



## A comparative study of selected detective stories of Arthur Conan Doyle and Saradindu Bandyopadhyay

Kanika Saren

Department of English, Bankura University, West Bengal, India

### Abstract

Sherlock Holmes and Byomkesh Bakshi both have been able to establish themselves in the mind of the readers through their keen intelligence, power of observation and profound investigation. They are the unparalleled creation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Saradindu Bandyopadhyay respectively. Arthur Conan Doyle and Saradindu Bandyopadhyay both have depicted that how the criminals are using their intelligence and knowledge for their evil purposes in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* and *Arthamanartham* respectively. The English version of *Arthamanartham* is *Where There's a Will* translated by Sreejata Guha. The criminals are performing such type of methods which are beyond our imagination. Intelligence and knowledge both are very important things for the development of any project. But these same things become terrible when evil people use these for their ugly intention. The misuse of knowledge and intelligence is occurring year by year but the discourse of these matters does not take place much. The criminals are misusing their intelligence and knowledge and through this we also get a concept of their mentality and status. Some criminals attempt crime to fulfill their desires and some are bound to the situations that compel them to attempt crime. So, under which circumstances they are attempting crimes, we need to focus on that also.

**Keywords:** Intelligence, knowledge, criminal, crime

### Introduction

Crime is an illegal act which is considered as harmful and immoral for society and the people who attempt crime known as criminals. It's true that generally the people who attempt crime carry an evil personality. It's true that people should use intelligence and knowledge accurately. But here the criminals misuse intelligence and knowledge and by doing this, they were about to get succeed instantly unless the detectives were there. On the other hand if they used these properly, they won't get succeed easily. They wanted to acquire power and money easily and instantly. But on the other hand, the mindset of every criminal is not bad.

In rare cases good people also attempt crime due to their situation that compels them to do so. For instance, in Arthur Conan Doyle's another story *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot* Dr. Leon Sterndale murders his lover Brenda's brother Mortimer Tregennis out of rage because Mortimer was the killer of his lover Brenda. Dr. Sterndale could not accept the death of his lover and as a result that intolerable circumstance forced him to kill Mortimer. It was his rage and grief that formed revengeful tendencies in his mind.

Moreover, some people mistakenly attempt crime without their cognition. In the play *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus marries his mother Jocasta unconsciously and also becomes father of her children. When he comes to know the bitter truth of his life, he feels himself so corrupted that he damages his eyes ruthlessly in shame. But people still identify him as a criminal and the filth of society.

Some criminals attempt crime so skillfully and obviously inadequately that nobody can identify even the process of the crime. For example, in Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's another story *Pather Kanta*. The English version is *The Gramophone Pin Mystery* translated by Sreejata Guha, the serial-killer named Prafulla Roy murders some businessmen one by one by shooting gramophone pin which was attached to his bicycle bell. He triggers the bell and that pin went off by the force of the trigger.

Some criminal attempt crime just to take revenge. For example, in *Othello* when Iago realizes that Othello chooses Cassio as his lieutenant instead of him. He makes conspiracies to ruin his life. As a result, Othello suspects both Cassio and Desdemona and decides to kill them. But at the end of the play, when he learns the truth he kills himself. So, these criminals attempt crime but their mentality is totally different according to their circumstances.

My first research question is when a criminal is caught usually either he or she is sentenced to death or is hanged. But are these punishments accurate to reduce the limit of crimes? Secondly, following these same process of giving punishments the criminals are wiped out from the society, but in human mind, is the mentality of attempting crime stopped?

The mentality of the criminals is discussed through Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* and Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's *Where There's a Will*. In chapter 1, the criminal in the short story *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* is represented as how he uses his intelligence by hiring a governess who is quite similar to his first wife's daughter in look. So, he captures his real daughter and uses the governess to control the beliefs of his daughter's fiancé so that he can get the chance to inherit her property. In chapter 2, the criminal in *Where There's a Will* is represented as how he misuses his knowledge to inherit his maternal uncle's property by piercing his neck (at the meeting point of the medulla and the vertebra) with a needle which causes death. Both the criminals want property. First one is misusing his intelligence and the next one is misusing his knowledge.

### Chapter 1: Misuse of Intelligence

Intelligence is the ability of learning and understanding anything quickly. Intelligence is not same as knowledge which we can acquire from books. It depends on ones' quality of thinking and having the ability of solving puzzles.

But what happens if a man misuses his intelligence only for his self-interest.

This is what depicted in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*. The criminal named Jephro Rucastle hired Violet Hunter as the governess of his house who is quite similar to his former daughter Alice in look. Rucastle grabs the advantage by using the governess as the figure of Alice so that he can control the belief of Mr. Fowler who was his daughter's fiancé. On the other hand, he captured his daughter so that he can get the chance to inherit her property. After seeing him first time, Violet Hunter assumed that he was a good person. He seems an excessive good person to her. Because he was just acting like a good person to hide his evil purposes. His nice behaviour and way of speaking didn't upset Hunter. But when she started working at his house, some certain things which she noticed seemed suspicious and created terror in her mind. Violet Hunter was quite different from other women. She was intelligent, clever and brave as well. When Rucastle encountered her first time, he offered her a job of governess with £100 a year but also told her to maintain some odd rules which seem awkward to her to accept. So without wasting her time, she consulted detective Sherlock Holmes.

Here, Rucastle is attempting the crime only for the sake of his self-interest and if someone tries to act against him he does not hesitate even to kill that person. Just as when she tried to look for the locked room, Rucastle threatens her, "And if you ever put your foot over that threshold again... 'I'll throw you to the mastiff'". (Sherlock 506) This is how his hidden devil starts to reveal itself gradually.

Rucastle didn't know that Hunter consulted a detective. In the beginning the story, Holmes remarks, "Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell." (Sherlock 494) So at the end of the story, Holmes is successfully able to solve the case by applying his own logics. It has become possible as the detective has more intelligence than the criminal. There is a clash between good intelligence and bad intelligence which is represented.

## Chapter 2: Misuse of Knowledge

Knowledge or fact is something which we usually acquire from books. Whatever humans have discovered or invented, we learn these from books. We acquire knowledge and then use it in our daily life. We also try to invent something new by adding our imagination and intelligence with knowledge. But in the same way, knowledge can be dangerous when an evil person use it for his evil intention and it will be considered misuse of knowledge.

The same thing is represented in Saradindu Bandyopadhyay's *Arthamanartham*. The English version of *Arthamanartham* is *Where There's a Will* translated by Sreejata Guha. In the story, Phonibushan loves to read books. After reading Gray's *Anatomy* which was on Sukumar's desk, Phonibushan learns that if a needle is pierced into the meeting point of the medulla and the first vertebra, death would be certain. According to Gray's *Anatomy*, "The brainstem consists of the medulla oblongata, pons and midbrain...Damage to the brainstem is often devastating and life-threatening." (*Anatomy* 309)

Here, Phonibushan murdered his maternal uncle Karali Charan Basu following that process. Byomkesh Bakshi remarks, "A person who is naturally moronic can never act

intelligently, but one who is quick witted can pretend to be dull." (Bandyopadhyay, *Picture* 122)

Phonibushan prepared his plan perfectly to murder but due to his errors or ignorance, Bakshi caught him easily. He th Phonibushan could not go out of the house due to his physical disability. He loves to read books so he chose knowledge as the source of his strength. He wasn't weak mentally. He had a suppressed rage towards Karalibabu because he often made fun of his disability. So he used his knowledge as a weapon to take the revenge. It's true that people should not make fun of a lame person but putting someone to death in order to inherit property; this is an act of violence without any excuses. This is a premeditated murder and that the criminal had at least some knowledge of medical procedures. According to Bymokesh Bakshi, "When a man commits a premeditated crime...it becomes difficult to catch him out. In such cases, we do not know who the offender is...the only way, at this point, is to judge from the mode of killing." (Bandyopadhyay, *Picture* 122)

The 'mode of killing' reveals the mentality of the criminal. Here, Bakshi discovers that murderer is clever but also a stupid. He has committed the murder intelligently, but he has kept all instruments of killing in his house.

In this story, the three things which we clearly know about Phonibushan that he lives in Karalibabu's house, due to his physical disability he cannot go out of the house and he is fond of books. So, he is completely dependent on Karalibabu. Moreover, Karalibabu often make fun of his disability. Phonibushan cannot tolerate and that makes him to feel insecure. First of all, Karalibabu chose Motilal and Sukumar to grant his property. If they inherited the property, Phonibushan again had to be dependent on them whereas he did not want to be dependent on others. Maybe, this was what going on in Phonibushan's mind before attempting the crime.

After attempting the crime he did not expect that a person like Byomkesh Bakshi will solve the mystery and catch him easily. At the end of the story, he learns that the will did not have the witnesses' signatures. He was totally dumb as if he had lost his ability of thinking for few seconds. At that moment, there was no way for him expect attempting suicide.

## Conclusion

According to Pinaki Roy, "First of all, detective fiction is closely related to the real life of human beings...human mind is characteristically attracted to the mysterious and incomprehensible." (Introduction 4) Here, we find some similarities and dissimilarities between two criminals and two detectives. Both the criminals want property first one is misusing his intelligence inadequately and next one is somehow compelled to misuse his knowledge due to his situation. In *Where There's a Will*, Phonibushan is shown to commit suicide by slashing his wrist but not shooting or drugging or hanging himself which usually occur in Eurocentric detective fiction. We also find some difference on the mode of investigation between two detectives. Sherlock Holmes is an aristocrat detective whereas Byomkesh Bakshi is very ordinary person and he does not follow the Occident. He does not like if anyone call him detective rather he likes to introduce himself as a 'Satyanyeshi' or the truth-seeker. Saradindu Bandyopadhyay was also influenced by the writings of Edgar Allan Poe but he wanted to create an Indian detective who will investigate

the cases in Oriental way. Holmes' investigation is based on the footprints, fingerprints and post-mortem conditions of the body whereas Bakshi's method of investigation is psychological. Just as Sir Arthus Conan Doyle was inspired by his professor Dr. Joseph Bell for his deduction and observation skills, according to Rakesh Jain and Akshita Sharma, "Bandyopadhyay was influenced the renowned Bengali barrister , industrialist , patriot and politician Byomkesh Chakroborty(1855-1929), and hence too the elements of anti-colonialism in Bakshi."(p. 60)

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