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# Colonial Modernity, Crime and Detective Fiction: A Survey of Indian Detective Fiction

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**Abstract:** The paper explores how modern rationality encouraged the development of Indian detective fiction as a genre by tracing the history of detective fiction from the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century when Saradindu Bandyopadhyay wrote the Byomkesh Bakshi mysteries. The study takes detective fiction to study Bengali Bhadrakalpa as a byproduct of the symbiotic relationship with British colonialism. It argues that the modernity India/Bengal acquired is colonial modernity. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, every sphere of life in Bengal became modified by the wave of modernity, witnessing a transition in the domestic sphere and the world outside, which witnessed a change in the form of crime from pre-colonial times to the post-independence period. The Bhadrakalpa are a part and parcel of the modernity of Bengal that came in the form of the Bengal Renaissance in the mid-nineteenth century. The study attempts to understand the ambivalence of colonial modernity. The production of culture by a particular socio-economic group is hybridized when it comes in contact with a dominant group. The paper scrutinizes the influence of modern rationality on the literary production of detective fiction. It will also trace the development of the detective genre published by the newly established publishing houses. As modernity affects more than any single aspect of human life, multiple effects have resulted from Bengal's engagement with modernity through British hegemonic intervention.

**Keywords:** Colonial Modernity, Crime and Detective Fiction, Bengali Detective Fiction.

## Introduction

Detective and Crime fiction have exceeded all the other genres of fiction in the last two centuries. Best seller lists in the newspaper and magazines invariably include crime fictions

titles; books have dedicated crime fiction sections. The texts are read across age, appealing to young and to the old as well as merely middle age. Academic study of the genre is relatively recent because of its importance and relevance to study of literature and culture. W.H Auden says, “The reading of detective stories is an addiction like tobacco or alcohol.”(*The Guilty Vicarage* 2) After all Critics define it as a popular literature, pulp fiction, contemporary, ephemeral, disposable, accessible reading, undemanding non-canonical, non-academic: an easy option. There is a wide spread, even global, acknowledgement of the genre not only academically but also commercially. Defining the detective novel P. D. James says, “Novels which have an atrocious crime at their heart, whose writers set out to explore and interpret the dangerous and violent underworld of crime, its causes, ramifications and effect on both perpetrators and victims, can cover an extraordinarily broad spectrum of imaginative writing extending to some of the highest works of the human imagination.” (James, 5)

The genre gets the tag of a form of popular fiction as it can appeal to only a privileged minority until a community achieves a high level of literacy. It is generally accepted that the ideology of individualism, the growth of science and rationality, development of the city, the founding of the police forces and of the surveillance all are important to consider in explaining the genre’s development. There is, however, marked divergence of opinion about how this social articulations are related. This may be a result of the fact that detective fiction has diversified to the point where it can be subdivided into various subgenres. Thus there is nineteenth century classic fiction of Edger Allen Poe and Arthur Canon Doyle, the golden age literature of Agatha Christie, the hard boiled thrillers of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett and cold war spy fiction of writers such as Ian Fleming and John Le Carre. All of these types fall into the category loosely

termed crime writing but each in turn have distinct characteristics that relate to their separate time and space and have therefore been subjected to varying interpretations by numerous and diverse scholars.

Francesca Orsini writes that the detective novel in India got immediate success in nineteenth century with the translation in regional language from English. But there are many writers who wrote detective, spy and mystery texts were written in English. Rudyard Kipling is one of the foremost Indian English writers; his *Kim* (1901) is concerned with great game of spying. The others mystery writers of English including S. Mukherji's *The Mysterious Traders*(1915); S.K. Chettur's *Bombay Murder*(1940); and Kamala R. Sathianadhan's *Detective Janaki* (1944). Tabis Khair observes the fiction of Ravi Shanker Ettieth's *The Tiger by the River* and *The Village of the Windows* (2004)) novels and Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (1919) have the elements of mystery.(Indian Pulp Fiction in English)

Sleuths have been a part of the Bengal's popular fiction for well over a century. The detective story in Bengali literature is known as the *goenda kahini* (translation: 'detective story') .The earliest endeavor of writing detective story started in Bengali literature and its beginning lies in 1890s with Priyanath Mukherjee's personal experiences published in a magazine entitled *Darogar Daptar*. It resembled Francois Eugene Vidocq's *Memoirs de Vidocq*, an eventful memoir of soldier, a criminal, an entrepreneur, a private detective personal experience. Though Mukherjee's work is not totally original but tried hard to 'Bengalify' his stories. He gained popularity and his series inspired other writers to explore the genre. Panchkori Dey is one of his renown processors but his writing was no particularly original and neither had much literary quality writing in the early 20th century. Dey was the first to introduce the detective-assistant duo in Bengali, following the Holmes-Watson tradition: *Debendrabijoy* and

*Arindam*. Dey was a voracious reader of English crime fiction and he didn't hesitate to recreate in Bengali what he'd read in English. Many other writers tried to write detective stories but they had neither originality nor literary quality. It is the trio of, Hemandra Kumar, Saradindu Bandyopadhyay and Satyajit Roy who brought the detective genre to Bengali literature.

The critical response to Indian detective genre is not as enormous as its literary output. Serious intellectual and critical investigation are required for the genre. Few scholars have tried to investigate the development of detective and crime fiction in the Indian subcontinent. Linguist and scholar Sukumar Sen is one of those few. His investigative book, *Crime Kahinir Kalkranti* (1995), explores the genealogy of crime and detective tradition of India. The book critically analyzes the generic development of crime and detective tradition from the West to the Indian subcontinent. Another visionary work is by Pinaki Roy in his *The Manichean Investigators: the Postcolonial and Cultural Rereading of Sherlock Holmes and Byomkesh Bakshi Stories* (2008). Here, Roy tries to relate detective fiction to the postcolonial and cultural traditions of pre- and post-independence Bengal. He argues about how the detective narratives of Sherlock Holmes construct the appalling and, at the same time, the alluring image of the Orient, which was used to underpin and legitimize the British colonialist. He examines colonialism as a theme through which the British text successfully constructed the orientalist discourse. According to him, Byomkesh completely differs from the Western sleuth as he brings his subaltern identity into crime detection. The book explores the nuances of the discursive construction of the East and the detective narrative as a political representation of the Anglo-American hegemonic world order.

# 1 European Modernity and Development of Detective and Crime Fiction

European modernity came from three waves: the Reformation, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution and the ensuing European revolutions. The most important idea to emerge from Europe was the concept of Individualism, popularized and perpetuated during the transition of Europe from a feudal to an industrial society and fought for passionately during the French Revolution. As a blow to the traditional Western concept of a God-centric civilization, the revolution circulated the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity. The concept of Individualism germinated from the soil of Europe. The European philosophers played a predominant role in this revolutionary ideology. Kant, Hegel and Rousseau are the prime forces of the European revolutions. The second wave was formulated during the Industrial Revolution and led to the transformation in class structure, monopoly over the new trade routes, and other discoveries related to technology. It paved the way for a capitalist economy in the West. The third wave associated with national sovereignty with the rise of European nationalism and the nation-state ushered in the modern political systems.

Western political modernity is the formulation of modern institutions--the formation of the colonial state and its bureaucracy. Frederic Jameson opines that the process of colonialism is always historicized 'that facilitates the creation of binaries of the centre and periphery' (Jameson 46). Jameson's seminal essay "Modernism and Imperialism", informed by the idea of global imperialism inserted into literary history, argues that imperialism is the constitutive element of European modernist aesthetics. Many other critics agree. Walter D. Mignolo asserts vis-à-vis Jameson's insistence that Western modernity promotes colonialism in Asia, Latin

America and Africa. He says that colonialism, in other words, is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility (Mignolo 721).

Jean Baudelaire is quite famous for his argument, which Frederic Jameson supported. According to Baudelaire, when romanticism is dissatisfied with what is still perceived as the reactive sense against the classical, the concept of modernity is born (Jameson 21). Modernity is marked by a discontinuity in social, political, economic and all other previous institutions. The life that modernity brought with it has swept us away from all traditional social orders in a smooth and unprecedented fashion. Whether the transformation is intentional or unintentional, the question is how to identify the discontinuities which differentiate modern social institutions from the traditional social order. Anthony Giddens talks about several features involved in that process. ‘The pace of change’ of conventional civilization has not been less dynamic in pre-modern times; it has merely lacked speed. The pace of the condition is extreme. The predominant factor is the technology, which permeates all other spheres. The second feature of discontinuity involves the scope of change, which is related to connectivity or interconnectedness with one another around the globe. The wave of transformation enveloped the world. With the change in time, some new social institutions rose in the modern period which did not exist in pre-historic times. For example, the national state, the political legacy and its consequent democracy, and the commoditization of production and labour. (Giddens 5-8)

The changes brought by modernity began with the Enlightenment and the Reformation in Europe. While the Reformation questions institutionalized religion, the Enlightenment elevated the minds as the measure of the evolution of man. The Cartesian axiom, “I think, therefore I am”, led steadily towards a more scientific empirical, rational and logical linearity. In this process, nature, religion,

superstition and a more instinctive way of living and thinking were marginalized. European literature has reflected this paradigm shift in the consciousness of the European mind. Therefore, a vital aspect of modernity was the rise in secular writings, literacy, print culture, and the reading public, which resulted in the rise of a new genre, the novel. This new form soon became a social document. The increasing use of the rational faculty of the mind, an interest in the empirical study of data and the rising ascendancy of scientific procedures and perspectives resulted in ratiocination, which took popular form as detective fiction beginning with Edgar Allen Poe, and the sub-genre has never lost popularity.

The beginning of the detective story in modern times came with the establishment of the police system, which started at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the reign of Napoleon. (Reference) Detective and crime fiction have exceeded all other genres in the last two centuries. The detective icon brings immense passion and excitement to one's daily routine. However, the controversy was not over; some academicians did not feel this fiction deserved to be read alongside Shakespeare. The literary quality of detective fiction has always been questioned, though it follows all the literary tools and techniques to prove its grandeur. The genre thus gets the tag of a form of popular fiction as it can appeal to only a privileged minority until a community achieves a high level of literacy.

It is generally accepted that the ideology of individualism, the growth of science and rationality, the development of the city, and the founding of the police forces and surveillance are all important to consider in explaining the genre's development. There is, however, a marked divergence of opinion about how these social articulations are related. This may result from the fact that detective fiction has diversified to the point where it can be subdivided into various subgenres. Thus, there is nineteenth-century classic fiction of Edger Allen Poe and

Arthur Canon Doyle, the golden age literature of Agatha Christie, the hard-boiled thrillers of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett and Cold War spy fiction of writers such as Ian Fleming and John Le Carre. All of these types fall into the category loosely termed crime writing. However, each, in turn, has distinct characteristics that relate to their separate time and space and have, therefore, been subjected to varying interpretations by numerous and diverse scholars.

The avant grade writers modified the formula's 'most conservative feature' which demanded a new way of speculation, and questioning the reader's assumption about the genre. The new dimension also allowed the questioning of the conventional version of the critical formula. Detective fiction, a self-conscious work of art, demands symbolic rather than symptomatic reading. This reading considers the text as the product of a particular time and place and the conscious attempt to symbolize understanding of the time and place (Horsley 52). The distinction of genre as a high and low is culturally constructed (Matzk 5). According to Terry Eagleton, the 'high' cultural form is aesthetically superior, which is more profound, authentic, and humanly historical (qtd. in Wilkinson 11). The low or the popular form does not fulfil the criteria. Christina Ann Evans argued that detective fiction is considered bad literature because its reliance on repeated and familiar strategies does not challenge the reader (Wilkinson 11).

The critical acclamation of the genre came at the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of structuralism and post-structuralism. The debate was assisted a step forward when the question of high art and low art, Popular literature and Mass literature was at its zenith with the blurring distinction of modernism. Structuralist Tzveteran Todorav's teleological thinking about detective fiction resulted in the critical text *Typology of Detective Fiction*. He was eager to formulate the structure of the genre to compare certain measurable

elements (Todorov 2). He suggests that the geometric structure of detective fiction leads to clue after clue. Detective fiction is made up of story about two stories- the first story is a crime, and the second one is an investigation (4). The first story of crime tells what happened, whereas the second story investigates how the reader has learned about it (5). The first story, he argues, is absent but real, and the second one is present but insignificant. These presences and absences constitute the continuity of the narrative (5). Many conventional and literary devices are related to the first action. The devices, he mentions, are of two types – temporal inversion and individual point of view. The complete justification and naturalization initiate the second action. He was not so much concerned about the second story. He asserts that the author is writing a book, and he will give the same treatment to both of the stories. The style he emphasizes should be neutral and pliant to the point where it is rendered imperceptible (6). He marks two readerly aspects of detective fiction. The first one is curiosity, which, according to him, is initiated from effect. Beginning with the effect (murder or crime), the reader must search for the cause. The second is suspense, which moves from cause to effect our interest sustains what will happen next (6).

Peter Huhn also provided a similar analysis of detective narratives. According to him, the detective Story is the combination of a double plot structure, it can be outlined as: the initial crime which remains unsolved and works as an uninterpretable sign that opposes the integration into the established meaning system of a community because crime affiliates and discredits the validity of the system. So, it becomes vital for a community to uncover the hidden meaning by reinterpreting the sign in order to defuse it. The second story is about the progress of the plot which is presented to find Meaning from the sign by finding the missing links to the accepted patterns of reality. This interpretative link forms the

narrative in the detective story thus employing one of the most fundamental devices for generating coherence and meaning telling the story of the genesis of the crime (Huhn 5). The genesis of the crime provides clarity and essential components of the narrative as a well-structured form.

As a general convention every murderer leaves some traces, though, in order to avoid detection, he/she leaves as few trace as possible or manipulates the trace(s) in a way that it does not create further story. So, crime or murder resists the second step of the story i.e. the genealogy of the crime '. Therefore, a mystery is created in the space between the first and the last stories. Thus, crime fiction has a dual plot with two-fold stories. The first story is about crime which the criminal writes and is partly hidden, partly distorted and misleading. But in that process of writing, he does not succeed in overcoming the Freudian Unconsciousness, so, he leaves some traces, which become clues for the detective that begins the second story written by the detective. But interestingly both the stories are similar to a certain extent. In both parts of the story the clues are hidden and readers are completely misled.

An important feature of the detective story is the employment of an 'individualized narrator' who may be the detective's friend or assistant. The reason may be manifold. He is an active participant in the story and the reader of criminal story but unable to detect like the common reader. This device produces an interesting reduplication of the interplay of reading and writing motifs (Huhn 8). And the detection part of the story is a narrative by the detective himself. And with this complete closure the novel no longer contains any interest for the reader. Because the mystery was initially defined as the meaning of the text, no interest remains when the mystery is removed.

There are further, two other components of detective fiction-- freedom and constraint. A crime story is about freedom-- the freedom of the criminal. Crime is an act of freedom. The criminal attempts to realize himself and to gratify his desires by freeing himself from the restraints of society and its defining norms (Huhn 11). The criminal creates a free place by breaking the social codes. The detective, on the other hand, acts as society's agent in order to restrict this freedom and bind the criminal again to the constraining rules of society through arrest and punishment. In detective stories, the detective himself as a reader, who is no ordinary reader, of course, but a super-reader, always succeeds in extracting the meaning from the resistant text. He deconstructs the former i.e. the criminal story and succeeds to find out the sign(s). The process of deconstruction or reconstruction of sign goes on till the end.

A few theorists wrote some critical essays outlining the regulation of this fairplay. "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" (1939) by S. S. Van Dine is one of the most famous of them. A larger number of rules are invested for the concern of the reader--the space for engagement with the reader. The waste of the reader's trouble and expenditure of energy must be rewarded (Dine 2).

These theorists helped detective and crime fiction to achieve an honourable place as far as the complexity of the form was concerned. The double story, the writer-reader relationship and the establishment of crime as a gap or absence-presence in the status quo of society led to the establishment of the detective narrative as a narrative of society, not very different from the social novel. It is now seen as a social document in a more complex form. Popular fiction should not be understood as providing the ideological underpinning of society but as a part of the composite of the surface technology that elaborate and inscribe the relation between class, community and nation (Matzke 15). Raymond Williams regards the study of

popular fiction to be central in trying to recreate what he calls the structure of feeling that is approximating the feeling and the experience in a particular time and place. Gramsci proposed the idea of aesthetic appreciation in detective and popular fiction. His conclusion was that both detective and popular fictions are read only once as they were a practical escape from reality. One reads a book for practical impulse; one rereads it for aesthetic reason. The aesthetic emotion hardly ever comes on the first reading (Wilkinson 14-15).

The intellectual investigation through detective fiction is primarily the province of socially inclined theorists. They assert that detective fiction can be read as the embodiment of social determination as it portrays the real complexity of society. Sociologists are interested in its origin and development as it is very much related to nineteenth century industrial revolution and the bourgeoisie ascendancy. Detective fiction has been of particular interest to Marxist inclined theorists particularly because the crime is related to class conflict, a result of the oppression of the bourgeoisie class. Crime proves the instability of society. These theorists have concerned themselves with understanding the relationship of crime and detection with social institutions. Marxist scholars are less concerned with the aesthetic appreciation of the text.

Detective fiction has an intimate relationship with the society. Before the crime the society shows a status quo. The crime creates an imbalance in the social order. It has a relation with fracturing the social system that it supports and protects. The duality of the detective ensures as well as solves the crime which restores the normality of rhythm in society and social order. Detective fiction, Moretti writes, is a hymn to a culture's coercive abilities (*Clues* 143). It attracts his attention because of its radical possibilities, the ideological conflicts, and its capacity to challenge the established norm and asks

questions about the larger condition of society, its values and systems of authority.

The existence of the criminal or the detective is like social organisms. They represent the two poles of society. The former must be eradicated to maintain the stereotypical normality. In the detective fiction innocence is always the victim of individual criminal act. The innocent represents the conformity of society. The individual guilty is not guilty of impersonality rather it is collective and social (*Clues* 35). Similarly, in *Sign Taken for Wonders: on Sociology of Literary Form*, Moretti writes “Innocence is conformity; individuality guilt.... detective fiction ...exists expressly to dispel the doubt guilt might be impersonal and therefore, collective and social” (131).

Modernity and industrialization brought an uneven social development that created a big lacuna in social hierarchy. The crime novel undertakes to dissect society’s flaws and failures, and to expose society’s wrong turns of the capitalist economy and the political structure. Detective fiction maintains an unproblematic relation between science and society. It reduces the complexity to simplicity as through the untangling the knot of crime. The continuing appeal of detective fiction is that the genre is conservative in nature. Detective fiction writers often used the conventional formula as a vehicle for social and cultural criticism-- subversion not a limitation.

The Eurocentric detective novel stands as a prototype of the modern detective narrative. However, postcolonial fiction presents an alternative perspective for example, the African American mystery and detective genre offered a counter-ethnic view. The British and American detective fiction writers accommodated the Eurocentric ideological political perspective by creating a binary between the West and the Rest. The genre has ancient roots of this stereotype. The genre’s forefather, Edger Allen Poe created a stereotypical of

black image in his short story, *The Gold Bug* (1843) which is considered an entry of Poe's detective cannon. Though, it is not one of the three stories featuring *Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin*. However, Poe's depiction of Jupiter as comic, ignorant, and still devoted to his master despite his manipulation conformed to nineteenth-century antebellum racial stereotypes (Bailey 272-275).

The genre is therefore, severely criticized for its –challenging racial stereotypes which is challenged by postcolonial writers. The Africa American mystery and detective genre offered some speculation to the socio-cultural critic to explore and counter ethnic stereotypes. The foremother of African America Mysteries Pauline E. Hopkins Hagar's *Daughter* is a landmark of Afro-American detective fiction. The novel is a completely black-centric discourse. The novel records the uncertainty of black fortune in the white political domain, kidnapping and detection by the amateur sleuth Venus Johnson. John Edward Bruce's detective novel, *The Black Sleuth* (1907) traces the *bildungsroman* narrative of its detective protagonist Sadipa Okukena who has an experience of racial discrimination in his academic and detective career. Bruce's narrative stands as a contrast to the detective mainstream detective novel.

In the European detective fiction black characters generally play minor roles or are house servants. The form is employed by the African-American writers and writers of African origin to respond radically not only to the colour of the detective but also challenging the order of the convention. The writings of Hopkins and Bruce give voice to the marginalized. They used the genre to explore African American social issues in Harlem. Cultural vernacular is one of the characteristics of Africa American detective genre as mentioned in the novel of Stephen Soitos in *The Blue Detective* (Matzke 36).

## 2 Colonial Modernity and Development of Detective Fiction in India

Postcolonial theorists and writers have created a discourse to question the Western epistemology regarding colonial history. The periodisation of modernity traces back to a specific moment of history designated as spatial configuration that occurs in Europe from about sixteenth century to early twentieth century (Friedman 426). This definition fails to prove the universality of periodisation. By doing so the modernity of the third world is overlooked. Unfortunately, this part of the world gained modernity through colonization, followed by the formation of independent nation statehood. As a result, some countries achieved modernity after 1940. Examining the spatial politics of the conventional periodization of modernism fosters a move from singularities to pluralities of space and time, from exclusivist formulations of modernity and modernism to ones based in global linkages, and from nominal modes of definition to relational ones (430). However, contemporary academic scholarship finds that the western intellectual and industrial systems are not enough for the proper understanding of modernity in the third World. The periodization of modernity consists of debatable beginning and end points. It is the ideological Eurocentric notion of modernity that contains unacknowledged spatial politics that suppresses the global dimension of modernism through time and the interplay of space and time in all modernisms. To put modernity on that particular time bondage means to hear only one side. But the paradox is that the process of modernity is not the activity of any single side, though the West claims that they are the responsible for bringing civilization to the Rest, 'as well as modernity to the rest of the world. This binary created the superstructure of western imperialism. There is no acknowledgement of the contribution in the formation of modernity from the sluggish

‘third world. It was a European initiative to bring forth modernity in the rest of the world by the process of colonialism. Marlon’s opinion is effective in that respect, that colonialism constitutes western modernity (432-435).

It cannot be denied that the modernist aesthetics is not a radical European concept. The philosophy underlying modernism came not only from western epistemology, but the sluggish third world contributed to it. The high preachers of modernism Pound, Eliot and others were fascinated by the orientalist philosophy and artifacts. Eliot’s *Waste Land* or Yeats’s *Byzantium* bear witness to this fascination. Very recently Charles Pollard in his *New World Modernism* reinvigorates Eliot’s scholarship by mentioning the international influence of cosmopolitan modernism on Europe.

Modernity in its epistemological, philosophical and technological break from the past, is undeniably a system honed by the European nations. As such, the modernity of India is the byproduct of British colonial rules. This was the period marked by extreme violence and exploitation; the establishment of the capitalist economy; nationalism; establishment of modern institutions, academic and administrative reform through Government of India Act, Macaulay’s Minute on Indian Education and various other measures and reforms imposed by the British rulers. The historiography of British Empire building is also the capitalist history of colonial India and the activity of the British in India. The modern artifacts or the modern academic institutions undertook the initiative of the modernisation of the Indian. The question remains how the colonial society embraced the western concept of modernity if one equates modernity with westernization. The British education system was the soft tool for British imperialism and colonial domination. The institution on the one hand maintains the social dominance on the other hand it creates a social hierarchy. The power was centralised in the educated, creating a new class of people.

Modernity of Bengal demands a dialogical reimagining of the city as well as the domesticity of colonial people by both the westerners and the Bengalis simultaneously. Contemporary historians and academicians recognised the importance of researching the true conditions of nineteenth century Bengal. According to Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Capitalization of History*, the history of Bengal/India has a complex experience of modernity and the interaction with European colonialism and the consequent coming to terms with globalized modernity (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 15).

### **3 A Survey of Bengali Detective Mysteries: From Bakaullah to Bandyopadhyay**

The literary impact of the European narrative form in nineteenth-century Bengal results from its engagement with British colonialism. The Bengali Renaissance bought a new English reader and writers' group who were influenced by the new genre. New generations of young Bengalis were attracted to the Western knowledge and education system. As a form, the novel became an intimate part of Bengali society. An interesting observation made by Sukumar Sen is that the literary genre became available to Bengali readers through literature in the English language, subsequently leading to educated Bengali's engagement with the novel as a genre. Sen mentions that the lyric poetry of Madhusudhan Dutta and Rangalal Bandyopadhyay appears after Kashiprasad Ghosh and Sashi Chandra Dutt's lyrics in the English language. Tarachand Shikdar wrote the first recorded Bengali drama, but Krishnamohan Bandyopadhyay had been writing in English before him.

The same happened in the case of the Bengali novel, Sashi Chandra Dutta wrote in English before Parrychand and Byamkim Chandra did in the Bengali language (Sen 146). The Bengali renaissance boosted this literature with varied themes

and forms. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Raja Rammohanroy, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay are the entrepreneur of Renaissance knowledge. Bankimchandra's *Durgesh Nandini* and *Kopal Kundla* are iconic Renaissance women.

In the mainstream literature, crime or detective characters do not have an intentional existence rather they are coincidental. There the crime is natural not driven by any political intention. Sukumar Sen writes that the traditional Bengali family is unitary in structure. As a result, the boundary of family is not confined within narrow space. It is not unusual for someone to have an instinct for crime within the family. Theft is not the only activity within domestic crime in decent middle class Bengali families, but there is also the torture of newly bride if she does not fulfill the expectation of her mother-in-law. It was traditional and much discussed crime in earlier crime stories. Rabindranath Tagore did not write detective stories or crime stories separately from his mainstream literature but his stories comprise elements of mystery, suspense and crime. These elements rise spontaneously from some of his short stories which were published at the beginning of his career in *Sadhana* and *Hitobadi Sampatti Samarpon*, *Kankal* (Skeleton) *Nishite* (At Night) and *Didi* (Sister) appeared in *Sadhana*. Investigating the history of Indian detective fiction Sukumar Roy found the Indian source of crime and mystery in Sanskrit theft stories. However, the detective or *jajus* like figure was missing for a long time in later Indian literature. Stories written before the nineteenth century cannot strictly be recognized as detective stories as there was no concept of detective in general. The beginning of the detective story in modern times was with the establishment of the police system which started in the beginning of the nineteenth century in the reign of Napoleon. While the novel was first read and written in English, it was otherwise in the case of detective stories which were written

first in various indigenous Indian languages. Detective fiction written in imitation of western models became part of the Bengali reading scene. The writers could not imitate the language though the form and content remained the same to some extent. Sen and Francisca both argue that detective fiction in India and especially Bengal was imported ready-made from the English language (*Crime Kahanir Kalkrinti 140 and Detective Novel 436*).

Detectives have been an inseparable part of Bengali literary imagination for well over a century. The detective story in Bengali literature is known as *goenda kahini*, a story where *goenda* takes the prominent role. The genre initially had a long struggle to exist within the mainstream Bengali Literature. The mainstream Bengali literature was already established as a dominant part of the reader oeuvre. It was in its full form when detective genre came to Bengali literature.

Barkaula's *Bakaullar Daptor* was the first detective narrative and an important text that records the institutionalization of colonial India along modern European lines. It marked the employment of police in India (The establishment of metropolitan police of Britain preceded the police in India). It was a significant and historical incident of colonial authority, being necessary for the government for political surveillance and to keep trace of petty crime, robbery and *daku* in parts of suburban Bengal in the third decade of the nineteenth century. Some native educated Bengalis got a chance to serve the colonial crime branch. Barkatulla was one of them. He proved his ability and worked with success. His first Bengali detective collection was published under the title *Bakaullar Daptor*. Kaliprasanna Chattopadhyay collected his criminal record from the crime diary and published as *Bankaullar Daftor*.

The detective story had an enormous output as pulp literature from Bottala Press in the second half of nineteenth century.

Some novels are in magazine form. The magazine gave the new crime writers an opportunity to practice their hand with crime and detective stories and fiction. Among other writers Prioyanath and Bhuban Chandra Mukhapadhyay's novels were published from Bottala Press. It was a place where the new writers published their works and made them accessible to the readers. Sukumar Sen mentioned the important persona of the Bottala Detective writers group including, Hamachandra Bandyopadhyay's *Rani Sudhamukhi* and *Haridas Manna Hiraprobha*, Mahichandar, Chattopadhyay's *Chader Hat*, Kushumandra Mitra's *Kaminikantak*, Ramanath Das's *Jalrashik*, Satish Chandra Bandyopadhyay's *Rail Churi* and Dare Babaji's *Udashini* and *Rajkanna's Guptokatha* etc. Some translations were published by Kali Prassana Chattopadhyay from the Reynolds novel, as for example *Rani Krishnakamini* translated from *Young Duchess*; *Sanik Samantan* as a translation of *Soldier's Wife* and *Haridaser Guptokatha* in imitation of *Haridaser Guptokatha*.

Prionath Mukherjee who served as a police officer penned down his experiences every month for a magazine named *Darogar Daptor* (The Daftar of Daroga). Unfortunately, its appearance was overshadowed by Sherlock Holmes as they both appeared at the same time. *The Memories of Vidocq* (1828-9) contains romanticized versions of real cases exposed by a reformed criminal and the founder of the first detective agency in French. His incarnation is not limited in the European world by the form of *Balzac's Le Pere Goriot* (1834) and *Gaboriau's* detective *Lecocq* and its Indian counterpart Prionath Mukhapadhyay's personal experience entitled *Darogar Doptar*. Both *Vidocq* and *Prionath* played a significant part in the development of the pre-history of detective fiction in French and India respectively.

The other books which are rarely mentioned for discussing police procedural writings are *Sakalaer Daroga Kahini* by *Girish Chandra Bose* and the other one is written by the

British Police Major A. T. M. Ramage who came to India in 1853. Later he was engaged in the police force. His *A Detective Footsteps, Bengal* (1882) was the result of his nineteen years' experience with the police. The writer's intention was political, observes Sen –he wanted to train the newly appointed police on suburban area (Sen, *Krime Kahanir Kalkrinti*,148).

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the pioneer of the modern Bengali novel, did not abstain himself from writing crime novel. He also started his literary career with an English novel entitled, *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) which was a well-knit crime novel, published for Indian Field by Kashari Chand Mittra. His novel *Krishna Kanta's Will* (1878) was a mature crime novel which started with crime and ended with murder. The society of pre-colonial Bengal did not recognize crime as a punishable offence. It was tolerated as a personal, unitary or exceptional incident. Bankim Chandra's literary imagination was completely driven by the notion of socialistic or the religious perseverance. The final resolution of his crime proceeded by peace not punishment.

The grandeur of detective writing from Bottala press became less influential with the sudden appearance of *Kuntalin* literary award for innovative new detective writing. It was initiated by the Calcutta based industrialist Hemendra Mohan Basu (1866-1916). Sen comments –under his patronage Bengali detective stories matured even further (*KK* 103). The ambition of that prize was manifold-- it worked as a tool for Bengali nationalist movement. Sen writes –the literary award has two motives, first, to give enthusiasm to the new writers and second, to advertise indigenous product to the upper class educated society (166). It succeeded in both of its intentions and became a great source of motivation to the young litterateurs including, Rajani Chandra Dutta, Dinendra Kumar Roy, Jagadananada Roy, Saralabala Dasi. Saralabala Dasi was twice the winner of *Kuntaleen* award and first woman writing detective fiction but she did not venture to introduce a female

detective. The male detective is created along the lines of Agatha Christie's intellectual detective Hercule Poirot.

A historian and a crime writer, Harishadhan Mukhopadhyay's (1862-1938) detective stories including *Hatyakari Key* (Who is the Muderer?) and *Ascharya Hatyakanda* (The Perplexing Assassination), are important as examples of early sleuth stories. Bhuvanchanda Mukhapadhyay (1842-1916) wrote detective stories and translations in imitation of western detective fiction, *London Rahosha* (London Mystery). His other mysteries like *Samaj Kuhitri* (The Dirty Face of the Society) and *Haridaser Guptkatha* (Haridas's Secret) are mingled with native and western detective flavour, though in some stories he can claim some originality--*Kunjabala/Kashmir Kusum* bears witness to his individuality. He has translated a number of novels of Eugene Sue into Bengali. *Thakurbarir Daftor* or the *Avisapto Euhidi* is the Bengali translation of *The Wandering Jew*, a description of Christ's thirteenth disciple Judas's afterlife. *Santarpto Satan* is the Bengali translation of *The Sarose Sanders* which deals with Goethe's *Faustus's* story. His other important works--*Bankimbabu's Guptakatha* (Bankimbabu's Secret) *Banga Rahasya* (Bengal Mystery), *Bilkati Guptakatha* (The Secret of the West) *Samsar Guptakatha* (Family's Secret) and several others. Kshetra Mohan Ghosh and Surendramohan Bhattacharyya, observes Pinaki Roy, write stories testify to their inclination for seeking safe refuge for themselves and their sleuths under the protection of the Western imperialists (MI 101).

Another influential editor and anonymous contributor to Bengali detective fiction, Dinendra Kumar Roy's detective Magazine *Nandan Kanan* played a prominent role for the new generation of detective writers. He was the co-author and later became the editor of Upendranath Mukhapadhyay's *Nandan Kanan*. His detective Robert Blake is an anglicized indigenous figure. He first appeared in *Rahoshya Lahori* (Collected

Mystery Stories). Roy writes Robert Blake was the most popular prototype Eurocentric investigator in pre-independence India in the 1910s and 1920s and in his characterization of the British detective Roy was dependent on different English periodicals, particularly Union Jack and Sexton Blake (103). Dey translated detective stories from many European authors, but he was different from his predecessors like Panchkari Dey, who used to indigenize his translations. His later publication was *Rashya Lahori* (Collected Mystery Stories) where he published the translation of Sexton Blake series. He did not try to reshape the original sense of the text but often used some lines without making any changes.

The further development of detective story came through the skillful detective stories of Hemandra Kumar Roy. Roy has the credit of creating and introducing three set of detectives or Trisul detectives, in the language of Sukumar Sen: Jayanta Manik and Sundarbabu group and Hemanta-Robin with Satishbabu group. Their mutual correlation shows the cultural and political assimilation of colonial police and the Indian people. Pinaki Roy finds a –colonial connotation in Hemandra Kumar Roy's *Jakher Dhan* (The Hard-Guarded Treasure), *Jayantara Kirti* (Jayanta's Achievement), *Manush Pichas* (The Human Monster), *Shahjaner Mayur* (Shajahan's Peacock Throne) and *Padmarag Buddha* (The Carbuncle Buddha).

Panchkari Dey is remembered for introducing detective duet and a changeable detective character, the same detective gives a different impression at different point to the reader. His detective duet Debendrabijoy Mitra and Arindam Dey first appeared in *Manorama*. Dey continued the duet in his next three novels, *Mayabi* (1910) *Mayabini* (1902) and *Neelbasana Sundari* (1904). Detective Dr Bentwood turned up in his novel *Jibansmriti* in 1903 which was, according to the writer, –a Hypnotic Novel. Later, the title was changed as

*Salinasundari*. His *Gobindraram*, *Mitru Bivisheka* (Death Hallucination) *Protigya Palan* (The Fulfillment of Oath) and *Sati Simontani* (Virgin Simontani) Gobindraram is the detective, was created in the light of historical figure Gobindrarm. Debendrabijoy and Arindam character's exhibit hybridity in their dress in their traditional Indian and European formals like pleated shirts with hard cuffs, open breasted sleeveless coat made of China silk, black bordered proceeded dhoti, and Derby shoes (Saradindu Omnibus 11). Ranojit Chattopadhyay and Siddharta Ghosh write whereas Priyanath Mukhapadhyay wrote a tale based on his own experiences, Panchkari Dey blended romance with those ingredients. Nevertheless, his stories were not original-- at best they were Western tales in Eastern garb (Chattopadhyay and Ghosh 749).

Mohit Mohan Chattopadhyay in the late 1950s introduced Bhombal Das and Kabla Ram to satirize the anglicized investigator as object of ridicule. Hari Sadhan Mukhapadhyay who had a keen interest on Mughal history, wrote the detective story in imitation of Raynolds and Bhuban Chandra. His detective stories including *Kankan Chor* (The Bangle Thief), *Lal Chiti* (Red Letter) *Mrittu Prehelika*, *Saitaner Dan* (The Gift of Satan) and *Pannar Pritisodh* (The Revenge of Panna) etc. showed his popularity both as a mainstream and detective writer.

The newly established publication houses of the twentieth century resulted in a plethora of detective fiction and story publications from various publishers. Kishor Mohan Bagchi started P. M. Bagchi publication and published his *Adbhut Hatyakanda* (The Mysterious Killing). Contemporary newspapers and magazines played a prominent role in the enormous production of detective stories and novels. Mritunjay Chattopadhaya initiated *Romancho* which appeared on weekly to satisfy the crime and detective reader. Pronab Roy, Priotosh Bhattacharya, Moni Bardhan, Panchu

Mukhapadhyay and Nipo Krishna Chattopadhyay wrote detective stories regularly for *Romancho*.

*Hemandra Kumar Mukhapadhyay* is another important contributor to the genre in Bengal. He started his literary career as a juvenile story writer for Mouchak magazine. Though, at the beginning of his stories there is the influence of Panch Kori Day's detective characters (Sen 189) Sen added Dey's writing the Western theme and character completely moulded into indigenous form and aesthetics. He has succeeded to popularize the juvenile literary form to the young readers (Sen 189).

Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's Byomkesh Bakshi stories, set in colonial Calcutta covering almost fifteen years of Indian history. It explores the material changes in urban life and the varied changes in the institutional apparatuses as well as social change under the influence of modernity. The experience of the urban industrial life; material structure formed by the technology and artifacts and the various new social ideas are involved with modernity. The capture of city life of a particular historical conjuncture traces the roots and the development of modernity in colonial world and places modernity as a local phenomenon. As far as Bengal is concerned, the reception of modernity was formed not only by the pivotal role of colonial market place, but more particularly the symbiotic relationship between education and administration.

The unavailability of complete translations of Byomkesh Bakshi stories encapsulates to the four translated texts by three translators; two translated texts by Sreejata Guha, one by Manimala Dhar and the last one by Arunava Sinha. Sreejata Guha has translated the first ten mysteries of the first phase. Seven of them-Satyanweshi, Pather Kanta Makarsar Ras, Arthamanartham Agniban, Upasanhar and Chitrachore translated as The Inquisitor, The Gramophone Pin Mystery,

The Venom of Tarantula, Where There's a Will, Calamity Strikes, An Encore for Byomkesh and Picture Imperfect respectively, in her translation *Picture Imperfect and Other Byomkesh Bakshi Mysteries* (1999). She also published another translation, entitled *The Menagerie and Other Byomkesh Bakshi Mysteries* (2006). The mysteries in this volume include Chiriakhana, Monimondon, Khuji Khuji Nari and Sanjarur Kanta translated respectively as The Menagerie, The Jewel Case, The Will that Vanished and The Porcupine Spike. In the translation of the titles sometimes literary translation is not followed. She has often taken care to deliver the essential sense of the main story.

Monimala Dhar translated seven mysteries in her *Byomkesh Bakshi Stories by Saradindu Bandyopadhyay* (2003) where she translated-- Raktamukhi Neela, Seemanta Heera, Achin Pakhi, Shailarahasya, Chorabali and Room Number Dui as The Deadly Diamond, The Hidden Heirloom, The Avenger, The Man in a Red Coat, The Phantom Client, Quicksand and Room Number Two respectively. Byomkesh and Baroda, The Rhythm of Riddle and The Death of Amrito are taken from Arunava Singh's translations, Byomkesh O Baroda, Heyalir Chondo and Amrtir Mrtyu.

The remaining twelve untranslated stories are required for textual reference, but for that one has to depend directly on the main source-- *Byomkesh Samogro* from Ananda Publishers. Adim Ripu, Boni Patanga, Rakter Daag are the synonyms of the translations of Natural Instinct, The Firefly and The Bloodstain; while, Durga Rashaya, Kahen Kobi Kalidas, Adrsya Trikon, Dusta Cakra, Adwitiya, Beni Samhar, Lohar Biskut, Bisupal Badh are translated as The Mystery of Fort, The Riddle, Invisible Triangle, The Locked Knott, Iron Biscuit and The Murder of Bishupal.

Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's Byomkesh Bakshi first appeared in Kolkata based *Basmati* monthly in 1932. Sukumar Sen

writes that as far as Indian detective fiction is concerned, Bengali literary sleuths stand unique, and Byomkesh Bakshi is the most efficiently and artistic conceived among them. (Sen 34,146,193). Bandyopadhyay 's genius was that he takes that which had come before him and refines it into a cohesive and compelling form. So successful was his format that it superseded its processors and shaped its successors. He also established a strong narrative form and brought together a number of themes that would shape future Bengali detective fiction.

The immense popularity of Byomkesh stories arouses various media adaptation. Many of Byomkesh stories have been made into films. Satyajit Roy made one of his stories Chiriakhana (The Zoo) into a Bengali film starring the biggest star of the time, Uttam Kumar, as a detective. *Byomkesh Bakshi* was popularized by *Doordarshan* in a serial with the same name featuring the well-known actor Rajit Kapur directed by Basu Chatterjee.

By the time Saradindu began writing Byomkesh stories, he was already well known as a fiction writer and he hadn't anticipated that it would be the detective in his quiver of characters who would hit bull's eye. In this respect, Saradindu had something in common with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who thought that his novels based on Napoleonic wars would make him immortal and that Sherlock Holmes was a mere aberration. This is why he tried to get rid of Holmes by plunging the detective to his death, but persistent demands from the reading public forced Doyle to bring Holmes back to life. Similarly, Saradindu pushed Byomkesh into fifteen long years of retirement, while the writer focused his attention upon the film industry in Bombay. This is why, in a writing career spanning four decades, Saradindu wrote only 32 Byomkesh stories.

Byomkesh Bakshi, presented as a vulnerable and even temperamental sleuth, is a one-of-its-kind portrayal of the detective. Byomkesh never refers to himself as a detective; he says he is a *satyanweshi*, one who seeks truth. Byomkesh is the first grown-up, professional detective and in his moods and mannerisms, he represents the Bengali middle class. Solving mysteries was a hobby for Jayanta. He was seldom bothered by material factors like remuneration. He's also a man who knows he's working in a dangerous field –Byomkesh owns a gun that he occasionally carries with him. Though one doesn't see him using it, the fact that he has it is a sign that these cases are not child's play.

The background that Saradindu gave Byomkesh is interesting too. Byomkesh's father was a teacher of mathematics, we are told, and he inherited the ability to deduce and analyse from his father. Also, Saradindu didn't keep Byomkesh stuck in a static world, like the western prototypical detectives, where only the crimes that he's solving change. Byomkesh matured with time. He was a bachelor with Ajit as his flat-mate, friend and sidekick, already working as a team, from the first Byomkesh stories, *Pather Kanta* (The Thorn in One 's Path) and *Simantahira*. *Pather Kanta* was about a murderer whose weapon of choice was a gramophone pin. Unusually for Byomkesh, *Simantahira* didn't have a violent crime in it, but was a challenge posed by a client to Byomkesh. When these two stories did well, Saradindu provided his readers with some context for Byomkesh. It was in the next story, *Satyanweshi* (The Truth Seeker or –The Inquisitor), in which Byomkesh busts a drugs racket, that Saradindu told readers how Byomkesh and Ajit met. Although *Satyanweshi* comes later chronologically, it is, in terms of the overarching storyline, first in the canon. But while Byomkesh is certainly inspired by Conan Doyle's classic duo, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, he and his stories are distinctive.

It's worth noting the difference in Byomkesh's relationship with Ajit from that of other detectives and their chroniclers. Holmes and Poirot both are quite patronizing to Watson and Hastings, as if they are slightly inferior creatures. But Ajit is a friend. He may not be an equal as a detective to Byomkesh, but their relationship is one of mutual respect. Even after Byomkesh gets married, Ajit continues to live in the same flat, living his own life while Byomkesh lives his, almost like a family member that you want to have around. In contrast, poor Watson had to leave Baker Street and fend for himself once he got married.

After four stories of bachelorhood, Saradindu introduced Byomkesh to Satyavati in *Arthamanartham* (The Encore of Byomkesh). Satyavati is not Byomkesh's Irene Adler. Initially, in *Arthamanartham*, Satyavati appears to be a murderer's accomplice because her brother is the prime suspect in their uncle's murder. She tries to help her brother by suppressing some facts, which, of course, only serve to further complicate the situation. As far as purely literary parallels go, the only one that comes to mind is the marriage of Harriet Vane, a murder suspect, to Dorothy Sayers' gentleman detective, Lord Peter Wimsey.

Having solved the mystery in *Arthamanartham* Byomkesh turned his attention to Satyavati and started courting her. It's difficult to tell how long the courtship lasted because Satyavati appeared again in *The Picture Imperfect* and that was after about fifteen years. With their occasional spats and general contentment with one another, Byomkesh and Satyavati seem to be a conventional, happy couple.

Saradindu mentions at one point that they have a son, though he doesn't figure in any story. Byomkesh is a normal, educated, middle-class Bengali man, not a larger-than-life figure like Blake or Jayanta or an eccentric, drug-addicted genius like Sherlock Holmes. All these elements helped the

Byomkesh stories become tremendously popular and remain so. The plots are captivating, and Saradindu's writing craftsmanship is impressive. Byomkesh is one of those detectives whose escapades can be read and re-read.

The physical development of Calcutta is very crucial that particular time (1920-1970). Bengal saw phenomenal growth faster than other colonial metros. The development of the city through the eye of the detective is quite fascinating but it has not been of much concern to historians. The reason for this reluctance is the availability of –white materials in colonial history, which have overshadowed the native truths. The detective story in Calcutta is another kind of literary imagination that helps to seek the gap between colonial discourses and colonialist responses. The study attempts to fill in the gaps of this history by searching in Calcutta for the native history that challenges the British colonial discourse. In Calcutta, much of the Indian detective fiction coincides with the advent of colonial modernity in Bengal from the early nineteenth century.

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