metaphor for the death of an ideal. For Teddie, the ideal refers to the kind of relationship that should obtain between the officers and the soldiers within a military regiment and therefore, by implication, between the British and the Indians. The only form of relationship acceptable to him is paternal. As Merrick sums up
Teddie: "(He) died... for the regiment... there was a touch of old-fashioned gallantry in it. All that paternalist business really meant something to him. Man-Bap. I am your father and your mother"(470). Teddie's view of himself as a military officer is a naturalization of his racial superiority which enjoins upon him, as a consequence, the messianic duty of guiding the natives like a father. Commenting on the social and cultural intercourse between the British and the Indians under the Raj, Philip Mason observes that "Between people so different, there could be courtesy, kindliness and liking, there could be affection, but no dealing on equal terms. The relationship was paternal."  

In Teddie's death there is a combination, therefore, of an attempt at preserving the status quo of relationship by eliminating the disruption posed to it by the INA and an atonement for the sad decline of the paternal ethos. Merrick finds an analogical parity between the deaths of Teddie and Crane: both die by fire for the failure of an ideal they hold dear. Culturally, fire connotes purification. To die by fire is an effort on the part of both of them to cleanse themselves of the guilt of their individual responsibility for the loss of the ideal.  

Merrick sees Teddie as an "anachronism" and his ideals as "old fashioned virtues"(447). As against the amateurish actions of Teddie he traits himself as "unemotional" with "a
certain professional detachment" (447). Sarah refutes this self-estimate of Merrick's because she detects a similar emotional involvement in all his actions. The recklessness with which he forges ahead to save Teddie is more an emotional than a professional action; he subscribes to those values that have sustained Teddie and given his death a meaning: "I see a man who was in love with those legends, that way of life, all those things that from a distance seemed to distinguish people like us from people of his own kind, people he knew better. I see a man still in love with them but who has chosen to live outside in the cold because he couldn't get in to warm his hands at this hearth with its dying fire" (472). The real difference between Teddie and Merrick lies in the degree in which they conform to the concept of paternalism. While Teddie sets store by its benevolence, Merrick insists on its authoritarian power as the means of correcting the natives.

The character of Merrick is another stressful point of The Scorpion's macrostructure. The second and the third storylines intersect each other through him— he occupies a position of eminence in both of them. Even Kasim in the first storyline refers in his letter to the Governor to the dubious role of Merrick in the Mayapore case. Merrick is the single most important character of The Scorpion and for that matter of the entire Quartet. In a sense, he represents all the illiberal forces of the Raj opposed to a British-Indian union. Yet he is not a type. He is as much an individual as a product of the English social conditions. In his conversation with Sarah,
Merrick brings out the questions of class that tend to colour the quality of relationship between Englishmen in India.

... any difference that Teddie saw in our attitudes, he'd always put down to the fact that I wasn't the same class. You can't disguise it, can you? It comes out in subtle ways, even when you've learned the things to say and how to say them. It comes out in not knowing the places or the people your kind of people know, it comes out in the lack of points of common contact(450).

The awareness of his humble and low class origin provides the motivational underpinning to his actions. Even his accent, as Sister Ludmila points out in The Jewel, is "regulated by care and ambition rather than by upbringing "(The Jewel 171). The intra-community relationship of the English in India is a replication of "the British social scene with its own internal frictions and enmities." During his interrogation of Kumar he has admitted that"... his origins were humble. If he hadn't had brains he'd have ended up as a clerk in an office working from nine to six. But he had brains. He'd got on . In India he automatically became a sahib. He hobnobbed on equal terms with people who would snub him at home and knew they would snub him(359).

The trait of Merrick's humble origin circulates throughout the novel. A host of characters refer to it at some point of time or the other. Fenny comments on this while Merrick
accompanies them to the guest house of the Nawab of Mirat during the marriage of Teddie: "... Merrick's family would (not) bear close inspection. But he's quite the little gentleman, and terribly efficient over detail. That's a sign of humble origin" (173). Even Sarah who does not react to the colonial situation in a stereotypical way detects traces of his poor upbringing in his voice: "When Captain Merrick replied his voice was... resonant. It was a good voice, but not public school" (173).

The entire gamut of Merrick's actions is calculated to erase the signs of his origin. His attachment to Daphne in The Jewel springs not from any motives of real love on his part but from purely utilitarian reasons. It is "the political cachet of her background" that turns him on. As a member of the Indian Police first and then as a Captain of Indian Army, one of the finest in the world, Merrick has earned a place on the elite circle of the social scene in India. Commenting on this scene, Brown observes that "one's occupation... determines one's place in the Indian scheme of things." The consideration of class distinctions that prevail in England tend at times to subvert the fixity of the hierarchy. An alliance with Daphne, who has a distinguished family background, can satisfactorily counterbalance Merrick's lack of class. He admits as much in narrating to Sarah his feelings for Daphne:

"... I saw her as peculiarly graceful. Grave. Slow. Beautiful almost, because of that. The kind of girl
you could talk to. Really talk to. Or just sit with. Our tastes were—much the same. In music. Pictures. That sort of thing. Our backgrounds were quite different, because mine is very ordinary, but Daphne didn't give a damn who your parents were or what school you went to'(259).

Merrick's self-narration is not without its strategic significance especially when he likens Daphne to Sarah: he wants to get attached to her. Next to Daphne, Sarah is the only other woman character in the novel who has the legacy of a distinguished identity. The paternal stream of her family is constituted by the Laytons generations of whom have been educated in the best of the English public schools such as the Chillingborough and have served the British empire as civil and military officers. The Muirs—no less an established Anglo-Indian family than the Laytons—have served the King mainly as military officers; they constitute the maternal stream of Sarah's family. Merrick hopes to reap from an attachment with Sarah the same kind of psychological fullness as the one he has expected from an alliance with Daphne.

Class is a significant component of the English consciousness, but denied of the sense of belonging, of rootedness that it offers, Merrick hones his racism as a compensatory reaction. He scoffs at the idea of a relationship of equality between the British and the Indians.
You have to draw a line.... you need it there, you need to be able to say: There's the line. This side of it is right. That side is wrong. Then you have your moral term of reference. Then you can act. You can feel committed. You can be involved. Your life takes on something like a shape. It has form (260).

There is consistency in the traiting of Merrick especially in so far as his unswerving belief in a racist division of the communities is concerned. Racism for him is a signifier of negative relationship—the British ought to exhibit contempt for the Indians, and the Indians must respond to the British with fear. Merrick's tone takes on an added pungency when he repeats to Kumar what he has already said to Sarah: "...relationships between people were based on contempt, not love, and that contempt was the prime human emotion because no human being was ever going to believe all human beings were born equal. If there was an emotion almost as strong as contempt it was envy.... a man's personality existed at the point of equilibrium between the degree of his envy and the degree of his contempt" (360).

The singling out of contempt and envy as basic human emotions and the code of conduct by which both the communities ought to abide add a complicating factor to Merrick's own dealing with the Indians, especially Hari Kumar. Kumar has landed status, a public school education, in short a kind of
upbringing that Merrick ought to have as an English man but has not. Consequently, Kumar becomes an object of envy rather than an envying subject. The frequency with which Merrick harps on Kumar's vanity and his refusal to subordinate himself to his authority indicates a topsyturving of his own favourite model of colonial equation. To Bronowsky, he describes Kumar as "the worst of the lot", out to rape and murder white women and as a man who has been educated at Chillingborough, one of the"big public schools at home" (241). To the Laytons, too, he introduces Kumar in more or less similar terms: a "surly type of westernized Indian who thinks he's a cut above everybody"(179). Kumar's having been at Chillingborough is a matter of envy for Merrick, who has not been to as good a place. What irks him further is the fact that Kumar does not shrink into submission under the weight of his colonial power. In recounting his first confrontation with Kumar at the Sanctuary, Merrick tells Bronowsky that Kumar "thought he was too good to answer the questions of a mere district superintendent of police" (232). On the contrary, Kumar affects to establish an equal relationship with Merrick. As he barges into Kumar's room after Daphne is reported to have been assaulted, the latter reacts with what he thinks is justifiable anger: "Who gave you permission to burst into my room, Merrick?"(244) What to Kumar is a search for equality in an unequal situation is to Merrick an audacious presumption and an appropriation of the colonizer's prerogatives.

Merrick's brutality to Kumar is on one level a logical
outcome of the strange relationship between the two but on another level it is a clue to the complex mind of Merrick, for his violence is mixed with his sexual attraction for Kumar. The interrogation of Kumar provides an insight into the latent homosexual inclinations of Merrick. The violence is an unconscious projection of his sexual preferences. Jaques Lacan treats the phallus as a symbol of patriarchal law.¹⁴ Merrick's homosexuality is therefore a phallocentric obsession with patriarchal power which signifies the antithesis between dominant, superior and hence white, and submissive, inferior and hence black. Kumar who, because of his education and background, causes some of the signifieds to slide from one part of this metaphoric equation to the other, threatens Merrick's phallic status. The violence is thus an act of restoring the phallic balance of power through an indulgence of excess.¹⁵ Through the sexual fondling of Kumar's private parts even as he subjects him to his sadistic torture, Merrick establishes with Kumar what Ashis Nandy calls "an unconscious homo-eroticized bonding."¹⁶ The oppressive sense of guilt that the knowledge of such bonding generates propels him to torture Kumar all the more. The violence is in a sense directed at his own self: it is an effort at self-obliteration and at erasure of the burden of guilt. He, therefore, either provokes him to hit him or degrades him to kill himself. Kumar is driven by his humiliation to the brink of committing suicide but that such a course will suit Merrick immensely stops him from carrying it out. Similarly, through an effort of will, he refrains from hitting out at Merrick because that will serve his purpose too.
The Scorpion orchestrates at least four distinct figural responses to Merrick's treatment of Kumar in the Mayapore case. Both Lady Manners and Rowan believe that what Kumar says is true. Bronowsky, too, feels that Merrick in apprehending Kumar has committed a "passionate mistake"(236). The consensus of opinion represented in the novel resolves the uncertainty regarding the verity of Vidyasagar's deposition made in The Jewel. In The Jewel doubts are cast on his statement by no less a character than White whose voice, clearsighted, and unprejudiced, has a ring of authority. The establishment in The Scorpion of the fact that Vidyasagar has been telling the truth points out—apart from the technique of solving in a succeeding volume enigmas raised in a preceding text—the impossibility of securing Scott's view of life through any particular character. Just as all the characters express some part of the novelist's consciousness, so also quite a few of them embody in varying degrees the ideal of Scott.

The common opinion of Bronowsky, Rowan and Lady Manners centres on the individual complicity of Merrick in the Mayapore case without trying to relate his racism to the issue of life in colonial India. Only Sarah does that. In evaluating Merrick and his mentality, Sarah comments in an instance of silent locution: "You are... our dark side, the arcane side. You reveal something that is sad about us, as if out here we had built a mansion without doors and windows, with no way in and no way out. All India lies on our doorstep and cannot enter to warm us or be warmed" (476).
The British racist hauteur represented by Merrick has its binary opposition in the form of a nationalistic and hegemonistic aloofness of a section of Indians typified in the attitudes of Pandit Baba. Although he makes a brief appearance in the first part of The Scorpion, his character looms large in the background. Presented as a "venerable Hindu scholar" (225), he exerts "a lot of influence over young Indians of the educated class" (285). He has been hired to teach Kumar Hindi. Bronowsky believes that he is responsible for the persecution that has dogged Merrick since his departure from Mayapore to Sundernagar, then on to his military stations and that he has engineered the incidents that have occurred at Mirat. The Scorpion presents through him an extreme Indian reaction to the possibility of an equitable British-Indian interpersonal relationship:

We are Indians and they are English. True intimacy is not possible. It is not even desirable. Only it is desirable that there should be peace between us, and this is not possible while the English retain possession of what belongs to us, because to get it back we must fight them. But also when we have got back from them what they have taken from us and are at peace with them this does not mean that we should love them. We can never be friends with the English, nor they with us.... (136).

As against this range of attitudes, whether paternal or
racist, Sarah seeks to forge a relationship of equality with the Indians. By doing so, she rises above the narrow confines of the Anglo-Indian life in Pankot and gets differentiated from the members of her own family. She belongs to a family the members of which define themselves, their duties, their professions, their moral values, their habits of social behaviour in relation to India. But the apprehension of self is as uniquely individual as the reaction. The presentation of the Layton family is an innovative textual strategy, used on the one hand, to delineate in a capsule form a multiplicity of British reactions to the Indian experience, and on the other hand to reflect through the web of intra-familial relationship the changing political scenerio of India. While *The Scorpion* offers a contour map of the family, *The Towers* provides details about it together with its squabbles and bickerings, love and animosities.

John Layton, the absent head of the family and POW of Germany at the moment, has a sense of identity with the country he comes to live in. The identity is, however, paternal and paradigmatically in line with that of Teddie. His benevolent paternalism, like Teddie's, is an offshoot of his being a military officer. The fondness that he feels for the soldiers and the common Indians springs, as it were, from a personal desire to be useful to and be responsible for them. Underlying such a desire is a certain internalization of the colonialist's duty of bringing happiness to the natives through personal sacrifice and becoming the centre of flattered attention oneself.
He... would sleep the sound sleep of satisfied appetite for food and drink and human correspondence that left in his mind an impression of the hill people's grave simplicity and cheerful dignity so that he thought 'well, home is here,' and knew that for English people in India there was no home in the sense of brick and mortar, orchard and pasture, but that it was lodged mysteriously in the heart (86).

Mildred Layton is also affected profoundly by India though not in the sense in which her husband is. The semic encoding of Mildred with her individual response to the Indian experience occurs in The Towers. In The Scorpion, the effect of "the strain of separation from her husband" is visible in "her vague- ness and general air of distraction" and an "overindulgence with the bottle" (151-152). These new features of her character tend to interfere with her own life style and influence the nature of her relationship with the other members of her family. She wears a mask of indifference to the affairs of her daughters and at the same time wants everything, especially the marriage of Susan, to be kept at abeyance till the return of her husband.

Mabel and Susan share between them the trait of indifference, but to each of them it has a different meaning. Susan's indifference together with her charm and winning ways conceals a deep-seated fear of personal inadequacy. Consequently, all
her actions are directed at situating herself in the middle of a "charmed circle"(101). The shock of her young husband's death sends her into a world of melancholia. The indifference worn as a mask slowly turns into a psychotic withdrawal as she undergoes the additional shock of a premature labour brought on by the sudden death of Mabel. She copes with the loss of her husband, the painful reality of her own insufficiency exposed in the wake of such loss at a fantasy level.

Fantasy for Susan becomes the primary mode of a wish fulfilment, of finding happiness that the world of reality does not offer. It is Sarah who divines the reasons of Susan's happiness in a state of complete withdrawal.

How pretty you look, Sarah thought. Pretty and happy. No more than happy, profoundly content, totally withdrawn. You've found your way in. Why should that cause us pain and sorrow? Why should it hurt to think that you ...recognize me as someone belonging to a world that's become unreal to you and isn't to be compared with the one you've always imagined and imagine now, and smile at because you feel its protection all round you like a warmth?(572)

Mabel's indifference to the affairs of the Anglo-India and her withdrawal into a private world of her own have the same quality of self-discovery as Susan's but without the psychological ramifications of the latter. She lives alone holed up
in Rose Cottage, away from and totally unconcerned with the problems that beset her stepson's family. Barbara Batchelor, her only companion at the Cottage and the central character in The Towers, comments on this insouciance to Sarah: "She lived a life of her own, didn't she? I never knew what she was thinking. It sometimes seemed to me she'd found herself, I mean her true self, and just wanted to be alone but have someone who would talk to her." (570).

Mabel's withdrawal is symptomatic of a sensitive mind incapable of coming to terms with the insensitivities of her countrymen in dealing with the Indians. Her apparently ambivalent attitude to India camouflages an extreme though never fully verbalized critique of British imperialism. She is haunted, for example, by the atrocities of the 1919 massacre which expose the brutal face of imperialism. She publicly refuses, therefore, to identify herself with the fund-raising drive of the Pankot and Ranpur ladies to save General Dyer from starving and privately sends money instead to the fund for Dyer's victims. Explaining the rationale of her action, she tells her stepson,

To me it's not a question of choosing between poor old Dyer and the bloody browns. The choice was made for me when we took the country over and got the idea we did so for its own sake instead of ours. Dyer can look after himself, but according to the rules the browns can't because looking after them
is what we get paid for. And if it's really necessary every so often to shoot some of them down like ninepins for their own good the least we can do is admit it, just say, Hard Luck to the chap who shoots too many, and see to it that the women and children who lost their menfolk, or the children who lost their parents don't starve' (81).

Unable to channel her shock in an alternative mode, she retreats into a private universe where she sets up the terms of her interaction with India and the Indians. The memory of the 1919 massacre, however, lies in her unconscious expressing itself occasionally in her dreams. She refers in her sleep to a Gillian Waller which mystifies both Barbie and Sarah. Gillian Waller, as K.B. Rao points out, is "the twisted and garbled version of the words Jallianwallah Bagh."¹⁷

Sarah inherits Mabel's ambivalence without the certainty of attitudes. She is on a constant search for the modes of self-actualization. Consequently, unlike others she has no fixed categories of response. The only fixed quality about her is her sharply marked-out individuality unblinker by any prejudice or prearranged emotion. The character of Sarah, on account of this volatile signification, is not complete till the very end of The Quartet. In The Scorpion, however, there is a perfect correspondence between her semic traiting and her actions. As a child, Sarah has not been happy in England; as a woman, she is not happy in India either. The basic reason for
this unhappiness is partly the awareness that she cannot be herself in India.

She ... remembered her Aunt Lydia saying that India was an unnatural place for a white woman. As a child she had not understood, but had understood since, and agreed with Aunt Lydia that it was. They did not transplant well. Temperate plants, in the hot house they were brought on too quickly and faded fast, and the life they lived, when the heat had dried them out and left only the aggressive husk, was artificial (165).

The awareness does not stop her from striving towards a state where she can be her natural self. As an inevitable part of this striving, she refuses to subscribe to the artificial barriers in which the Pankot society has shut itself up. Her visit to Lady Manners shunned and cast out by the English community because of her decision to shelter Parvati encodes a sequence of resistance on Sarah's part to merge her self-identity with the group identity. It generates, as a corollary, a guardedly hostile response from the Pankot society which dubs her as unconventional and anti-British. Mrs Smalley, one of the nondescript ladies of the Pankot society but a central character in Staying On, voices in her customarily hesitant manner the collective response.

'If you ask me', young Mrs Smalley said- ...' the
trouble is she doesn't really take it seriously...

'Any of it,' Mrs Smalley said, 'Us, India. What we're here for. I mean in spite of every thing. In spite of her - well, what she was brought upto.... I ... get a horrible feeling she's laughing .... At all of us ....'(156).

The horse-ride with Ahmed is yet again an attempt by Sarah to satisfy the urge of her self by breaking out of the constricting life of the Anglo-Indian society into something challenging and largely unacceptable. As she herself admits: "It wasn't until we actually set out that I realized it was the first time I'd been alone with an Indian who wasn't a servant"(184). The consciously-taken step towards forming a relationship of equality with an Indian is an indictment of the general British mind which feels at home with only those Indians who are servants. Because Sarah puts a premium on the individuality of her own self, she can afford to recognize the dignity of each human being. The need for a warm human contact equips her with the courage to be colour blind. The novel duplicates Daphne in Sarah through this character trait; but Sarah never takes the final plunge, as Daphne does, into the other India that represents the physical and the body. The relationship between Sarah and Ahmed does not develop into a serious affair primarily because the latter cannot shed his self-consciousness. However, as the last volume of The Quartet shows, the pair comes to share a special bond of empathy.
It is Sarah's hope of the possibility of an open and equal relationship between the races that keeps in check the racist biases of Merrick. It is her feeling of "happiness and grace," again, that counterbalances the concluding fiery image of the novel. Indeed, the novel conveys a sense of melancholy and of destruction. The predicament and helplessness of Kasim, for example, issue from his incapacity to exert a satisfying hold on the rapidly changing political conditions which threaten to undo his dreams of an equal relationship between the two major communities of India. Similarly, the death of Teddie which occurs for what he thinks is a noble cause is looked upon as wasted because paternalism which has been his source of sustenance has been rendered obsolete by the growing cynicism represented by Clark. The appearance of this new type of Englishman with socialist irreverence for the institution of the Raj threatens the legitimacy of the Laytons' continuing presence in India. Clark considers the Raj to be a "time-expired sore, a suppurating mess," a leg too far gone in gangrene to be worth saving" (511). Even Sarah has herself the premonition of an unhappy ending of the British-Indian engagement: "...Her father's generation must be the last generation of English people.... War or no war, it was all coming to an end, and the end could not come neatly. There would be people who had to be victims of the fact that it could not" (148). The most poignant symbol of what Sarah calls the death wish of the English is the attempt of Susan to kill her baby within a circle of fire.

The Scorpion as the overarching image of the novel
orchestrates not only the death-wish of the English but also the negations of human contact. The scorpion for all its venom is really a sensitive creature that burns itself to death when encircled by fire. Its seeming suicide in the face of inescapable danger is illusory. Human relationships, too, are sensitive entities and apt to wither when surrounded by indifferent and destructive forces. The death of Kasim's and Teddie's ideals, the breakdown of human contact are ultimately accounted for by the insensitivities exhibited by both the British and the Indians as well as by the subversive conditions over which the characters have no control.

The Scorpion seeks to study the motivations of the characters by establishing a series of relationships both intra-communal and inter-communal. One of the strong points of the novel is a sympathetic portrayal of both British and Indian characters. Even the racist biases of Merrick, singled out in The Jewel as one of the principal reasons of the failure of Daphne-Kumar love relationship, are treated in a kind light. They are shown to be as much a product of individual frustrations as the prevailing social conditions. Merrick's racial prejudices, as the novel shows, are a reaction-formation against the social class stratification of England that relegates him to a negligible place. As much as the racist biases, the paternal attitudes idealized by Teddie and John Layton are themselves no less impediments to a meaningful one-to-one relationship between the British and the Indians. What lends a peculiar sadness to these characters is, however, the
knowledge that their attitude is undercut by the changing moral climate at home. The people really engaged in the running of the empire are out of tune with the new ethos represented in the novel by the likes of Clark. The fluid situation arising out of the war conditions throws up people like him who because of their brief stay in India have neither the patience for the elaborate facade of the Raj nor any respect for the values that have sustained generations of the Laytons in India.

Similarly, the changing conditions of the Indian polity bring forth a kind of opportunism which is strictly outside the code of Kasim's conduct. With his pragmatism and moral integrity he, too, is out of tune with the times which invite compromises in political life and irrational gestures in public life. The final picture of Kasim that emerges in The Scorpion is that of a man crucified on his commitments wearing a crown of thorns.

The Scorpion presents three types of relationships. Apart from providing additional insights into the Indo-British relations through not only recounting the Kumar-Daphne affair from a new angle but also recreating this affair on a minor key in the Sarah-Ahmed alliance, the novel offers accounts of the intra-communal relations of the Indians and those of the British. While the Indians' relation with each other is presented in political terms, the Britishers' is offered through the
family network of the Laytons. The experience of India affects the nature of the basic man-woman and woman-woman relationship of the British society as particularized in the Layton family. This in turn exerts a conditioning effect on their attitudes to the Indians. The Towers follows up on what is broadly outlined in The Scorpion— the internal structure of the Layton family against the backdrop of the self-contained Pankot society—till the various relationships are tied up in the final subversive symbol of A Division.
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