ANALYZING AND SITUATING DETECTIVE FICTION IN AN ALTERNATIVE CANON WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FELUDA STORIES IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

(ABSTRACT)

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## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION---------------------------------------------------------------2

2. THEORIZING DETECTIVE FICTION: AN AUTOPSY-----------------------------8

3. FELUDA: EVOLUTION OF AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL AND RELATED ISSUES -----------------------------------------------13

4. TRANSITION FROM TEXT TO SCREEN--------------------------------------------16

5. CONCLUSION-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------19

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------23
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Popular literature is generally de-canonised on grounds of being non-serious. Among the various sub-genres of popular literature, detective fiction is also considered ‘non-literary’ and hence unfit for serious academic study. Despite its wide scale popularity the genre has been neglected from the literary canon and is noted only for its entertainment quotient. But with a compact-gripping structure, a detective fiction narrative has much more to offer beyond its capacity of generating mystery and adventure. Detective fiction as a genre evolved mainly in the nineteenth century. In its early years the genre propagated in the form of pamphlets or crime narratives whose interim focus was on crime and the agent executing it. Broadsides, Ordinaries Accounts and Newgate Calendars are such early pamphlets and they mainly dealt with the criminal’s life with more focus on his or her acts of crime and conviction. From these early pamphlets evolved the tradition of Newgate Novels, which romanticized the figure of the criminal hero in the nineteenth century.

But the quintessential detective was yet to arrive. As the real world saw the advent of Police detectives, Runners or thief-takers et.al the idea of detection slowly developed. Gradually the memoirs of such investigative figures made way into the world of fiction and a notable work in this regard is that of Francois Eugene Vidocq’s *Memoirs of Vidocq* (1828). Slowly the concept of an investigative figure developed and following the trend of police detectives some enthusiasts carried out investigation out of curiosity and came to be known as amateur detectives. Later some of these amateur detectives took the job of investigation to the next level by accepting personal assignments and this marked the entry of the private professional detective. Besides, there was another tradition in which people from other professions like physician, barrister et.al published factual tales in which they presented
themselves as quasi-detectives. Drawing influences from these early models like the thief-turned-thief takers, police turned investigator, professional anecdote model of doctors and legal practitioners, the figure of the detective began to develop.

In the nineteenth century the figure of the quintessential detective found immortalisation in Arthur Conan Doyle’s fictional creation Sherlock Holmes who made his first appearance in *The Study in Scarlet* in 1887. Doyle’s creation owes a lot to his predecessors, most notably Emile Gaboriau’s Lecoq or Pere Tabaret and Edgar Allan Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin. However, Doyle’s narratives established the basic conventions of the genre. In Holmes, Doyle made an assemblage of all the essential features of a typical detective: an intelligent eccentric man, physically fit but uses a pistol, ‘bohemian’ in nature, habitual use of pipe or cigar, an expert in taking disguise - all these became a refraining phenomenon. Moreover, the task of narration was taken up by the detective’s close acquaintance often his close friend; the detective’s knowledge in forensic science, the commercial aspect of the profession, all these nuances became very popular. Infact, Holmes breathed in fresh air in the realm of detective fiction because unlike his predecessors he was a perfect blend of scientific detection and professionalism who was paid for his work.

But nineteenth century also saw a number of amateur detectives-those who were driven into the act of investigation either by chance or out of curiosity. Dorothy L. Sayers’ Lord Peter Wimsey, Margery Allingham’s Albert Campion, G. K. Chesterton’s Father Brown, Agatha Christie’s Jane Marple et.al are some of the famous writers who worked in this tradition. Nineteenth century also witnessed the increasing participation of women both as readers and writers. In previous times women did not have much scope in the genre and they were portrayed either as passive victims of crime or as catalysts inciting men into criminal activities or even as mere helping hands to male detectives. But gradually women started venturing into the genre both as authors as well as protagonist and in the twentieth
century, the genre witnessed the arrival of the most famous woman writer of detective fiction. British writer Agatha Christie dominated the genre with her clue-puzzle narratives. She created two radically different detectives – M. Hercule Poirot and Jane Marple or popularly known as Miss Marple. Miss Marple made the women detective a popular concept as the age witnessed the rise of major women writers like Dorothy L. Sayers and Margery Allingham. Besides, Christie is also known for her clue-puzzle narratives. Twentieth century is popularly referred to as the ‘Golden Age’ of detective fiction, famous for its particular style of murder-mystery designed as intricate puzzles. Such narratives also provided the reader with some details of the plot, an essential aspect of the clue-puzzle model.

As the genre gradually became popular, it moved to other parts of the globe. In America the earliest form of crime narratives were primarily rouges, thieves or murderers’ accounts in the form of criminal biographies, execution sermons, final words and confessions or melancholy ballads. Although America adapted the pre-existing English versions, but from eighteenth century onwards, American writers drew elements from their native culture and domesticated the genre to cater to American tastes and culture. However, it was Edgar Allan Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin who immortalised the concept of a detective. He was intelligent, empirical and analytical and Poe’s stories published between 1841 and 1845 introduced the basic conventions of the genre. Later American writers were influenced by the English clue-puzzle trend. But the American clue-puzzle narratives were infused with slight variations. Unlike the British narratives which were usually based in an English country house setting, the American narratives were mostly based in urban locations where the criminal’s act showcases the unpredictable dangers that lay beneath the civilized society. S. S Van Dine, Ellery Queen, Rex Stout are some of the chief writers who contributed to the American clue puzzle novels.
However, the fame of American detective fiction rests mainly on the exclusive sub-genre which appeared in the 1920-30s and is denoted as ‘hard-boiled’; ‘tough-guy’ or ‘private-eye’ detective fiction. The ‘hard-boiled’ narrative tradition mainly evolved in response to the prevalent socio-economic trends in America. The sub-genre ushered a new age for the private-detective who was tough, realistic and characteristically American. Back in the nineteenth century, fictional detectives of popular ‘dime novels’ exhibited similar traits like the hard-boiled detective. In the 1860’s there was a trend of yellow backs printed on the cheapest newsprint which later came to be known as ‘dime novels’. The basic theme of the twentieth century hard-boiled tradition which shows the detective as a moralistic hero filtering the corrupt society owes back to dime novels. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler are the two pillars of the hard-boiled school of detective fiction in America. Hammett’s two most famous creations are Continental Op and Sam Spade. Chandler’s fictional detective Philip Marlowe is not just an intellectual agent cracking clue-puzzles rather he is twentieth century knight who undertakes the task of rescuing the society and its people from utter mess and moral wreckage. Apart from them other important American writers are Carroll John Daly, Jams M. Cain, Ross Macdonald et.al. In the wake of the feminist movement America was also a suitable breeding ground for female writers in hard-boiled detective fiction. The best known names are Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton and Marcia Muller.

After capturing the imagination of the readers in the west, the genre made its way to the east. In India the emergence of the genre is marked by the early works of translation from the English originals to other Indian languages. In the 1890’s, fiction writing was flourishing in India and various monthly magazines in Hindi and Urdu were published. Detective novels or Jasusi Upanyas perhaps contributed the most to such magazines and constituted the most significant subgenre of Indian fiction writing. Jasus or Detective (1900) and Hindi Daroga
Daftar or Hindi Constabulary (1910) were two monthly magazines devoted solely to detective novels. But the stories created between 1890s and 1930s failed to create an indigenous tradition of Indian detective fiction as most of the works published were either translations or adaptations of western detective fiction. However, Bengal with its rich and almost inexhaustible tradition of detective fiction helped to create an indigenous tradition of Indian detective fiction. From early nineteenth century Bengali authors tried their hands at crime tales which got published in local magazines. In this regard the pulp status of Bat-tala publications is noteworthy. Bat-tala is a name of a place localized near present day Chitpur of today’s Kolkata. Amidst a wide range of Bat-tala publications, one of the most widely read section is the sub-genre of thrillers popularly known as Guptakatha. The Guptakatha series often dealt with various crimes like robbery, murder and abduction, at the same time they focused on the moral code of conduct by highlighting the aspects of sin. Slowly the pulp culture paved the way for mainstream publication of crime tales often in the form of short stories and even full-length novels. Among the various popular detective fiction writers in Bengali literature, Saradindu Bandopadhyay and Satyajit Ray pioneered the image of a Bengali private detective. Both of them were influenced by British big names like Holmes and Poirot but their creations were typically Indian. The first Feluda story was published in the children’s magazine, Sandesh. After their launch in 1965, Feluda stories met with huge success and were later translated into other languages.

Despite its wide scale popularity, the genre continued to receive criticism for being inferior in comparison to ‘high’ literature. But detective stories deserve serious approach and in this respect, this dissertation shows that detective stories are much more than narratives of crime and suspense and they have ample scope for a full-fledged research. In this research the researcher has formulated a theoretical framework to study the various aspects of a detective fiction narrative. The researcher has focussed on the author’s skill of narrative structuring to
study how a detective fiction author generates mystery and suspense in such narratives. The research has also emphasized on the detective’s skill of detection to showcase that while investigating the detective takes a psychological insight into the criminal’s mind. Besides the research also highlights that such narratives are not easy to perceive and require an active participation from the reader’s end to understand the narrative and operate as a virtual detective. The primary aim of this dissertation is to look into the politics of the literary canon that has always neglected the genre which contributes to the huge corpus of literature that is generally referred to as popular literature. In order to do this the researcher has undertaken a detailed textual analysis of Gopa Majumdar’s English translations of Feluda stories from various theoretical angles. Ray’s stories are highly popular but are usually not considered for serious academic pursuits. This research takes into account selective sections of Gerard Genette and Kenneth Burke’s theoretical postulations to understand the schematised framework of a detective fiction narrative. The research also focuses on selective sections of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory to study the detective’s task of investigation. The research refers to the selective theoretical notions of Louis Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser to study the dynamics of the text-reader interaction that a detective fiction narrative initiates. Besides a detailed study of Ray’s stories also reveal various unexplored aspects about the stories.

Infact, detective fiction offers a gamut of perspectives that needs serious recognition. The research work shows how the thrillers work and argues that the genre is neither artistically nor aesthetically inferior and deserves to be placed in an alternative canon on its own grounds. Moreover, the research also lends more emphasis to Satyajit Ray’s Feluda stories by showing that the stories facilitate an opportunity for a full-fledged research by virtue of their merit.
Chapter 2

THEORIZING DETECTIVE FICTION: AN AUTOPSY

Detective fiction, like any other branch of popular fiction has been the axiom of much academic debate in recent past. In most cases such debates are aimed to reformulate the general perception that the genre does not offer any intellectual expertise. In order to understand and evaluate such narratives this chapter has formulated a theoretical framework to study detective fiction. It has to be understood that investigating a crime and unmasking the criminal does not actually summarize the dynamics of a detective fiction story. A detective fiction narrative works on the problem-solving principle. Contrary to general beliefs, such narratives do not always deal with any crime in the true sense of the term. Many a times the narratives are presented as a mystery without any trace of crime. This chapter makes an in-depth study of all relevant aspects of a detective fiction narrative. Apart from this, the chapter also focuses on Satyajit Ray’s Feluda stories. The trend of the non-police investigator was popularized by Arthur Conan Doyle. Ray’s Feluda also follows the same pattern. But it is interesting to study how Ray has defied the model of a colonial detective by making his hero a typical Bengali ‘bhadralok’ or gentleman, who brings in a sentiment of Bengali consciousness every time a reader reads the stories.

In order to carry out a detailed textual analysis of the stories the research has considered the multilayered implications of the term ‘text’. A text is not an isolated entity, it is a cohesive structure envisioned by the author to give expression to his thoughts. So to study a text, one must take into consideration the content, i.e. the story; and the manner in which it is presented, that is the discourse. The fictive world of a detective fiction narrative is actually a microcosmic picture of the macrocosmic world of the author where crime is rampant and is often left unpunished. With reference to the outside world the author
represents a world where the criminal is brought to books by an alternative agent who is far more competent than the police professional of the real world. A detective fiction narrative can also be read as a collection of multiple stories. The narrative begins as an effect of a problem while the cause remains hidden. This creates a puzzle with some hints and clues that needs to be disentangled in order to solve the puzzle. To lay down the puzzle the author often brings multiple angles into the narrative which themselves make stories in their own terms. But each story is synchronized with the basic plot of the narrative and is arrived at by different characters who act according to their governing interests. The guiding principle which holds a detective fiction narrative is that of concealment and recognition. While the story of crime is always concealed, the dynamics of the latter helps in the cognition of the former. Each narrative is more like a hide and seek game where the criminal hides or tries to hide his activities and thus ends up writing his story of crime. On the other hand the detective overcomes all confusion and tries to read or comprehend the criminal’s story of crime by following an elaborate process of investigation which makes up the detective’s tale of detection. So a classic detective fiction narrative can be read from different angles- as a tale of crime and a tale of detection, as a story of concealment and cognition and also as a story of writing as done by the criminal and a story of reading as carried out by the detective.

Narration in such narratives is unlike a sequential telling of events. The narration constantly vacillates to create the right atmosphere of suspense in the narrative. French literary theorist Gerard Genette has paved some new directions in the study of narratives. The researcher has focussed on some sections of his theoretical postulation to study how narration is modulated to create the right pitch of narrative suspense in detective fiction narratives. His concepts of ‘anachrony’, repetitive narration, ‘focalization et.al are significant to understand how the narrative discourse is set in a detective story. Besides this, the research also focuses on Kenneth Burke’s pentadic scheme to understand how detective fiction narratives operate.
The psychological interpretation of detective stories can be understood in the light of Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis as explained in his essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. The research highlights that a psychological reading of detective stories suggest that a detective is the alter ego of the criminal. In the process of criminal detection, the detective takes a psychological insight into the criminal and almost substitutes his own self with the criminal in order to decode the mechanics of the opponent’s mind. The research also showcases that when a detective acts against his expected behaviour or moral code of conduct he actually tries to gratify his unacceptable urges responding to the pleasure principle of the id. But the ego expresses them under suitable time and condition thus making the detective’s act of stealing evidence more acceptable, which according to Freud is the process of ‘sublimation’.

The research also stresses on the text-reader interaction arguing that a detective fiction narrative requires an active reading. In order to understand the complexities of the narrative a reader must engage in an active reading and employ his faculties of intellect and reasoning to understand the mystery. Louis Rosenblatt’s ‘transactional theory of reading’ when applied to the study of detective fiction shows how reading becomes a participative process that engages the reader in a live circuit with the text. A passive reading of detective fiction narrative would result in a plain reading out of the formal aspects of the text. But such stories in the guise of thrillers provide a thrilling challenge to the readers. So for an active reader, such texts offer a challenge to understand and solve the puzzle along with the detective if not ahead of him. And in order to do this a reader must entail in an active reading utilising his faculties of reasoning and intellect to draw inferences from the various hints and clues and engage in a live circuit with the text to be able to solve the mystery. The complex framework of a detective fiction narrative can also be understood in terms of Wolfgang Iser’s theoretical postulations as described in his essay “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach”. In this work Iser gives a detailed explanation of the reader’s course of reading.
According to Iser a story gains its dynamism through textual gaps. A detective fiction narrative incorporates many blockages which hinders the reader’s process of understanding the mystery. Detective fiction narratives require the reader to become a virtual detective, so that a reader tries to utilize his intellectual faculties to unlock the blockades and establish the missing-links to comprehend the narrative. When the reader succeeds in doing this, he will be able to fill in the ‘gaps’ to investigate the crime and unveil the criminal.

Detective stories also offer an insight into the culture which forms the background of its setting or creation. Satyajit Ray’s Feluda stories are essentially culture specific. When Satyajit Ray first introduced his fictional sleuth, he was contributing to the already established tradition of Bengali detective fiction. Feluda can also be said to be an extension of the Bengali consciousness which was a result of the nationalistic idea promoted by Anushilan Samitis or akharas. In his stories Ray presents two different versions of Bengali bhadralok. One is represented by Feluda, who enjoys superior intellectual faculties and he can withstand any physical or mental challenge. The other is represented by Lalmohan Ganguli, a noted fiction writer who later became a good friend and accomplice of Feluda. In this regard it is interesting to study how Ray has redefined the concept of a typical Bengali bhadralok by presenting Feluda as a twentieth century Bengali sleuth with the finest qualities of the east and the west. Feluda differs from the colonial model propagated by Holmes but does bear some similarities considering his intellectual capabilities. At the same time he represents the nationalistic idea and defies the meek image that most Bengalis are thought to represent. In this regard the researcher has referred to Goutam Basu’s essay “SELF ASSERTION THROUGH PHYSICAL CULTURE MOVEMENT IN BENGAL DURING THE LATER PART OF NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EARLIER TWENTIETH CENTURY”. In fact, Feluda is a nice blend of the finest qualities of the Bengali bhadralok and the colonial model and stands to represent an efficient twentieth century sleuth. Moreover the tales are scattered
with various subtle nuances that reflect the socio-cultural space of Bengal. So it is interesting to study how the original stories are translated from the source culture to the target culture.

While tracing the history of the genre in India, the researcher takes a look at ancient mythologies like *The Ramayana* or the Jataka tales to show that these ancient tales are scattered with many ‘detective fiction elements’ like tracing of clues, observation, analytical reasoning and deduction. For instance in *The Ramayana*, Rama traced Sita’s abduction by tracing clues. Moreover, such elements can also be traced in the ethnic literature of Tripura. For instance, the folk tales of the Darlong community, an ethnic tribe of the state, shows the presence of some detective fiction elements like tracing foot-prints et.al. A look into such tales helps to apprehend the absence of the genre in the ethnic literature of the region despite the presence of detective fiction elements in their literature. It also helps to understand how the issues of crime and criminality may vary across cultures.

Thus detective fiction is not an easy genre to interpret nor is the reader’s role easy in interpreting such tales. In this chapter the researcher makes a theoretical study of the genre although considering the suitability and compatibility of the research plan, only selective premise have been referred from various theories. In this process the researcher has validated the claim the detective fiction is not an easy genre to interpret.
Chapter 3

FELUDA: EVOLUTION OF AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL AND RELATED ISSUES

In 1965 appeared Ray’s first Feluda story featuring Tapesh and his cousin brother Prodosh Chandra Mitter affectionately called Feluda. In view of the various theories discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter carries out a detailed textual analysis of the sixteen (translated) stories included in the first volume of Gopa Majumdar’s “The Complete Adventures of Feluda” (2004). Although the main focus is on theoretical conceptualisation of the narratives, but that would not curtail the excitement associated with the reading of such thrilling plots. Apart from this, it is interesting to note how Ray developed his hero from a detective novel buff to a professional detective. Satyajit Ray was a realist and in the treatment of style and character his writing clearly indicates this. In his initial stories he introduced a young eccentric man who delights in challenging himself to solve any perplexing activity that happens to distort the harmony of his surrounding atmosphere. But with each story the readers get to know more about him and see him undergo a gradual development from an amateur investigator (by hobby) to a professional detective (by choice).

self and almost places himself in the mould of the criminal to carry out stints which reveal another side of Feluda’s character. These acts can be seen under the light of Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis. Apart from these each narrative is laden with various textual gaps which offer a challenge to the reader to apprehend the dynamics of the mystery.

As a reader-researcher, reading the sixteen stories of this volume has been a unique and different experience. Having read the stories in their English translation rather than their original Bengali versions has led to a mixed feeling of unfamiliarity fused with familiarity about the source culture. For a Bengali who chose to read the stories in English; reading perpetuates an opportunity to know and understand the source culture that also happens to be the native culture of the reader through a different language. In this case reading initiates a slight privilege for the reader whose mother tongue is Bengali and is also familiar with the culture of Bengal. This privilege gives the reader an advantage over those who associate with the language of the translated version but not with the source culture like the native speakers of English. With some pre-conceived ideas about the source culture, the reader is in a position that facilitates to carry out an aesthetic reading to evoke a ‘lived through experience of reading’ according to the postulation of Louis Rosenblatt.

Ray’s stories are firmly rooted in an Indian socio-cultural space that predominantly reflects Bengal. The stories are almost like travel guides taking the reader to different parts of the country. Feluda’s adventures in Darjeeling, Calcutta, Sikkim, Rajasthan, Kailash, Varanasi, Bombay et.al offers a doorway to visit the places through Ray’s fluid descriptions of the various cities. Feluda definitely represents the private professional detective but on many occasions he is also driven by his inbuilt morality to unveil the perpetrator. Ray’s stories are laden with various culture specific nuances. Each narrative is laden with some typical elements that create a Bengali atmosphere even outside the boundaries of Bengal. No
matter where they travel, the people they meet, the way they address each other, the food they eat everything has a subtle touch of the culture of Bengal.

In the sixteen stories Ray has also introduced two important characters. Feluda stories cannot be thought without Lalmohan Ganguli. First introduced in “The Golden Fortress” Lalmohan Ganguli does not simply stand as a comic relief, rather he stands as a contrast to Feluda and also as an aid to him on many occasions. Uncle Sidhu is also introduced in the same story and is a representative figure of typical intellectual Bengali who loves reading and has an encyclopaedic knowledge. The stories also depict some common motifs that Ray has repeated in a number of stories. For instance, the nature of crime always rises from an aberrant greed of humans. Some of the stories also depict Feluda reacting according to his sense of righteousness and judgement and as such he often takes up cases that are not his professional assignments. Ray’s Feluda stands out as a twentieth century Bengali detective, an exemplary individual who is ethical, moral and holds the capacity to fight against any disorder or crime. His ability rests not just on his muscles, in fact, it is his mental agility and conviction that sets him apart. He has a rational perception and encyclopaedic knowledge; someone upon whom Topshe and Lalmohan Babu can unhesitatingly rely.
Chapter 4

TRANSITION FROM TEXT TO SCREEN

Translation has its own dynamics and the entire process is accompanied with a host of considerations. In this chapter the researcher has focussed on the various aspects of translation while dealing with the translated versions of Ray’s original stories both in linguistic as well as cinematic domains. But before dealing with the intricacies of the translated versions, the researcher has undertaken a detailed analysis of the stories comprising the second volume of Gopa Majumdar’s “The Complete Adventures of Feluda” (2005). Like the first volume, the second one too is a collection of number of thrilling tales involving deceit, intrigue and crime. A close study of the stories reveals that they are cast in a somewhat similar fashion like the stories of the first volume. Infact, in his later tales Feluda shows more growth as a detective. This volume includes some of the famous stories like, “Tintoretto’s Jesus” (1982), “Crime in Kedarnath” (1984), “Feluda in London” (1989), “The Mystery of Nayan” (1990) et.al. The nineteen stories of this volume has been analysed and studied under the light of the various theories that has been already discussed in the preceding chapters. In each story the narratives are laden with subtle nuances that have been studied theoretically. What is noteworthy is Feluda’s further development as a professional detective and his growing popularity. However, the last story of Ray came in 1996 and with “The Magical Mystery” (1995-96) the legacy of Feluda stories comes to an end. But the stories continue to appeal to readers and owing to their popularity many of them have also been adapted into the silver screen, comic strips, television series et.al.

This chapter shows that apart from the various theoretical angles Feluda stories also offer other avenues of research. The English translations of the Bengali originals and the inter-semiotic translations from the Bengali text to the silver screen offer an interesting
domain of translation studies. Cinematic adaptations as well as translations of classic literary works have often met with scarce criticism over the issue of aesthetic equivalence. The journey of a story from one linguistic medium to another or from a typographical medium to an audio-visual medium is ought to be tricky since each medium is endowed with its own set of conventions and it operates accordingly. So instead of critically evaluating the pros and cons of translations, the research studies the various multiple levels at which literary works gets translated as it is interesting to see what gets lost or gained during the process of translation. While conducting the research, the researcher has referred to the essay “REFLECTION OF AND ON THEORIES OF TRANSLATION”.

Every language has an inbuilt defence mechanism against translation since every language develops according to its particular semantic tradition. So in order to translate a work from a source language to a target language, the translator has to address the notions of the target language but at the same time the original work must not lose its appeal. But translation is a tricky process and is accompanied with some inescapable loses and gains. The researcher’s study of the English translations of the original Feluda stories highlights how the source language resists an all inclusive translation and how the inbuilt defence mechanism of the source language will disrupt a ‘dialogue across’ the corresponding cultures. In this regard the researcher has referred to the essay “Translation as an Act of Ventriloquism: The Author-Translator Hegemony in English translations of Kokborok Poetry” to study the dynamics of the process of translation. Studying the translated versions become more interesting as the researcher shifts focus to the cinematic adaptations of Ray’s stories. Two of Ray’s popular stories Joy Baba Felunath (The Mystery of the Elephant God) and Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress) were adapted into the silver screen by Ray. But with two different sign systems it is interesting to explore the various nuances as filmmakers re-write the typographical text of the original story into the screenplay of a movie. But critics often disdain movie adaptations,
arguing that such practices distort the original classic and fail to communicate the aesthetic appeal of the original work. Studying such adaptations facilitates the analysis of the multiple levels at which such movies are made, adapted or interpreted into the silver screen as it is quite interesting to see what gets changed or lost or gained in adapting the literary texts from a typographical space into an audio–visual space. In this regard the researcher has lent special emphasis to make a close analysis of Ray’s skill as a writer of detective stories as well as a maker of detective movies. By studying the movie adaptations of Ray’s original stories the researcher not only gets to study the dynamics of inter-semiotic translation but this study also facilitates an opportunity to study Ray’s directorial skills in adapting the stories from one medium to another. Moreover, the researcher has extended the study of the translated versions by analysing the book covers of the original stories as well the film posters of the movies. In this way the research has showcased an enthralling area of research that Feluda stories offer.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The research conducted substantiates that detective fiction is not just a thrilling tale rather each tale is more than a crossword puzzle. The politics of popular culture has its roots in the elite considerations that dismiss the mass culture as inferior. In a typical taken for granted mindset, popular literature is considered to have no scope for the assessment of literary merit and therefore most works of popular fiction remain under-valued. But the conducted research shows that detective fiction is neither inferior nor artistically limited in comparison to mainstream literature. Detective stories are definitely entertaining and hence popular but this popularity does not account for its lack of literary merit. In this regard the conducted research has highlighted the various narrative strategies to comprehend the schematised framework of a detective fiction narrative as conceived by the author. The researcher made an in depth study of the genre and has focused on how a detective novel operates, what are the ramifications of the author’s narrative structuring and what impact does it impart on the readers. On the basis of the study the research validates the argument that detective fiction is not artistically inferior and therefore deserve canonical signification from the established tradition of English literature.

Although the initial tales of crime illustrating the criminal’s life and conviction were mainly aimed to warn the people of any act of hindrance against the law of the state yet these tales made a significant contribution to the formation of a genre that dominated the world of fiction from nineteenth century onwards. After conquering the imagination of the people of the west, the genre spread to other countries. By twentieth century writers from other countries also produced their own versions of crime narratives. In many former British colonies the genre found a suitable place to mutate. In countries like Australia, Japan, China,
South Africa, India, et.al writers have indulged in writing crime narratives that takes into consideration the primal issues appropriating the notions of that particular nation and its culture.

The researcher theorizes detective stories from various theoretical perspectives. This aids to formulate a theoretical framework to read or apprehend detective fiction narratives in order to understand the engineering that goes into the making of such stories. The research work thus defends its claim to reinstate detective fiction to a position of academic respectability by showing that the stories incorporate intricate structuring to arouse the desired reading effect for the reader. The conducted research highlights that the appeal of the detective fiction narratives owes to its intense narrative structuring. The technicality involved to generate the mystery is not only interesting but it also showcases the artistic deftness of such narratives. The research shows that the style of narration, narrative voice and narrative mood is at the disposal of the author who can modulate them according to the need of the plot. These narrative strategies help the author to create the right pitch of narration to make reading an involving enterprise for the reader. Moreover, the conducted research also takes into consideration the psychological makeup of the detective and the criminal. Freud’s psychoanalysis provides new insights into the genre and it also helps to understand the psychological ramifications of Feluda stories. Besides, Kenneth Burke’s concepts of ‘pentadic’ scheme and ‘motivational discourse’ help to study the technicalities of the detective’s process of investigation.

At the same time the research emphasize that reading detective stories renders a different experience for the reader because while reading the reader almost becomes a virtual detective. Like the detective, the reader too is digressed in multiple directions on encountering any twist during the act of reading. In this regard the stories can be read in the light of Wolfgang Iser’s reader response theory. According to him almost every text
incorporates some textual blockage into the narrative. Detective fiction narratives are also laden with textual ‘gaps’ or fissures that hinders the reader’s process of perception. To encounter such gaps the reader must employ his faculties of intellect in order to apprehend the gaps and unravel the hints and clues to solve the mystery along with the detective. Infact, a typical detective fiction narrative can be conceived as a game between the detective and the criminal, the detective and the reader, and the reader and the author. Apart from comprehending the mechanism of such stories, the conducted research also shifts attention to study the culture of the origin of Feluda stories.

On reading Feluda stories, the reader gets to know about the cultural notions, societal norms, the moral frame work and the spirit of Bengal. Ray almost creates a virtual Bengal in his narratives, a geographic- psychic space which reflects the Hindu-Bengali cultural ambience. Such stories also have an operational value system embedded in the narratives which corresponds to the ethical structure of the society and culture of their origin. Thus, on reading such stories in translation the readers from a different cultural background might not associate with the moral standards of the source culture. In cases when the motive of the crime is injustice or revenge, the decision of the criminal’s conviction on the basis of morals becomes difficult and ambiguous. However, for a Bengali reader cum researcher, the prior knowledge of the source culture lends an extra advantage as the researcher can easily associate with the various culture-specific nuances while reading the English translations of the original Bengali versions. Moreover, having already read some of the original stories in Bengali, the reader- researcher could also associate with the various changes that the translator has incorporated while translating the stories from the source language and culture to the target language and culture.

The conducted research also focuses on Ray’s delineation of Feluda as a quintessential Bengali bhadralok with the finest qualities of the colonial model of a detective
and the subtle characteristics of a typical Bengali gentleman. The research shows that Feluda is not mere a Holmes prototype, rather he is an Indian professional detective, a typical Bengali bhadralok of the twentieth century. And when these stories with its various aspects get adapted into the big screen it is interesting to study how they get adapted. Reading a book is a far more alluring experience since it offers a wide range of visualisation to the reader as the text allows free space for employing one’s imagination in interpreting the stories. But when seen in the big screen, the viewer is bombarded with various visuals; thereby curtailing the viewer’s imagination. Analyzing the stories in two different mediums helps to study what gets changed or adapted during the inter-semiotic translation of the stories from one medium to another.

However, one of the most important findings of the research is the coinage of the term ‘detective fiction elements’ which in the survey of existing literature on this genre has not been located before. The term refers to the basic ideas of finding clues, keen observation, analytical reasoning and deduction. This claim is however, not all inclusive and is made within the limitations of time and space of the research conducted and the readings undertaken thereof. This term and its implications are very significant in understanding the fact that many so-called non-detective fiction might also have detective fiction elements. One such example is The Ramayana. Thus the research work helps to re-evaluate the popular notions that degrade the genre of detective fiction. The conducted research helps to reassess the genre’s worth in order to situate it in an alternative academic canon. With these varied areas of study, the genre shows scope for serious academic research. The research has validated that through serious reading and interpretation the genre can be situated in an alternative canon thereby negating the politics of exclusion stimulated by the grand literary canon.
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