Chapter 3

Feluda: Evolution of an Alternative Model and Related Issues

In 1965 Satyajit Ray ventured into two different genres of fiction writing. The year saw the launch of two of his most loved fictional creations: detective Feluda and Professor Shonku. Ray’s first story featuring Feluda and his young cousin Tapesh was published in Sandesh, which revived the famous children’s magazine of yesteryears started by his grandfather Upendra Kishore Ray. His very first story captured the imagination of many young readers and Feluda went on to become one of the most loved and iconic figures in the domain of Bengali literature. Ray composed 34 stories featuring the duo and even introduced other important characters including Lalmohan Ganguli, the popular writer of thrillers in the series. This chapter attempts to study and analyse Ray’s stories in the light of various theoretical renderings discussed in the previous chapter. The stories which have been considered for textual analysis comprise the first volume of Gopa Majumdar’s The Complete Adventures of Feluda (2004). Apart from the theoretical renderings, the chapter also draws attention towards the gradual schematic development incorporated into the stories; suggesting the evolution of a shrewd professional private detective from an enthusiastic amateur investigator.

Although twentieth century saw new trends in the genre, yet every evolving writer followed the formulaic conventions of the nineteenth century detective fiction narrative. Ray’s admiration for Sherlock Holmes is a known fact and there are many aspects which indicate the western influence in his narratives. When Ray composed his first story, he was fully aware of the generic conventions of detective fiction; his use of the detective-assistant duo, an assistant cum narrator surely reminds the reader of Holmes and Watson. But Ray was an artist and not an imitator and hence as a variation he introduced two cousin brothers as the
detective-assistant duo in his stories. Moreover, none of them were professionals. The elder one is a twenty-seven-year-old man who is like any other office-goer of his age, while the younger one is an enthusiastic school boy who idolises his brother and looks up to him with respect and admiration. In order to make his narratives distinctively different, Ray added one more member Lalmohan Ganguli to make it a group of three. Lalmohan Ganguli became an active member of the group accompanying Feluda in almost all cases, infact, in many narratives he also happened to assist Feluda in his unique style. However, drawing inspiration from the western tradition of detective fiction was not that simple; since Ray intended to write his stories mainly for the young readers of Bengal. In this regard, Ray had to ensure that he should produce thrilling narratives without any trace of violence and eroticism. Even if they were not essential requirements, yet violence and sex were common aspects in the western tradition of detective fiction. However, without employing any of them Ray did succeed in creating a successful detective series featuring a proficient private detective out of a twentieth century Bengali intellectual. Interestingly Ray presented him not as an ace detective, but as an intelligent amateur who gradually developed his skills from his reading of detective stories.

Each story of Feluda series is a specimen of Ray’s craftsmanship. The tight-end thrilling narratives of crime and mystery become more alluring with vivid descriptions and adventurous story line. But like any other popular detective series, the adventurous tales featuring Feluda and company are considered to represent the domain of ‘popular’ literature, with no scope of academic research. In the previous chapter, it has been shown that detective stories offer a wide scale of theoretical perspectives and in view of the various theories discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter will entail a detailed textual analysis of the sixteen (translated) stories included in the first volume of Gopa Majumdar’s *The Complete Adventures of Feluda*. Although the main focus is on theoretical conceptualisation of the
stories, yet that would not diminish the excitement generated while reading the thrilling plots. Apart from *Sandesh*, the stories were also published in another popular Bengali magazine *Desh*² owing to their rising popularity. A chronological reading of the stories would explain how Ray’s fictional detective managed to capture the imagination of both the young readers of *Sandesh* as well as the adult readers of *Desh*.

Satyajit Ray was a realist and in style and character his writing clearly reflects his skill. His first four stories are interesting plots of puzzle and mystery without the involvement of any grievous crime. In each story, he presents a fictive world that runs chaotic following some disturbing events. Although Ray aims to compose stories of detection, the first four of the series differ from any typical detective fiction narrative. 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. In the first story, Feluda is introduced as the narrator’s cousin and except a sneak peak of his analytical skills and his age; this story does not provide any other information about the detective. But with each story the readers get to know more about him and see him evolve from an amateur investigator (by hobby) to a professional detective (by choice). Besides the four stories are also important to trace Satyajit Ray’s development as a detective fiction writer. In all these stories Ray has used some common motifs and recurring elements, although each narrative is exceptional in its own way.

In the first story “Danger in Darjeeling” (1965-66), Feluda and Tapesh find themselves in the midst of some mysterious developments that engulf the life of Rajen Babu³, after his peaceful life is threatened by an anonymous letter which read, “Be prepared to pay for your sins...” (Majumdar 2004:7). On the insistence of Tapesh, Feluda decides to look into the matter and starts his investigation. Although Feluda suspected three persons, it was Tinkori Babu who turned out to be the mastermind behind the letter. Feluda managed to
indentify the culprit, but before he could confront him, Tinkori Babu had left Darjeeling and in the following day he justified the reasons behind his mischief by sending an explanatory letter. Set in Lucknow, “The Emperor’s Ring” (1996-67) is an exciting story about a precious ring which is believed to have once belonged to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. After thieves thronged the house of its present owner Dr. Srivastava, he decided to hand it over to Dhiru kaka 4 to ensure its safety. But misfortune strikes as thieves steal the ring from the latter’s house. The police was informed, but since Feluda and Tapesh happened to be Dhiru kaka’s guests, Feluda got a golden opportunity to exercise his skills and investigate the matter. In the course he encountered various challenges like threats, entrapment et.al, but at last he succeeded in unmasking the culprit. Besides, the narrative incorporated another mystery which exposed Bonobihari Babu for being responsible for Pyarelal Seth’s death. Following a chain of unprecedented events, the action moves to an exciting climax at Haridwar where Feluda and Tapesh fall into the trap of Bonobihari Sarkar. But with his sharp intelligence Feluda succeeds in defeating his opponent by using handy weapons like gunpowder and black pepper.

“Kailash Chowdhury’s Jewel” (1967) is the third story of the series and it marks the beginning of Feluda’s career as a private investigator. Kailash Chowdhury hired Feluda to seek his help after receiving a letter in which he was threatened over the possession of a precious jewel. However, in a short but puzzling episode of investigation Feluda discovered that the real Kailash Chowdhury was held captive by his brother Kedar, who took opportunity of his identical looks and pretended to be Kailash Chowdhury himself. Later Kailash Chowdhury threw light upon his brother’s moves and the latter was finally arrested after the police was informed by Feluda. In 1970 came his fourth story “The Anubis Mystery”.

Nilmoni Sanyal is a connoisseur of Egyptian antiques who seeks Feluda’s help after receiving a number of letters written in an ancient Egyptian script called hieroglyphics. This followed
the theft of the statue of Anubis from his house and in this regard he suspected his ace rival Mr. Pratul Datta. However, Feluda’s intelligence along with his new techniques of investigation (using photographs, taking disguise et.al) helps him to reveal that the real culprit was none other than Nilmoni Babu himself. Excessive greed and temptation for antiques made him stage a theft at his own house so that no one would suspect him when he sends his men to steal precious antiques from his rival Pratul Datta’s house.

These four stories serve as the launch-pad for a new hero in the realm of Bengali detective fiction. In each story Ray has followed the basic generic conventions and the story of crime evolves after the story of investigation. Although the stories do not deal with any serious crime but acts of stealing, culpable homicide, threats et.al, disrupt the state of normalcy in each narrative. Following the tradition of dual narrators Ray employs Tapesh, the character- narrator who leads the reader through every contour of the story. The other narrator is Feluda, the detective-narrator who gives a detailed narration once the denouement appears. Like a typical Watson- figure Tapesh operates as Feluda’s ally who is totally bemused by his skills and is always in praise of him. Feluda is the ‘omniscient narrator’- the all knowing figure, who at the end explains the context and cause of the crime to expose the culprit. Narration in these four stories is simple but interesting. Tapesh is the first-person narrator, describing each character and event with finest details. His role as a narrator is very significant. Not only does he narrate the events, he also describes the various characters along with their physical attributes, mannerisms and mental manoeuvrings. If he had not narrated the various twists and turns, explaining the detective’s and the criminal’s behavioural patterns; reading Feluda stories would not have been such an involving experience. But apart from being a narrator he is also Feluda’s assistant cum ally. Although on most occasions Feluda does not share any crucial information with him, yet the style in which they both collaborate during investigations heightens the thrill of the narratives. Moreover, on many
occasions Tapesh is seen to disclose his own doubts and queries over the progress of the mystery. For instance in “The Emperor’s Ring” Tapesh voiced his confusions and raised various questions that emerged in his mind. This is a wise move by the author, since this in a way also instigates the mind of the reader with similar questions and doubts. So when Tapesh says, “All these thoughts chased one another in my mind...” (Majumdar 2004:82) he is also guiding the reader to understand the dynamics of the mystery.

On the other hand, Feluda is presented as a typical detective-narrator. As a detective he not only solves the mystery but is also empowered to take over narration at the final moment of culmination. By being a detective he enjoys an authority that empowers him both as an investigator as well as a narrator. A close reading of the first four stories depicts Feluda as an amateur-turned-professional detective and in each story he operates as an alternative agent who resolves the mystery before the police. Although in each story the presence of the police is a common motif but by virtue of being the detective Feluda has access to all the vital clues. Aided by superior power of intelligence, Feluda succeeds in decoding the clues and solves the mysteries before thereby leaving the men in uniform behind. Thus the stories depict the detective as more competent than the personals assigned to maintain law and order. The police usually appear at the end and their role is to simply arrest and convict the culprit once he has been exposed by the detective. Apart from his skills of detection, Feluda shows exemplary talent in other arenas, infact, he shows great talent in whatever he does. He is not only an avid reader, but is also good at cricket, various indoor games, card tricks, hypnotism and can even write with both hands. But as Tapesh remarks; the most remarkable thing about Feluda “is his power of deduction...acquired simply by reading and regular practice” (Majumdar 2004:28).

In these four stories, Feluda exhibits brilliant power of observation and great analytical skills in the tradition of any other professional detective. His hunt for clues while
scrutinising the letter in “Danger in Darjeeling”, his act of observation in “The Anubis Mystery” and in the same story his gaze into the photograph that led to the discovery of the hand impression of the child exhibit his skills. While investigating his sharp mind works in collaboration with his power of vision to draw and analyse inferences on the basis of which he solves the mysteries. However, with each story Feluda bridges the gap between an amateur investigator and a professional detective. In “The Emperor’s Ring”, he used black pepper and gun powder as weapons in defence and even tricked the culprit to believe that he possessed the emperor’s ring to “provoke the real thief” (Majumdar 2004:78). But in “The Anubis Mystery”, Ray shows the more professional side of his character with his possession of a revolver, his use of camera and photographs and in the manner in which he playacts in disguise.

Another interesting aspect about the detective is observed in the scene of final resolution, in which he confronts the culprit and either forces him into a confession or exposes him by using his logic of convenience. In detective fiction stories, often the author does not provide the readers with any formidable background information about certain aspects. Under such circumstances, the author contrives a device to overpower the culprit by the detective’s stance of logic. In order to understand the puzzle, the detective at times tries to think and analyse how he might have acted as a criminal in a given context of crime. In this way the detective narrows down to the most probable explanation to understand the criminal’s act of crime. This ability of the detective depends on his power of logical understanding. The concluding scene of “The Emperor’s Ring” depicts how Feluda confronts the culprit and explains the series of incidents that have led to the mystery. The confidence with which Feluda gives explanation of Bonobihari Babu’s activities shows how Feluda finds the most logical explanation of the circumstances that led to the death of Pyarelal. Dismissing the fake story of the culprit, Feluda disclosed the truth behind Pyarelal’s death. Negating any
sense of doubt, Feluda narrates how on the morning of Pyarelal’s death, Bonobihari Babu visited him with a poisonous spider to frighten him and following an argument; the former’s fright at the sight of the creature suddenly caused his death. The confidence with which Feluda speaks about the flow of events shows his authority as the omniscient detective; when he lacks concrete details to validate his claim. This is how the detective logically substantiates his claim by relying on his instincts. It is actually a device used by the author to empower the detective. Apart from the hints and clues, a detective fiction narrative is also scattered with a number of probabilities. When the narrative does not provide any information, the detective is shown to narrow down to a conclusion by accepting a possibility which appears to be more valid according to his logic, thereby eliminating the other probabilities.

In addition to his skills of detection, Feluda’s role as a narrator is also significant. Following Gerard Genette’s theory postulated in his work *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), it can be said that when the story reaches its final moment of revelation, Feluda acts as an all-knowing figure who enjoys zero-focalization. By the term ‘focalization’ (Genette 1980:189), Gerard refers to the perspective of the narrator. In each story, Feluda becomes the omniscient narrator who provides a logical explanation to resolve the mystery at the end. In this regard too, Feluda enjoys an authority that empowers him to decide if he would share any important information with his assistant Tapesh, and if he does, it is also up to him to decide what to share and how much to disclose. In this regard it is interesting to analyse the presence of Feluda’s blue-notebook- the one which was used by him to note down relevant points related to the mysteries while solving a case. But Tapesh enjoys no access to this notebook nor does Feluda ever disclose anything about its contents to him. However, even when Tapesh managed to take a look at it in “The Emperor’s Ring” he could not decipher any sense out of it and was disappointed to find that it was written in a different
script. Later in “The Anubis Mystery” Tapesh stopped bothering about its contents as he discovered that in the notebook Feluda wrote in a unique way as he devised a style of writing English with Greek letters. In this way Ray invests his detective with double authority, both as a detective as well as a narrator.

Satyajit Ray also excels in constructing intense narrative structures, maintaining the basic narrative conventions of the genre. Each story can be read in terms of its various versions and as retellings in the form of translated versions of the original Bengali work. Besides this, each story can also be read in terms of the ‘story of crime’ and the ‘story of investigation’ (Todorov 1977:44). The former is written by the criminal; and is the story of concealment, while the latter is the story of cognizance as read by the detective. In each story the culprit constructs a tale of mystery which creates anarchy in the lives of the characters in the plot. While reading the stories the reader can notice that wherever Feluda goes “...mysterious things start happening around him.” (Majumdar 2004:28). Infact, in the first two stories of the series Ray maintains a common link by staging each mystery during Feluda’s holiday trips; first in Darjeeling and then in Lucknow. Interestingly, in each story Ray has maintained a holiday motif. It can be suggested that it is an intentional move by the author to add a degree of life-likeness to the narratives since this will ensure that young Tapesh can easily assist Feluda in his adventures during the holidays.

While Feluda tries to resolve each mystery he attempts to read the culprit’s story of crime and in this process composes his own story of investigation. In her introduction to the book titled Mayhem and Murder: Narrative and Moral Problems in the Detective Story (1999), Heta Pyrhonen writes that “the detective’s reading affects the readers own reading process.” (Pyrhonen 1999:5) This is indeed true since it guides the reader to understand the intricacies of the puzzle as an ongoing mystery by making an investigator out of a reader. This guiding principle also works when the reader-investigator is also a researcher. While
reading detective fiction narratives, the reader cum researcher also becomes an investigator in the process of carrying out thorough textual analysis of the narratives. A close reading of the first four stories helps to identify another common motif regarding the nature of crimes. All four stories are interesting plots which operate on the problem-solving principle. In each story the problem arises out of a person’s greed and selfishness. Interestingly, Ray follows a common motif as in each mystery it is the avarice for antiques that turns the narrative into a brainteaser. Although in “Danger in Darjeeling”, the letter written to threaten the protagonist had nothing to do with antiques, but Rajen Babu’s collection of various antiques was thought to be a crucial factor in the initial stages of the investigation. In the following three narratives this motif is more predominant. Pyarelal Seth’s death in “The Emperor’s Ring” occurs due to Bonobihari Babu’s extreme desire to possess the emperor’s ring. In the third story, Kedar Chowdhury’s greed for a supposedly precious stone—blue beryl made him keep his own brother in captivity for the lure of money. Nilmoni Sanyal was also persuaded by his greed to steal antiques from Pratul Datta’s house. So in each narrative except the first one, the miscreant’s crime (culpable homicide, abduction and stealing) is the secondary outcome that emerges out of his primary motivation of greed.

The stories can also be understood in terms of the Gerard Genette’s theory of narratives as explained in his book *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. In this work Genette has made a detailed study of the various factors that determine the nature of narrative discourse. Considering the link between story and discourse, Genette states that tense, mood and voice are the three determining factors at the author’s disposal which he or she can utilise to create the right track of narrative discourse according to the demands of the plot. Keeping his postulations in mind, one can study how Satyajit Ray has made various choices in the narrative style to create a brilliant mystery. Narrative time plays a determining role in any narrative and the author can make various choices to manage the ‘order’, ‘duration’ and
‘frequency’ of the events of the story to present them accordingly in the narrative discourse. As a detective fiction writer, Ray chose to follow a non-chronological order of narration to exert the desired reading effect upon the readers. In such narratives authors usually use anachronies (Genette 1980:35) as a common device to regulate the order of narration. This distorts the chronological order of the events to present them in a non-chronological manner. This device helps Ray to intensify the mystery as seen in “The Emperor’s Ring” where the fact that the ring was actually in the safe hands of Feluda was disclosed in the discourse only at a right moment towards the end, although in the story he carries out this task long before. Had it been disclosed at the very moment at which the event was actualised then there would have been no mystery at all. The success of the story lies in the twist that even if it was believed that the ring was stolen but in reality it was displaced in the safe custody of Feluda. This shows how anachrony operates in detective fiction narratives.

Ray has also maintained the right equation between the duration of the ‘story time’ and the ‘discourse time’ (Chatman 1980:222) to suit the requirements of his plot. Often there are such sequences where the discourse time is greater than the story time. At times Tapesh gives a detailed description of the context and background of an incident, or he simply gives a vivid description of the locale without making any progress in the plot of the story. For instance, in “The Emperor’s Ring” there are portions where Tapesh describes their visit around the city of Lucknow. Ray makes his narrator so skilled that it almost appears that the reader gets to visualise the grandeur of the city of Lucknow along with its historical monuments interspersed with various cultural highlights of the city. Moreover the format of such stories is such that on many occasions the characters recount the events related to crime multiple times; taking recourse to repetitive narration.

Satyajit Ray also maintains the right pitch of narrative mood in his stories. Infact, on many occasions his narrative skill gives vent to his conceptual theories about detective
fiction, which he contrives to propagate through the mouth of his narrator Feluda. In all four stories Feluda receives multiple threats, either over phone or through an anonymous letter. According to Feluda, the miscreant never gets any warning; it is always “given to the culprit’s enemy” (Majumdar 2004:49). Moreover in a detective fiction narrative the author maintains the right narrative mood by regulating the ‘narrative information’ (Genette 1980:162) that is provided through the narrator. According to Gerard Genette “the narrative can furnish the reader with more or few details.” (Genette 1980:162). In detective fiction narrative, the author regulates the inflow of details to the reader and keeps a desired degree of distance between what the detective does and what he narrates as a narrator. For instance, in “The Emperor’s Ring” Ray has kept Feluda at a convenient distance from the information that it was he who possessed the ring right from the beginning of the mystery. Ray places him at a desired degree of detachment from what he narrates and makes this information open only at the right moment. This move creates the narrative mood for the reader. The narrative information (the fact that the ring was with Feluda) was not delivered to the reader until the right moment arrived towards the final denouement. In this way the author maintains a degree of detachment between the narrator and the information which he delivers. This move also determines the perspective of the narrator. Here, Feluda discloses his involvement in the whole mystery only when he desired, so that he could provoke the real thief to come out in light.

Another important aspect of a narrative is the nature of the narrative voice. In terms of Genette’s theory of narration, Feluda stories operate within the ‘intra-diegetic’ – ‘homo-diegetic’ (Chatman 1980:223) paradigm. According to Genette’s terminology narration is intra-diegetic when it takes place from within the narrative and this can happen only when the narrator is a character within the narrative, a style which is explained by the term homo-diegetic narration. In Ray’s stories both narrators are characters within the narrative and thus
they are homo-diegetic and therefore narration in Feluda stories operates in intra-diegetic mode. Apart from this Ray also incorporates his own style of narration. For instance, Ray has maintained a link or a sequential pattern throughout the first four stories. In the first story, Feluda is a twenty seven year old young man and Tapesh is thirteen and a half year old. While Tapesh becomes fourteen in the second story, Feluda grows a year older only in the third story. In the first story Ray does not reveal much about them except their relationship and Feluda’s interest in investigation. In the next story he is introduced in a more comprehensive manner. In this story Tapesh speaks about Feluda’s job, his nature, his skills and other interests. And by the third story Feluda evolves as a ‘PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR’ (Majumdar 2004: 93) from an amateur investigator. Thus Ray has maintained a sequential chain in presenting his hero. This is an intentional move on the part of the author who intended to present his hero not as a skilled detective like Holmes, but as an ordinary individual with extraordinary qualities, who had the potential to become a great detective. Moreover, this style makes his stories more realistic as the readers can easily identify with the characters.

While reading, readers often try to decode the working mechanism on which detective fiction narratives operate. According to reader-response theorists, reading is a dynamic process and a text comes alive only through the active participation of the reader. While reading a detective story or novel the reader almost becomes a virtual detective as he or she tries to analyse every detail to understand the mystery and progress accordingly. But a sudden twist in the narrative may dissolve the reader’s perspective and require him to either make a fresh start or modify his already built perspective. This process of creation, dilution and diversion of perspective continues until the denouement is reached. At times a skilled reader might be able to integrate his views and narrow down to a solution. But conventionally, the reader does not have access to all details and thus he has to wait till the end in order to
confirm his final perception. According to Wolfgang Iser, the author of a text always incorporates some textual ‘gaps’ (Iser 1972:285) or blocks to disrupt or break the reader’s chain of perspectives as developed while reading. In addition to various twists and turns such gaps make reading more difficult as the reader struggles to progress. However, unlike twists and turns such gaps are not easily discernable at the surface level. Even to recognise a gap the reader has to indulge in the process of active reading. While investigating the mysteries, Feluda often chooses to reveal less and even if he speaks he stops abruptly without giving a clear picture. This in turn builds up a textual blockage that leaves both the narrator and the reader puzzled. In “The Emperor’s Ring” Feluda says, “I have got an idea which spy Pyarelal had tried to talk about.” but as Tapesh narrates, “He refused to say any more.” (Majumdar 2004:72). Here Feluda ends his speech without elucidating further and therefore both Tapesh as well as the reader expect more clarification and are left guessing about a possible explanation. This creates a textual ‘gap’ or a possible blockage as a result of which the reader faces difficulty in apprehending vital aspects of the mystery. Here the reader has to utilise his intellect to unlock this gap and progress further in the narrative. Ray incorporated a similar gap in “Kailash Chowdhury’s Jewel”. On seeing Kailash Chowdhury and his father from the roof top of a neighbouring house, Feluda smelled mischief and uttered only two words, “Fishy. Very Fishy.” (Majumdar 2004:110). After this he did not speak a word on his way back home. Once more he abruptly leaves things unsaid and unexplained. This formulates a textual gap and it causes an interruption in the reader’s perception of the flow of events while understanding the mystery. However, as the reader continues to read he develops more perspectives which in turn can be utilised to fill up this gap by utilising his intellect.

The next four publications of Ray were all published in Desh, another noted magazine of Bengal. Interestingly Desh was not a children’s magazine, rather it was suited for the adult readers of Bengal. But the magic of Feluda and Tapesh worked for both adult and children
since both categories enjoyed reading the brainteasers featuring the duo. Slowly their characters got more developed; the plots were trickier than the previous ones, new characters were introduced, the culprits were more cunning than before. In short, with his next four stories Ray went a step ahead in his endeavour of shaping the character of Feluda- one of India’s finest fictional detectives. In “Trouble in Gangtok” (1970), Feluda and Tapesh came across an exciting mystery during their summer holidays in Gangtok. Sasadhar Bose’s friend cum business partner Shivkumar Shelvankar is killed in a tragic road accident. However Feluda’s interaction with Nishikanto Sarkar and Helmut Ungar revealed some interesting facts which raised his suspicion over the accident. His doubts proved correct as his investigation unveiled an intricate murder mystery behind Mr. Shelvankar’s death. Having cheated Mr Shelvankar in business, Sasadhar Bose decided to kill him to eradicate him forever. After killing him he made it appear like an accident and to avoid any suspicion, Bose took the disguise of Dr. Vaidya. But Feluda’s intelligence dispelled all clouds of concealment as he exposed the real identity of Sasadhar Bose alias Dr. Vaidya.

“The Golden Fortress” (1971) is an adventurous thriller featuring a young boy Mukul who could recall events from his previous life. Mukul’s father came to seek Feluda’s help as he feared that some greedy miscreants would follow Mukul to find the hidden treasure, while he was on his way to Jodhpur to see the golden fortress with an eminent para-psychologist Dr. Hemanga Hajra. On their way they met with Lalmohan Ganguli, a noted fiction writer. After their arrival to Jodhpur, Feluda found Mukul safe, but things soon turned nasty as Dr. Hajra was attacked by an unidentified man and following this Feluda also received a culpable threat. Soon Feluda realised that the fort which Mukul wants to see is the one situated in Jaisalmer. The action finally moved to Jaisalmer after following a number of twists. Over there Feluda disclosed that the man with Mukul was actually Bhavananda, a crook who was faking as Dr. Hajra. His greed led him to multiple crimes in which he was aided by Mandar
Bose. At last Feluda succeeds in ensuring Mukul’s safety and also resolves a tricky mystery. The plot in the next story “Incident on the Kalka Mail” (1972) is laid like a Chinese box structure almost in the manner of a maze. Feluda was hired to return Dinanath Lahiri’s suitcase which accidentally got exchanged with a fellow passenger while travelling in the Kalka Mail. As Feluda started his investigation he narrowed down to the right person with whom the suitcase got exchanged. Moreover, Feluda also discovered that there were two entangling mysteries hidden within the contents of the suitcases that got exchanged. One mystery was about a diamond found in a container of chopped betel-nuts and the other was about a missing manuscript. However, with the course of action Feluda resolved both mysteries in a thrilling climax.

“A Killer in Kailash” (1973) deals with a smuggling racket that was ravaging the ancient heritage of India. The news of the stealing of the head of an ancient statue from a temple in Bhubaneshwar disturbs both Uncle Sidhu and Feluda. Driven by a sense of responsibility and on the insistence of Uncle Sidhu, Feluda decided to retrieve the head of the statue. This led him, Tapesh and Lalmohan Ganguli all the way to Aurangabad, a city which was home to some of the best specimens of ancient Indian art. After following a number of unprecedented incidents entangled with various intriguing twists, Feluda succeeded in retrieving the artefact and caught hold of the responsible culprits. All the four stories are complex mysteries interwoven with multiple twists and turns and each story operate on the problem-solving principle. Ray has constructed all the narratives within an intra-diegetic – homo-diegetic paradigm and has maintained the right equation between the story time and discourse time to intensify each mystery and create a desired reading effect upon the readers. In each story there is a discrepancy in the discourse order as the narrator often oscillates between the past and the present. Moreover, the stories can be read as a collection of multiple stories, in three of them Ray has repeated the holiday motif and among the four mysteries
only two were professional assignments for Feluda. However, in spite of some common aspects each story is strikingly different in character.

A skilled detective always relies upon his strengths of superior power of reasoning and brilliant analytical mind and in these four stories Feluda utilised his strengths to solve the mysteries. In “Trouble in Gangtok” Feluda used his brilliant power of observation and excellent analytical reasoning to expose the dual character of Sasadhar Bose alias Dr. Vaidya. After his visit to the accident site, Feluda was convinced that Mr. Shelvankar was killed and his conviction was further affirmed when he enacted the accident experimentally to see how things might have rolled during the actual incident. Once again the detective emerges as the all knowing figure during a dramatic confrontation with the criminal. Exhibiting his brilliance in logical deduction Feluda ripped through Mr. Bose’s alibi when he claimed that on the day of the incident he went to attend a wedding. Feluda explained that he never went to his nephew’s wedding since Hindu weddings do not take place in the month of Chaitra of the Hindu-Bengali calendar year. Feluda further added that the day on which he left Calcutta was the fourteenth of April, which marks the first day of the month of Baisakh, following the month of Chaitra and therefore he was sure that the accident took place in the month of Chaitra. Moreover a casual observation of a co-passenger’s (Sasadhar Bose) ring with ‘Ma’ engraved on it also helped him to expose Mr. Bose.

In “The Golden Fortress” no one had any idea about the particular fort that Mukul was referring to. Feluda finds a solution to this when he noticed a yellow bowl in a local shop in Jodhpur. On asking the shopkeeper he comes to know that the bowl was made of yellow sandstone which was found only in Jaisalmer. Thus the mist around Mukul’s golden fortress got cleared as Feluda says, “Here is a bowl made of stone. Yet if I were to say that it was a golden bowl, I wouldn’t be far wrong!” (Majumdar 2004: 242). He also observed that the fake Dr. Hajra misspelled his name in a note written on the letterhead which belonged to the
real Dr. Hajra. This confirmed his suspicions that the one pretending to be Dr. Hajra is actually a fraud. But Feluda also had a unique presence of mind which empowers his faculty of keen observation and gives him the knowledge of what to observe. In “Incident on the Kalka Mail” Tapesh says that Feluda “would begin to worry about a seemingly irrelevant point that would escape everyone else.” (Majumdar 2004:310). In this story he exhibits his skill when two neatly folded newspapers in Mr. Dhameeba’s suitcase raised relevant questions in his mind. He was doubtful about why would someone carry an already read newspaper on a train journey which any other passenger would usually discard. His doubts eventually helped him to solve the mystery of the missing manuscript. Once again in “A Killer in Kailash”, Feluda explained how his doubts against the smuggler Chattoraj alias Mr. Raxit was raised when he observed that his name was freshly written with paint in an old suitcase.

In a detective fiction narrative the detective tries to unravel the mystery by attempting to take a psychological insight into the criminal’s mind. Often the detective tries to understand the intricacies of the mystery by following the criminal’s thought process. In these attempts the detective negates his own identity and tries to place himself in the criminal’s space. While investigating, Feluda often acts as the alter-ego of the criminal. In order to understand the ‘convoluted geometry’ (Majumdar 2004:202) of the criminal’s mind; Feluda negates his own identity and tries to think like the criminal by psychologically substituting the criminal by his own self. For instance, in the story “The Golden Fortress” Feluda says that his first suspicion against the criminal Bhavananda (who was feigning as Dr. Hajra) was triggered when Feluda saw him lying helplessly on the ground with his hands tied at the back. Feluda virtually thought of the entire situation, replacing Bhavananda by himself and explained that any intelligent man in a similar situation with his hands tied behind his back can easily slip his hands below his folded legs and untie himself. However, Feluda’s actions
can also be analyzed in the light of Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis as explained in his 1920 essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”. In the story, “Incident on the Kalka Mail”, Ray employed Feluda in an act of stealing which led Mr. Ganguli conclude that, “…the dividing line between a brilliant detective and a criminal with real cunning is really quite thin.” (Majumdar 2004:314). After the original suitcase got stolen from Feluda’s hotel room in Delhi, he had to arrange a similar suitcase in order to return it to Mr. Dhameeja. The precision with which Feluda stole an old man’s suitcase in the Air-India office suggests how smartly he negates his role as a detective and replaces himself with the criminal. In other words, in executing the act of stealing Feluda psychologically substituted the criminal by his own self. However, a Freudian interpretation of the incident would suggest that Feluda tried to gratify his aggressive urges in accordance with the pleasure principle of the id, as it has a tendency to gratify the sensual pleasures of the psyche. But the reality principle of the ego does it under suitable conditions and expresses his conflicting impulses through ‘sublimation’ (Gay 1992:36). According to Freudian theory, the process of sublimation helps to substitute the unacceptable urges by legitimizing it with acceptable behaviour. Therefore it can be concluded that since Feluda as a detective represents ‘the good’, his behaviour in this act of stealing substitutes for his unacceptable urges and makes it (stealing) unobjectionable.

The skill of a detective fiction writer rests on his art of presentation. The author chooses to maintain a balance between different aspects of the narrative only to impart the desired reading effect upon the reader. In such narratives the author makes his narrator speak with a definite perspective and at the same time he regulates what shall the narrator say and how much will he speak. In detective fiction narratives the reader does not have any access to many interesting facts that binds the narrative together, but as the narrative reaches its climax the narrator provides a detailed explanation of all the events that were so long concealed in order to finally resolve the mystery of the criminal’s story of crime. According to Gerard
Genette, the narrative seems to take a “greater or lesser distance from what it tells.” (Genette 1980:162). These mechanizations undertaken by the author helps to shape the narrative mood for the reader. For instance, in “A Killer in Kailash”, Satyajit Ray builds an exciting mystery by regulating the narrative details that are usually expected to be delivered by the detective-narrator. In order to recover the head of the statue, Feluda played an exciting game to fool the culprits. But he did not ever choose to disclose the dynamics of the game to Tapesh and Mr. Ganguli, rather he asked them to simply act according to his instructions. On their first visit to the cave, Feluda suddenly went missing without any prior explanation, leaving Tapesh and Mr. Ganguli in a state of utter confusion. However, at regular intervals he did leave some notes of instruction for them until he appeared in the disguise of a hippie to explain the entire plan. Throughout the narrative both Tapesh and Mr. Ganguli found his behaviour mysterious because he did not explain anything. However, things seemed to resolve when the artefact was recovered and Jayanta Mallik, whom they were following from Calcutta was arrested. But even after that, both were left confused when Feluda claims that the mystery is yet to be resolved. Once again Feluda was “running a campaign, totally unseen.” (Majumdar 2004:388). Tapesh and Mr. Ganguli were asked to go to the cave where to their surprise they found Jayanta Mallik. At last the culprit was arrested and Feluda appears to explain the course of events that led to the arrest of Mr. Raxit alias Chattoraj and Jayanta Mallik’s release. Besides he also revealed the real identity of Jayanta Mallik, who was a detective himself. Feluda also explained the reason behind taking his second disguise as a tourist. In this story the mystery rests upon the author’s role in creating the right narrative mood by keeping Feluda at a distance from the facts which he narrates. Throughout the narrative Feluda maintained a desired space or distance between what he was doing and what he was revealing. This move by the author not only intensified the mystery but also creates the desired reading effect for the readers.
While reading such puzzling mysteries readers are led through a complex network of “perspectives, preintentions, recollections” (Iser 1972:284). In his essay “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach” (1972) Iser explains how the reader’s act of reading is influenced by his interaction with the narrative’s interlinking network of sentences. While reading, the reader builds a perspective which is often influenced by his preintentions. As the reader continues reading he is driven by anticipation and goes on to develop new conceptions because of which his previous perspectives undergo a modification which is then followed by a retrospection to develop new perception on the basis of what he has already read. This is a continuous process which goes on until the reader integrates a final perception of the narrative or the text. Thus, it can be stated that meaning is not fixed and is subject to constant alteration. While reading detective fiction narratives readers have to undertake a similar dynamic process of reading in order to comprehend the puzzle underlying the narrative. While reading such narratives, an active reader almost becomes a virtual detective and tries to follow the detective’s moves in order to solve the puzzle. But the structure of a detective fiction narrative is laid in such a manner that the reader has to follow a continuous process of building perceptions, modification of pre-existing perceptions and recollection of new perceptions. In this way a detective fiction narrative comes alive through an active text-reader interaction.

For instance in the initial stages of “Incident on the Kalka Mail”, it appears that it is too simple a case for Feluda who usually prefers to take those cases which are challenging enough and demands cerebral exercise. But once he comes to know about the manuscript Feluda decides to accept the task of re-exchanging the suitcases. Infact, it does not take much of his skill to find out the name of the particular passenger with whom Mr. Lahiri’s suitcase got interchanged. But with multiple twists at regular intervals, Ray has designed the narrative as a complex web. When Feluda had to go to Shimla and get Mr. Lahiri’s suitcase in return of
Mr. Dhameeja’s suitcase, some unexpected events raised his doubts. Feluda was attacked by some goons, Mr. Pakrashi offered him money to get hold of the manuscript, the suitcase was stolen from Feluda’s hotel room, he discovered a diamond hidden in a container containing betel-nuts and even the manuscript was missing when he finally got hold of Mr. Dameeja’s suitcase. So, a seemingly simple case turned out to be a ‘double-barrelled mystery’ (Majumdar 2004:329); one involving the diamond and the other was about the manuscript.

With so many twists, reading becomes a process in continuum where the reader has to undergo a constant process of building perceptions, but with further reading these perceptions are subjected to continuous alteration. Finally the reader draws inferences, negotiates through his former recollections to find new directions to comprehend the puzzle as an ongoing mystery.

At the end of each story Feluda appears as an all knowing figure providing a detailed explanation of the cause, agent and context of the crime. When the narrative in “The Golden Fortress” reaches its culmination the reader finds that at one hand Dr. Hajra has been badly injured by a peacock for messing up with its nest, on the other hand Feluda is seen to greet another man saying, “Hello, Dr. Hajra!” (Majumdar 2004: 268). This leaves Tapesh as well as the readers amazed. Later Feluda explains that the former was a fake crook, while the latter was the real Dr. Hajra. Again in “A Killer in Kailash” Feluda emerged as the all knowing figure when he explained the reason behind Jayanta Mallik’s release and his supposed role in the whole mystery. In this situation, both protagonists as well as the readers of the story are left amused to know that Jayanta Mallik was himself a detective; trying to save the head of the yakshi from going into wrong hands. Feluda not only knew about his identity but was also aware of the telephone messages that he used to make to Bombay. But in the true convention of the genre, he chose to conceal these significant details until the culprit was unmasked.
In these four stories Feluda evolved as a professional detective and with each story his skills get enhanced. Shedding the cast of an amateur investigator, he is shown to gain popularity. Throughout the four stories, Feluda has also voiced his theory about criminal detection. He believed that a detective must be receptive of all sources of knowledge and for him everyone stands as a suspect till the actual one is caught. Feluda also speaks about the maneuverings of a criminal which according to him run like ‘convoluted geometry’ (Majumdar 2004: 202) and in order to decode this pattern which appears almost like a ‘spider’s web’ (Majumdar 2004: 238) one must keep his eyes and mind open. Apart from this, the police force has also made its presence felt in the narratives. Like the previous stories, the police make a guest appearance to assist Feluda mostly towards the end of each story. Moreover, Ray has introduced three more characters in these stories; the most important of them being Lalmohan Ganguli a famous writer of best-selling crime-thrillers.

In terms of physical features and characteristics Lalmohan Ganguli is an antithetical projection of Feluda. He made his first appearance in “The Golden Fortress” and it is commonly believed that Ray introduced this character in order to offer some comic relief to the brainteasers. But the significance of the character is much beyond that. Lalmohan Ganguli writes under the pseudonym -Jatayu, a huge mythological bird which is symbolic of loyalty and fighting spirit. In Ramayana, Jatayu lost life after putting up a strong fight against Ravana while trying to stop him from abducting Sita. Because of this display of loyalty and heroic fight the bird is celebrated as a heroic symbol. Ray’s use of this name is also symbolic as it reflects Ganguli’s fanaticism for physicality and heroism in terms of bodily features and action as reflected in his literary writings. Lalmohan Babu is a thirty five year old, thin- short man whose appearance suggests his ‘meek and mild’ (Majumdar 2004:214) nature. However, he had always aspired for an increased height and strong muscles. But after years of failed attempts he settled for a literary career and started writing thrillers. He believed that his
original name would not attract buyers and so he opted for a dramatic name that would match the dramatic quality of his thrillers. His stories were mostly ‘spine-chilling’ (Majumdar 2004:296) thrillers featuring his fictional hero Prakhar Rudra. Besides this, his pseudonym would also give him a kind of feel-good-factor. In his first interaction with Feluda and Tapesh, Mr. Ganguli states that “I decided to pay more attention to the muscles in my brain.” (Majumdar 2004: 216) once he realized that it was hard to achieve a heroic physical appearance. Therefore, Lalmohan Babu has portrayed his hero with all those features and capabilities which he lacks and has always cherished. His hero is a strong six footer, with muscular ‘biceps and triceps’ (Majumdar 2004:216) and his adventures mostly involve fight sequences in some distant locale where Prakhar Rudra exhibits his physical strength. In short, Prakhar Rudra could do everything that Lalmohan Babu was incapable of and at times could even carry out some impossible feats. But apart from giving life to his own imaginations and aspirations Lalmohan Ganguli’s works are full of factual errors; and these are often pointed out by Feluda. Although his writing reflects his love for physicality, action, bravado and even violence (given his love for various weapons), but in reality he was a total foil to his own fictional creation. He mostly found things ‘powerfully suspicious!’ (Majumdar 2004:219) but at the prospect of any real danger he felt nervous. But, even with factual errors and unrealistic adventures his stories were best sellers with attractive titles like ‘Bloodbath in Arabia’, ‘Shivers in the Sahara’ et.al. With the successful publication of twenty-one thrillers Lalmohan Babu was quite sure that the readers did not notice those errors and said that they would “happily swallow what I dish out, and that simply means that the cash keeps rolling in.” (Majumdar 2004:297-298). Ray has also used his character to make contributions to the mystery in some way or the other. In “The Golden Fortress”, Lalmohan Babu got hold of an important code that eventually got decoded to reveal the miscreant’s plan aimed to hinder Feluda’s investigation. Again in the “Incident in the Kalka Mail” it was Lalmohan Babu
because of whom the diamond inside the kodak box containing betel-nuts came to the forefront.

However, from a reader’s perspective it can be suggested that Satyajit Ray’s portrayal of Lalmohan Ganguli has invested the stories with other different angles for analysis. On one hand, Ray creates Feluda who is exceptionally talented and solves his cases using his superior faculties of observation, rational thinking and extraordinary intelligence. Ray also creates Lalmohan Ganguli, a popular writer of crime-thrillers whose fictional hero Prakhar Rudra is physically strong almost in the herculean tradition and is made to exhibit unprecedented heroics. Thus Ray creates two different traditions of fictional heroes who fight against crime; the former is a detective who relies on the power of his brain to solve the most complicated mysteries, while the latter is a hero who relies on his muscular power to carry out unrealistic feats. Infact, this is a conscious move by Ray to emphasize the conflict between brain and brawn. This dichotomy also highlights the contrast between two different paradigms of fiction writing. Satyajit Ray’s Feluda series is one of the finest detective-series in the domain of Indian detective fiction writing, while the other is Ray’s meta-fictional creation Lalmohan Ganguli; whose popular crime-thrillers are full of factual errors and unrealistic adventures.

However, from a different perspective it can be suggested that through his delineation of Feluda and Lalmohan Ganguli, Ray has also presented two different versions of a typical Bengali bhadralok. Feluda offers a typical model of the twentieth century Bengali detective-who is a nice blend of the western tradition of detective fiction and the eastern tradition of a Bengali gentleman. Lalmohan Babu, on the other hand is a typical representative figure of a Bengali bhadralok. Goutam Basu explains that the Bengalis have always been ridiculed since right from the colonial rule Bengalis were considered to be a meek and effeminate class. In this regard he refers to Thomas Macaulay’s views and states that “Macaulay argued that the physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy.” (Basu 2013:64). However,
during the Nationalist movement against the British rulers the Bengali nationalists displayed their physical valour and strength and as a result of this the concept of Anushilan Samiti, body building and exercise gained ground among the Bengali youth. Interestingly, in the Feluda stories the Bengali bhadralok’s growing interest in building a strong physique gets emphasized when the reader considers the figure of Lalmohan Ganguli’s fictional creation Prakhar Rudra, the typical macho hero. Lalmohan Babu himself does not enjoy an attractive physical appearance and therefore he creates Prakhar Rudra to live his much desired dreams. He says, “...I’ve got my hero to be everything I could never be myself.” (Majumdar 2004:216). Most of his stories are staged in distant countries and locales because he believed that “Bengal has no muscles...” (Majumdar 2004:216). So it can be stated that Satyajit Ray consciously highlighted these subtleties to make Feluda more realistic and appealing. Feluda is neither meek like Lalmohan Babu, nor is he unrealistic like Prakhar Rudra. Feluda is a revised model of a typical Bengali bhadralok who has refined taste and also nurtures a strong and healthy physique with regular practice of yoga. Thus Ray’s delineation of Feluda facilitates an opportunity to understand his character as he stands to offer a revised model of a twentieth century Bengali detective.

Apart from Mr. Ganguli, Ray also introduced two other characters; Uncle Sidhu and Srikant, the servant who worked at Feluda’s palce. Uncle Sidhu made his first appearance in “The Golden Fortress” and he is described as an extraordinary character- a store house of knowledge. He has a huge collection of books on any and every possible subject and these books came handy whenever Feluda required any information. Although Uncle Sidhu was not a relative of them yet he shared a brotherly affection with Tapesh’s father and was highly respected by both Feluda and Tapesh. Uncle Sidhu represents the typical Bengali class that is generally regarded as one of the most learned and intellectual ones.
The next four stories appeared between 1973 and 1975 and they were alternately published in *Sandesh* and *Desh*. All four stories are brilliant narratives of criminal detection and in each narrative Ray’s ace detective excels in determining the nature, context and agent of the crime. Although all four stories cannot be categorized as crime stories yet each narrative is an intricate plot of suspense and mystery. “The Key” (1973) is a short but interesting story in which Feluda used his razor-sharp brain to solve the mystery of Radharaman Samaddar’s key. With the hope of finding his uncle’s wealth Monimohan Samaddar approached Feluda to resolve the mystery hidden behind Radharaman’s last words ‘In my name…Key…key,’ (Majumdar 2004:402). Radharaman was a music enthusiast and had a rich collection of various musical instruments. Considering his love for music Feluda discovered that his last words were not about any normal lock and key rather it referred to the keys of a musical instrument which operated as the lock to the secret chamber it holds. Feluda also discovered that Monimohan Babu tried to mislead him by lying. His uncle had mentioned the name of his grandson for whom he had left a message. Feluda’s intelligence revealed that when the keys of the melochord are played in a tune corresponding to the melody of Mr. Radharaman’s name, it opened the lock of a secret compartment which he had used to store his money.

The main action in “The Royal Bengal Mystery” (1974) takes place among the woods near the border of Bhutan. On an invitation from famous hunter Mahitosh Singha Roy; Feluda, Tapesh and Lalmohan Babu travel to Laxmanbari. Mr. Singha Roy approached Feluda to solve a unique riddle that might hold some clue about the family’s hidden treasure. But even before he could decode the riddle, the sudden death of Torit Sengupta, Mr. Singha Roy’s secretary changed the course of the story. Feluda investigated all relevant angles to find out the reasons behind Mr. Sengupta’s mysterious death. At the same time his investigation unveiled many hidden truths about the Singha Roy family. “The Locked Chest”
(1975) is a short but a horrific tale of a father’s murder by his own son. After receiving a letter from Kalikinkar Majumdar, Feluda visited his home in Plassey. Mr. Majumdar requested him to decode a short code that held the combination of his locked chest and promised to give him the whole collection of detective stories written by Emile Gaboriau as a reward. It was an easy task for Feluda and after receiving his reward he was about to leave for Calcutta. But his sharp intelligence indicated that there was something wrong when he tried to recount the events that have taken place from the moment of his arrival on the previous day till the moment of his departure the following day. He immediately returned back to discover that the person whom they thought to be Mr. Majumdar was actually his son in the disguise of his father, whom he had already killed for money.

“The Mystery of the Elephant God” (1975) is an intricate story involving greed, deception and murder in the holy city of Varanasi. Having heard the story of a sanyasi Machchli Baba; Feluda, Lalmohan Ganguli and Tapesh leave for Varanasi. Although the entire demeanor of this sanyasi appeared quite intriguing; but Feluda got himself involved with the mystery of a missing Ganesh idol after being approached by its owner Umanath Ghoshal. Initial suspicions fell on the city’s most villainous man Maganlal Meghraj. Following a number of interesting twists including a murder, Feluda eventually succeeds in bringing back the idol but not without the help of Umanath Babu’s son Ruku. Not only did Feluda expose Meghraj for staging a fake sanyasi and trying unfair means to get hold of the idol; he also unveiled the role of the Vikas Babu- Umanath Ghoshal’s secretary in this fiasco. Being an aid of Meghraj, he committed a murder to get hold of the idol which was later retrieved from his radio.

All the four stories are intricate narratives of crime and detection. Like his previous stories, Ray has maintained the right blend of suspense and mystery. A detective fiction narrative is usually provided with a handful of hints and clues which helps the detective to
draw a possible inference and make progress. With his faculties of rationality and logical reasoning Feluda tries to study these hints and develop logical explanations that could offer a solution to the mystery. There are also times when the narrative does not provide any background details and in such situations the detective confidently draws a conclusion by utilizing his instincts. This is an advantage which the author confers upon the detective as he mediates through multiple probabilities (offered by the narrative) to arrive at the most appropriate angle that appears logical to him. In “The Key”, Feluda solved the entire mystery by relying on his instincts. At first he concluded that Radharaman’s money was hidden in the melochord, a German made musical instrument. Then he asserted that the key that Mr. Samaddar had mentioned was not a normal metal key rather he referred to the keys of a musical instrument. After Monimohan Babu tried to run away with the melochord, Feluda explained how the former tried to mislead him by omitting the fact that his uncle Radharaman Babu had also uttered his grandson’s name in his last moments. Finally considering Radharaman Babu’s interest in music ‘a new idea struck’ (Majumdar 2004:421) Feluda as he explained that Radhraman Babu had devised a way to hide his money in the melochord by creating a unique tune which when played corresponded to the melody interspersed in his own name and with the pressing of the associated keys of the melochord it opened to reveal its secret compartment. Thus, through his last words “Dharani…in my name…key…key.” (Majumdar 2004:420), Radharaman Babu wanted to indicate the location where his money was kept. Again in “The Royal Bengal Mystery”, Feluda gave a logical explanation of the events that led to the mysterious death of Torit Sengupta. Initially he was thought to have been killed by a tiger, but later Feluda’s razor-sharp eyes observed a stab in his body which propelled the doubts of a murder. However, towards the end it turned out that probably Mr. Sengupta died because of lightning. In the absence of concrete details Feluda explained his thoughts as he believed that “What happened that night, I think was…” (Majumdar 2004:484)
when lightning struck Torit Babu fell on the ground and the sword which was used to dig up the hidden treasure got magnetized and accidently got pierced into his body. According to his logic the tiger found his body when he was already dead. In this way Feluda tries to draw a rational explanation by relying on his power of logical reasoning in both stories.

A detective fiction narrative can also be perceived as a complex web comprising multiple stories. According to Barbara Herrenstein ‘there are always multiple basic stories’ (Smith 1980:221) in a particular narrative. In detective fiction the different stories are interdependent and remain interlinked through a common strain. “The Royal Bengal Mystery” is a story which is constructed as a collection of multiple interlinking stories. The entire dynamics of the story remained hazy until the detective throws light in the final culmination of the story. The greed for laying hands on the ancestral hidden treasure of the Singha-Roy’s was the catalyzing force behind the construction of the narrative. Even before Feluda was offered to solve the riddle, it was decoded and this led to various chaotic incidents in the story. Infact, it is not the treasure hunt, but the sudden death of Torit Sengupta which incites the pace of the thriller. Initially it was thought that a man-eater tiger attacked him but once Feluda started investigating, his keen observation traced some clues that helped him to explain the mystery behind his death. However, the truth remained under cover until Feluda led everyone to the forest to find the hidden treasure. In the forest they were confronted with a tiger that was eventually shot dead by Shashanka Sanyal, Mahitosh Babu’s childhood friend. Finally, Feluda revealed that Torit Babu was the first to have cracked the riddle and on the night of his death he went to the jungle with an intention to unearth the treasure using an ancestral sword of the Singha-Roy family. But unfortunately he was struck by lightning and met with an accidental death. In this way the mystery of the riddle and Torit Babu’s death gets resolved. But apart from that, the story ends with more startling revelations. Shashanka Sanyal’s act of killing the tiger clarifies that in reality it was
he who was an ace hunter and therefore the stature of Mahitosh Babu’s fame as a hunter-turned-writer was nothing but a virtual reality.

The narrative in “The Mystery of the Elephant God” has also been laid down as an intricate web comprising multiple interlinking stories. After hearing the intriguing story about Machchli Baba, Feluda, Tapesh and Mr. Ganguli travel to Varanasi and over there Feluda accepted the task of retrieving the missing Ganesh idol which was suspected to have been stolen by Maganlal Meghraj, ‘the most cunning opponent’ (Majumdar 2004:511) that Feluda has ever faced. Although Feluda has encountered similar mysteries but this time he was against the most powerful goon of Varanasi. With his weapons of ‘powerful brain, steady nerves and strong muscles’ (Majumdar 2004:537) Feluda succeeds in exposing Maganlal’s role in contriving a scam in which he employed the fraud Purinder Raut as Machchli Baba in order to deceive the people of the city by spreading the story of his fake supernatural powers. This was actually a part of his greater plan to get hold of the precious idol. Apart from Meghraj, Feluda also unmasked the other culprit Vikas Sinha, Umanath Ghoshal’s secretary. Not only did he assist Meghraj in his quest for the idol but he also murdered Sashi Babu, the poor artist who recovered the idol while he was making the Durga idol of the Ghoshal family. On finding the idol he gave it to Vikas Babu who murdered the old artisan to keep it to himself so that no one would come to know about the idol and he can safely hand it over to Meghraj.

However, from a reader’s point of view the story poses a much intricate enigma. In a skilful display of talent Ray has incorporated certain textual ‘gaps’ throughout the narrative to give the mystery its required dynamism. A detective fiction narrative is based on the ‘logos of absence’ and it is the detective and the reader who encounter this absence and tries to make the truth visible. In a detective fiction narrative, textual gap is usually an absence or a blockage which defers or hinders the detective’s as well as the reader’s process of easy
comprehension of the criminal’s story of crime. The author creates these gaps or absences by
withholding vital information. To create these blockades the detective either leaves a gap by
choosing to keep things unsaid or unexplained till the final moment of denouement, or the
detective speaks in riddles. While at some other times, the miscreant’s activities appear to be
too complicated creating a blockage for the detective and the reader to apprehend. For
instance, in “The Mystery of the Elephant God”, Feluda gives five clues to Tapsesh and
Lalmohan Ganguli to solve the mystery of the missing idol. These clues posed a mental
blockage for both the characters within the narrative as well as the readers outside the text. In
order to deduce meaningful explanations out of these clues it is necessary to employ one’s
faculties of intellect and reasoning. Apart from the five clues, Shashi Babu’s last utterance
‘lie…lie…’ (Majumdar 2004:554), Ruku’s seemingly meaningless chatter also creates a
blockage or a gap. However, at the end it is the detective, who by the virtue of being the
authoritative figure entrusted to expose the criminal and restore normalcy; succeeds in
negotiating through these blockages to fill in the gaps and discover the truth. In this story,
Feluda arrives at a logical explanation of Ruku’s meaningless chatter which eventually
helped him to solve the puzzle. In reality Ruku ensured the safety of the idol by hiding it
inside the mouth of ‘the king of Africa’ (Majumdar 2004:557). Initially this statement
remained a riddle until Feluda’s extraordinary intelligence suggested that it was the lion of
Goddess Durga. It was this ‘lion’ that Shashi Babu tried to refer to at the time of his death but
being stabbed he could not complete his utterance and thus ended up uttering ‘lie’ instead of
completing the word thereby delivering a phonic sound which rendered a different semantic
meaning. Finally all these gaps are resolved by Feluda and the mystery becomes easy to
comprehend.

Moreover, these gaps also hinder the reader’s perception of the mystery and even
challenge the reader to resolve them. According to Wolfgang Iser while reading the reader
operates at two levels, the ‘alien’ reader and the ‘real- virtual’ reader (Iser 1972:298). Iser explains that the former interacts with the text by negating his identity and by corresponding with the thought process of some other character in the narrative. While the latter also thinks like other protagonists but in this process he avoids complete annihilation of his thought process. So, on encountering such gaps in the narrative of a detective story, the reader tries to unravel them and in order to do this he has to read like an ‘alien’ reader as well as the ‘real-virtual’ reader. To fill these gaps the reader must annihilate his identity and try to think like the detective but at the same time the reader also needs to apply his own reasoning faculties to analyze each blockage in order to remove them. In this way, the reader can engage in an active interaction with the mystery and ‘uncover the unformulated part of the text’ (Iser 1972:292) to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the thrillers.

In a detective fiction narrative the detective often tries to read the criminal’s tale of crime by taking a psychological insight into the criminal’s mind. The detective tries to fashion his thought process according to the criminal’s thought process so that the former can follow the criminal’s mental mechanizations and eventually succeed in exposing the criminal. After having successfully cracked the code in “The Locked Chest”, Feluda exposed a shocking murder mystery. Towards the end of the story when Feluda says, “I tend to forget, sometimes that there are other people just as clever as Felu Mitter.” (Majumdar 2004: 504), both Tapesh and the readers are confronted with a blockage since both fail to understand the significance of his statement. However, this blockage was resolved when it was revealed that Vishwanath Majumdar was in the disguise of his father after having killed him. In his investigation Feluda’s superior power of observation noticed that there were no tyre marks to suggest the departure of Vishwanath Babu in a car as asserted by his father on that very morning. Moreover, his excellent faculties of analytical reasoning and his expertise in pulling up disguises helped him to rewind the events of the previous night and arrange the loose ends
to suspect if “...one single person was playing different roles.” (Majumdar 2004:506). When the final outcome of the mystery is analyzed in the light of Feluda’s statement, it appears that in tracking down the culprit, Feluda tried to follow the criminal’s mental maneuverings. Therefore, it can be suggested that the detective took a psychological insight into the criminal’s thought process. This enables Feluda to think like his opponent so that he can arrange all pieces of the mystery into a composite whole to read the criminal’s story of crime.

The final four stories of the first volume are composed in the same tradition like the previous ones. While some mysteries emerge as professional assignments for Feluda, some others rise from of his curiosity or out of his moral responsibility. “The Bandits of Bombay” (1976) is a thrilling story engulfing the lives of the trio- Feluda, Tapesh and Mr. Ganguli while they were visiting Bombay as Mr. Ganguli’s novel by the same title was being made into a Hindi movie. Before travelling to Bombay, Lalmohan Babu met another director Mr. Sanyal who handed him a parcel and requested him to hand it over to a man at Bombay airport. But unexpectedly this casual incident led to fresh troubles in the life of Lalmohan Babu as his name got meddled with a murder mystery. But thanks to Feluda and his sharp brain Lalmohan Babu managed to emerge out of this trouble. At last it was revealed that the packet he was given contained smuggled goods and the one who carried out this skillful act was an ace smuggler Sanyal alias Mr. Gore. At first he met Lalmohan Babu as film director Sanyal (who gave him a parcel) and later he emerged as the producer of the movie which was based on a book written by Jatayu.

In “The Mystery of the Walking Dead” (1976), Feluda along with Topshe and Lalmohan Babu travel to Gosaipur after Jeevanlal Mallik wrote to Feluda about his fears that his father’s life was at risk. After reaching the village, Feluda came to know about Mriganka Bhattacharjee and his alleged supernatural powers to communicate with spirits. He also came to know that Jeevanlal’s father-Shyamal Mallik communicated with his late father’s spirit and
was warned about an in-house enemy. Mean while burglars stormed into Mr. Mallik’s house and his son was murdered. Being unable to find any solution Feluda went to Mr. Bhattacharjee to communicate with Jeevanlal’s spirit in order to know the truth. But eventually Feluda unveiled Mr. Bhattacharya’s forgery. He used his so called supernatural power to mislead Mr. Mallik against his own son who was actually alive as Feluda staged his murder to reveal the truth. In “The Secret of the Cemetery” (1977) Feluda unearthed the secret buried under a two hundred year old grave of an English gentleman- Thomas Godwin. After reading a newspaper article that reported that Naren Biswas was injured in a storm while he was in the South Park Street Cemetery, Feluda’s curiosity was incited. This guided him to discover that someone tried to dig up the grave to get hold of an antique watch that was buried along with the corpse of Thomas Godwin. This followed a meticulous investigation and finally in an intense climax Feluda resolves the mystery to disclose the intentions of Naren Biswas and his brother Girin who wanted to sell the watch. But Feluda ensured that the watch remained buried along with the original owner and hence their greedy manipulations were foiled.

“The Curse of the Goddess” (1978) is a story of two parallel plots. During their stay in Hazaribagh, Feluda, Tapesh and Lalmohan Babu hear about a tiger which has run away from a local circus. In the mean time, they get acquainted with Mahesh Chowdhury and his family. During a family picnic with the Chowdhury’s, Mahesh Babu is injured and later succumbs to death. Before dying he left a job for Feluda and handed him a photograph of a spiritual guru, however, before he could speak anything he died. Feluda began his investigation considering the fact that Mr. Chowdhury was expecting the return of his second son Biren, who has left home many years ago. As the investigation proceeds, many hidden facts evolve and eventually the story of the missing tiger and Mahesh Babu’s estranged son
are found to be interlinked. In a final twist it was revealed that Karandikar -the old trainer of the circus tiger is none other than Mahesh Chowdhury’s son Biren.

Once again Feluda exhibits exemplary power of observation and analytical skills to solve complicated mysteries. In “The Bandits of Bombay”, a trip to Bombay turns sour when Lalmohan Babu unexpectedly gets involved into a problem. Although the police investigated a murder mystery but Feluda’s investigation exposed the racket of a group of smugglers headed by Mr. Sanyal who was in the disguise of film-producer Gore. Once Feluda came to know that the smuggled object was still with Lalmohan Babu, it was easier for him to unmask the culprit. Again in “The Mystery of the Walking Dead”, Feluda finds the truth against all odds including that of talking spirits. According to Shyamal Mallik, his father’s spirit has communicated with him in writing but he refused to show the written message. To find the truth Feluda transgressed his position as a detective and carried out a theft and even staged a fake murder with full precision in order to expose the greed and forgery of Mr. Mriganka Bhattacharya. Mr. Bhattacharya claimed that he could talk to spirits and he convinced Mr. Shyamal Mallik that his father was warning him against an enemy who lived in his own house and wants to grab his money. Feluda resolved the mystery after getting hold of the written message which he recovered from Mr. Mallik’s chest without his consent. Feluda carried out this stint with the help of Jeevanlal Mallik who was thought to have been murdered. Not only did he transgress his moral conduct and carry out a theft, he even staged a murder to confuse the original culprit. Once Mr. Bhattacharya was convinced that Jeevanlal is dead, it was easier for him to frame him as the criminal; taking advantage of the bitter relationship between father and son. In his quest for truth Feluda had to think almost like a criminal and transgress his role and act like a transgressor to find relevant facts during investigation. His act of breaking into Shyamal Mallik’s room can also be analyzed under the light of Freudian theory of psychoanalysis. A Freudian interpretation would suggest that
while executing the act of theft Feluda has gratified his unacceptable urges responding to the pleasure principle of the id but the ego gives vent to his dormant urges under suitable time and condition thereby making them acceptable.

In “The Secret of the Cemetery”, a newspaper article reporting an accident in the South Park Street Cemetery drew Feluda’s attention to a secret that was buried in the ground for many years. In his investigation one can notice his exemplary knowledge about the history of the city of Calcutta. This case is more interesting because Feluda had no clue about the logos of the problem and therefore he had to start from scratch. At first it was his sharp observation which indicated that what was reported to be an effect of storm was actually a case of human action; moreover he also found a handful of vital clues at the spot of action that included a burning cigarette to support his suspicion. His growing curiosity led to some other discoveries. He found out that the concerned grave was of Thomas Godwin, he then located his descendant Marcus Godwin who lived in Calcutta and a meeting with him made him aware of the Thomas Godwin’s prized possession- an ivory casket. Following this Feluda once again exhibited an unusual side of his character and almost in an act of theft he took the ivory casket away without the consent of the present owner. A detective in quest of truth is always driven by his interests and he would go to any extent to fulfill his purpose. Often there are situations when the detective needs to negate his role as a detective and act in opposition to his moral code of conduct. In “The Mystery of the Walking Dead” and in “The Secret of the Cemetery” one can find such instances when Feluda transgressed his moral code of conduct. In his attempts to eradicate anarchy, he often faces surmounting challenges that hinder his work. At times he is left with no other option but to free himself from moral restraint and try any possible means like falsification, theft, eavesdropping et.al. Such instances showcase the other side of the detective’s psyche and it can be said that such acts reveal the deep-seated wild streak inherent in all humans. In both these stories Feluda had to
indulge in such acts which indicate that “...there is an underlying current of viciousness in the mind of every human being.” (Majumdar 2004:330).

In the former story, Feluda’s planning and execution of the theft of the letter exhibited his latent viciousness. Detectives represent a moral code of conduct but whenever situation demands, they have to negate their role to think and act almost like a criminal. In the other story too, Feluda ran away with Thomas Godwin’s ivory casket without notifying Marcus Godwin because at that point of time he was only concerned about getting hold of the book which Marcus Godwin had mentioned to be present in that box. Moreover, his act did bear him fruits as he got to read Charlotte Godwin’s diary which mentioned about Thomas Godwin’s precious watch -the Perigal repeater. Feluda came to know that this exquisite watch has remained buried in his grave since 1858. This information gave Feluda the much needed impetus to progress in his investigation since it helped him to find answer to an enigmatic question: why someone would dig up the grave of a man who had died long before? Following this Feluda conducted a thorough investigation to expose the miscreants who wanted to find and sell the antique watch to fetch a handsome amount. In the final scene he appears as the all knowing figure explaining the string of events that led to the culmination of the mystery.

Such activities of Feluda are open for a psychological interpretation. As already discussed the latent tensions of the id seeks gratification through the pleasure principle. Freud explains that the ‘unpleasurable tension’ (Freud 2003:45) has a tendency to express itself by following a path so that “...their ultimate outcome represents a diminution of this tension,” (Freud 2003:45). And in this process the id seeks pleasure. He further adds that when we look at these expressions with more emphasis on the manner in which they evolve “…we introduce the ‘economic’ perspective into our work.” (Freud 2003:45). So when we try to seek pleasure we simply try to diminish the displeasure. In the light of these postulations it
can be suggested that Feluda’s act of negating his role and executing an act of theft is his way of diminishing the tension of his ‘unpleasuable’ impulses and in an outcome of this process he seeks pleasure. However, the economic perspective of the manner in which his impulses seek satisfaction can also be understood in terms of utility. His acts of stealing also serve a personal interest, as the objects of theft help him to overcome any hindrance that blocks his progress while investigating the mysteries.

The narrative of the last story of this volume “The Curse of the Goddess” has two stories which run almost parallel. Initially it did not appear as a mystery but the news of a runaway tiger was definitely interesting because of which the trio paid a visit to the circus and also spoke to the trainer of the tiger- Karandikar. Meanwhile Mr. Mahesh Chowdhury’s unexpected death led to a sudden chaos. In his last moments before death he entrusted Feluda with a significant task and tried to convey something about his estranged son through gestures. Feluda made attempts to find Biren and in this process he ends up revealing some unpleasant facts about the Chowdhury family. At last Biren reappears and he also gets a share of his father’s property after Feluda decodes a riddle in Mr. Chowdhury’s diary.

According to Loius Rosenblatt, a reader can generate meaning only through an active transaction with the text. She also explained that every act of reading is influenced by the reader’s bunch of past experiences, because such experiences influence the reader’s ability to generate meaning out of a particular text. As a reader, reading the sixteen stories of this volume has been a different and unique experience for the researcher. As a Bengali, the researcher has read some Feluda stories in their original Bengali versions. But while undertaking the research, the reader cum researcher read all the stories in their English translations rather than the original Bengali versions. This has rendered a unique reading experience which has a feeling of unfamiliarity intermixed 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 familiar with the cultural
nuances of Bengal. For a Bengali reader this privilege gives an advantage over those readers
who can easily associate with the language of the translated versions but are not acquainted
with the source culture of the original works. Therefore for a native speaker of English
reading the English translations of Feluda stories would be an easy task, but the same reader
might feel impaired in his attempts to understand the various cultural subtleties that are inter
woven with each narrative. While reading the stories, the reader-researcher encountered
many elements which are characteristically Bengali. This is obvious since the stories deal
with Bengali protagonists and are mostly set in Bengal, but the interesting point to note is that
even when Feluda and company travel outside Bengal they mostly meet with Bengalis. When
Ray’s characters greet each other with ‘namaskar’ in Bombay or Varanasi and address each
other as ‘babu’; it definitely helps to create a microcosmic picture of Bengal outside its
geographic limits. The term ‘babu’ is usually used to refer to an anglicised Bengali but here
the term primarily signifies a sense of respect while addressing a Bengali bhadralok or
gentleman. And even though both ‘namaskar’ and ‘namastee’ signify the customary way of
greeting people with folded hands in India but the former is more commonly used by
Bengalis. Besides, the English translations also have other terms that emote the essence of
Bengal- dadu\textsuperscript{10}, kaka, baba\textsuperscript{11}, shyamasangeet\textsuperscript{12}, chanachur wala\textsuperscript{13}, khichuri\textsuperscript{14}, goja\textsuperscript{15}, aloo-dum\textsuperscript{16} et. al. While reading the English translations, these terms might create an enigma for a
non- Bengali reader. But for a Bengali reader the knowledge of the source culture helps to
relate with these terms instantly. Moreover, these terms also highlight the inbuilt defence
mechanism of a particular language against translation. Translation is an intricate process and
in the following chapter the various issues involved in this regard will be discussed in details.
In terms of Louis Rosenblatt’s postulations, a reader always approaches a text with one’s own bag of pre-conceived ideas i.e., ‘past experience’ and ‘present personality’ (Davis 1992:72). Thus, while reading the Feluda stories the reader-researcher’s knowledge of the source culture has been beneficial in generating meaning out of the stories as well as understanding the intricacies of the mysteries. For instance in “Trouble in Gangtok”, the reader-researcher’s knowledge about the cultural connotations associated with the Bengali months of Baisakh and Chaitra help to understand Feluda’s logical deduction drawn towards the end of the narrative while convicting the criminal. So, reading is an active enterprise which paves the way for an aesthetic experience. With some pre-conceived knowledge about the source culture, the reader-researcher is in a position to generate comprehensive meaning from the English translations of the stories and evoke a ‘lived through experience of reading’ (Davis 1992:74).

Another important aspect of reading Feluda stories is the much-discussed idea about Conan Doyle’s influence in the creation of Feluda. Although the influence of Conan Doyle’s colonial model is something that has been acknowledged by Ray himself, but he has firmly rooted his fictional detective 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 an opportunity to almost visit the places since Ray’s picturesque depictions add to the beauty of the narratives. His illustration of the city of Varanasi with its streets and ghats in “The Mystery of the Elephant God”, the specimens of Mughal architecture in “The Emperor’s Ring”, or the description of Devikund’s stone memorials in “The Golden Fortress” allocates a special charm to the narratives. In each story his delineation along with various cultural insights of a particular city, help the reader to almost visualize the places through his writing. The passages describing the immersion of Durga
idols in the ghats of Ganga, Lucknow’s special sweets in “The Emperor’s Ring”, the amazing rock carvings of Kailash, his description of the small village Gosaipur in “The Mystery of the Walking Dead” are many such instances where his illustrative detailing highlight his talent that has earned him fame in the world of celluloid. Satyajit Ray is not only a master film maker; he is also an accomplished writer and has made significant contribution to the domain of post-independence Indian fiction writing. Infact, his name lists among the best Indian writers compiled in *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997* and a large share of this credit goes to his Feluda stories.

India’s contribution to the domain of detective fiction is often undervalued, but Ray’s stories have made significant contribution to develop the tradition of Indian detective fiction. His fictional detective is a twentieth century man who fights against crime and tries to put a check on it. In most cases, a particular work of fiction predominantly reflects the author’s frame of mind. And the same can be suggested about Ray’s delineation of Pradosh C. Mitter as a ‘Professional Crime Investigator’ (Majumdar 2004:257). Feluda’s portrayal also gives voice to Ray’s concern over the wide range of crime and disorder in the contemporary society. In “The Locked Chest” Feluda has been described as a detective “…who depends more on old-fashioned methods…” (Majumdar 2004:493) of detection and uses his brain and analytical prowess rather than new methods of scientific and technical excellence. Ray was aware of the new trends of the genre but a close reading of his stories would suggest that he intended to deal with the problems of his age and therefore he depicted a hero who is an ordinary man with extraordinary skills and because of this the readers can easily relate with Feluda. Infact, Feluda has developed his skills on a gradual basis by reading various detective series like the stories of Emile Gaboriau, Edgar Allan Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle and by working on his strengths. In this regard Lalmohan Ganguli’s detailed explanation of Feluda’s
name in “The Golden Fortress” is interesting. Lalmohan Babu almost dissects his name into fragments to explain that his name matches his profession and describes that,

“Pro” stands for “professional”; and “dosh” is the Bengali word for “crime”. The “C” is “to see”, that is “to investigate”. So the whole thing works out as Pradosh C = Professional Crime Investigator! (Majumdar 2004:257)

Feluda definitely represents the professional private detective but on many occasions he is also driven by his ethical sense of judgment and his inbuilt morality to unmask the perpetrator.

Moreover, Ray’s stories are laden with various culture specific nuances. The stories also have an operational value system corresponding to the moral structure of the culture of its origin. In today’s world people often commit crime but manage to escape the shackles of law. In such cases, the detective plays the role of an alternative agent who unmask the criminal and takes measures to get him punished. Detective stories operate on a socio-cultural paradigm where the dichotomy of crime vs law operates. But if in any case the culprit does not get punished, we tend to believe that he or she will be considered as a sinner in the eyes of the omniscient God. However, in an earthly paradigm such ideas do not operate and this is evident when Feluda says that “But these days, a liar doesn’t always get punished by God. Other men have to catch and punish them.” (Majumdar 2004:470). In stories like “A Killer in Kailash”, “The Secret of the Cemetery” Feluda is determined to ensure that the cultural heritage of the country or historical relevance of some personal possession is not damaged due to the relentless greed of some people and this also reflects a certain nationalistic sensitivity of Feluda. In his stories Ray has dealt with crimes which expose man’s excessive greed or the relentless desire to possess something that does not belong to him. In each story Feluda has exhibited his conviction to evaluate situations ‘objectively and
and he is committed to ‘protect whoever is innocent’ (Majumdar 2004: 633). In his quest he does not require the help of Jatayu’s weapons as he solely relies on his powers of sharp brain, calm nerves and physical strength. Although he keeps a revolver, but the plots, as constructed by Ray; provides very little scope for its use. Besides, in almost every story Ray employs a law-maintaining official who at times even targets his jibes against Feluda. But Feluda remains unmoved and is mainly concerned about figuring out the criminal. Thus, Satyajit Ray has succeeded in creating a realistic fictional hero who is highly efficient without being an unrealistic - superfluous character.

After a detailed study of the sixteen stories of the first volume it can be asserted that, Feluda’s transformation from a young-intellectual amateur investigator to a professional private investigator has been perfectly pitched by Satyajit Ray. In his essay, “The Nature and Function of Literary Theories” J.J.A. Mooij writes that the function of literary theories “...depends mainly on the fruitfulness of the application of the theory and on the degree of enlightenment derived from it.” (Mooij 1979:133). In this regard it can be asserted that the theoretical conceptualization of Feluda stories not only shows the inherent structuring and technicalities of the thrillers but it also help to re-assess the worth of detective fiction as a literary genre and situate it in the arena of ‘high’ literature. Moreover, Ray’s psychology in fabricating the stories with various subtle nuances, depict the author’s consciousness of the real world of which he was also a part. In an age when India was reeling under the effects of dilapidated economy, increasing poverty and growing population; society saw an acute rise of various crimes as people lost their morality and fear of God. Excessive greed made them look for easy access to money and the resultant scenario saw an increased number of theft, forgery, smuggling et.al. In an age when a son does not fear to kill his father as shown in “The Locked Chest”; Ray’s hero stands out as an exemplary individual who is efficient, moral and holds the capacity to fight against any disorder or crime. Feluda is a man of
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supreme capabilities, who relies not just on his muscles but more upon his mental agility and conviction to fight against crime. He has a rational perception and encyclopaedic knowledge; he is someone upon whom Topshe and Lalmohan Babu can unhesitatingly rely. Suchitra Mathur in her essay “Holmes’s Indian Reincarnation: A Study in Postcolonial Transposition”, refers to Feluda as ‘a Bengali avatar of Holmes’ (Mathur 2006:88) or a pseudo-Holmes and tries to analyse and study his adventures in the light of Homi Bhabha’s concept of ‘mimicry’ to show how Feluda embodies “...postcolonial resistance, a subversive Bhabhian mimicry, that destabilises the continuing ideological hegemony of colonial modernity…” (Mathur 2006:88). But it is high time to consider the merits of Ray’s work beyond the influence of Doyle’s colonial model of Holmes. The compare and contrast model often used to study Feluda stories is not enough to recognise the significance of Ray’s works in the domain of Indian detective fiction.

In characterizing Feluda, Ray has maintained a curious balance. With his refined taste and extraordinary intelligence, Feluda is a twentieth century Bengali gentleman- one who can be said to represent the Bengali bhadralok. But being a bhadralok, he does not end up representing those Bengalis whom Lalmohan Ganguli tends to imply when he says ‘Bengal has no muscles’ (Majumdar 2004: 216). Feluda is a brave and courageous man who belongs to a class which is usually not celebrated for feats of bravado. He does not even display any heroic and farcical act like Lalmohan Babu’s fictional hero Prakhar Rudra. But he is capable enough to defeat Maganlal Meghraj in his own den. Meghraj, a powerful goon and a master of cunning is the most competent adversary that Feluda has faced. This conflict between a Bengali detective and a non-Bengali criminal highlights the battle of intellect and can be seen as a metaphor propagating the usual notion of Bengali parochialism. However, as far as physical strength is concerned, Feluda prefers to channelize his strength and energy in fighting his opponent, like Mandar Bose in “The Golden Fortress” or climbing up huge rocks
to find his adversary in “A Killer in Kailash”. Definitely Holmes’s influence is something which cannot be undermined, but the stories are the brain-child of a different author and therefore it is obvious that the stories will bear the reflections of the author’s mind and the age in which they were composed. Infact, Feluda reflects the author’s sense of self-esteem in being a Bengali bhadralok himself. So he tries to present a realistic hero in Feluda. And in this regard he makes a fine blend of the western tradition of a detective who is known for his skills of investigation, analysis and observation and of the eastern tradition of a Bengali bhadralok who is known for his aesthetic inclination to create the character of Pradosh C. Mitter. Infact, Feluda’s intelligence, his minimal display of physical strength or appropriate use of muscles make him a perfect model of a twentieth century sleuth.
Notes


2. It is a literary magazine published in Bengali by Anandabazar Patrika.

3. A Bengali term used to refer to an anglicised Bengali during the British rule, but now more commonly used to refer to a Bengali gentleman.

4. A Bengali term used to refer to an uncle either by relation of blood or with admiration.

5. The last month in the Hindu-Bengali calendar year.

6. The first month in the Hindu- Bengali calendar year.

7. A term used to refer to a quintessential Bengali gentleman. The term consists of two morphemes: ‘bhadra’ meaning gentle or well-mannered; and ‘lok’ meaning a person.

8. An ascetic.


10. A Bengali term used to refer to grandfather.

11. A Bengali term used to refer to father.

12. Bengali devotional songs composed in honour of Goddess Kali, one of the many incarnations of Chandi, representing the feminine principle.

13. A compound word in Bengali consisting of two words- ‘chanachur’ a popular Bengali snack; and ‘wala’ meaning a vendor selling goods or items.

15. A Bengali sweet made with flour. It has thin layers and is deep fried and then soaked in sugar syrup.

16. A Bengali dish cooked with boiled potatoes and spices.

17. A construction of concrete usually in the form of stairs, made at a river side where people usually bathe or sit.
Works Cited


Mathur, Suchitra. “Holmes’s Indian Reincarnation: A Study in Pstcolonial Transposition.”


