"Burden of the *Bhadralok*": Contours of Masculinity in the Detective Fiction of Saradindu Bandyopadhyay and Satyajit Ray

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Abstract

The genesis of Detective Fiction is deeply entangled with the histories of Gender, and in this curious case of the marriage of Gender and Genre, Bengali Detective Fiction is no exception. Bengali Detective Fiction, with its colonial moorings in relation to origin, have always had a tryst with the development of the discourses regarding Bengali masculinity. These discourses which developed as (anti-colonial) responses to the obnoxious stereotype of 'effeminate *babu*', left their marks in the development of Bengali Detective Fiction, the result of which is the interesting portrayals of masculinity in the works of Saradindu Bandyopadhyay and Satyajit Ray. In the realm of Bengali Detective Fiction, Saradindu Bandyopadhyay and Satyajit Ray have achieved colossal success, both in the popular as well as critical paradigm. The works of these two authors, if taken together, reflect a continuous history from Swadeshi movement up to the post-independence Bengal. Keeping this in view, this article tries to detect the twists and turns in Bengali discourses of masculinity, as reflected in the Detective Fiction of Bandyopadhyay and Ray.

Keywords

Babu, Dada, Detective Fiction, Effeminacy, Masculinity, Nationalism

The history of Criminal narratives may be traced back to the classical age, but quite exclusively, the eighteenth and nineteenth century becomes significant, both in European and Indian context, due to the unprecedented popularity of the genre contingent on the specific socio-cultural milieu. The eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw broadsides and Newgate's Accounts, later coalesced into what became known as Newgate Calendars, publishing crime narratives that documented specificities of the crime, its confession, characteristics of the criminal as well as the punishment,

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that was disseminated amongst vast and diverse readers. These narratives, however, used to straddle entertainment and control, resulting in being popular cautionary sagas, showcasing the 'consequences of crime' with a pedagogical intent and suggestion that 'crime was not rampant but was contained and containable.' Nevertheless, the public interest shifted from simplistic crime and punishment accounts to a more nuanced account of the criminal's 'motive' following the urbanization and mercantilization of society with a decline in crime control. (Worthington 2) In this context, one might well consider Thomas De Quincey's well known 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts' published in 1827 as one of the earliest works of an in-depth study of crime. The specificities of Crime narratives were in need of an investigator, a sleuth, thus the figure of the 'detective' was created. Worthington says that this 'detective' as well as the nature of the 'case' had their origins 'in the criminography of the first half of the nineteenth century.' (3) However, at this early phase, the figure of the 'detective' was seen in the police, an employee under the state, obliged to serve the state's requirements; one might take William Russell's 'Recollections of a Police Officer' as an example. The figure of the police as the detective had quite obvious regulatory concerns on the part of the state, as said by Worthington, 'A police was created by the state in order to control crime, and crime was seen as a trait of the poor that made problems for the rich.' (4) The emergence of the private detective was a much later development in the genre.

The European and especially British popular literary milieu that spawned the genre of Crime fiction becomes decisive in tracking the genesis of Indian and particularly Bengali detective fiction, due to the latter's colonial moorings, in terms of origin. Francesca Orsini's 'Detective Novels: A Commercial Genre in Nineteenth-century North India' gives an extensive account of this, in relation to printing and publishing culture. Orsini opined that the detective novel in India 'was introduced first when translated from English into Bengali and then from Bengali into other Indian languages at the end of the Nineteenth century' and met with 'immediate commercial success.' (436) Nineteenth century was, infact extremely significant in the Bengali context, as Sumanta Banerjee notes:

> All through the first half of the Nineteenth century, Calcutta and its outlying areas were going through the process of developing into East India Company's main metropolis and headquarters for both its increasing commercial activities and administrative responsibilities, which extended over an ever expanding territory in other parts of India that were gradually being brought under under its control. (46)

Growing importance of the city called for redesigning its administrative control and bringing its citizens 'under stricter rules and regulations'. (Banerjee 46) Tanmoy Kundu, in this context has mentioned the simultaneity of the origin of a formal Police(ing) Department in both Britain and India, that is, in the third decade of the Nineteenth century. (Kundu 39) Banerjee, too later mentions two significant moments in the history of colonial surveillance in Nineteenth century Calcutta, i.e. the Indian Penal Code (1860) and the establishment of a detective department by the Calcutta Police in 1868, which, apart from investigating cases, was also 'entrusted with preemptive tasks like surveillance over citizens.' (135)

As a result, the genre of Bengali Detective Fiction in Nineteenth century, seemed to execute a clearly defined disciplinary role, and to serve that purpose, it needed to be

'popular', widely available and accessible as opposed to the 'high literature' of that time, disseminated amongst a microscopic group of Bengalis.

However, the very urbanization of Calcutta (of which the police was an outcome), was also symptomatic of a deeper cultural change which created, established and disseminated, socially, economically and ideologically, the stereotype of an 'effeminate Bengali Babu', which in turn, influenced to construct a unique Bengali idea of masculinity, that was deeply embedded in the narratives of Detective fiction, where Satyajit Ray and Saradindu Bandyopadhyay seems to achieve colossal heights.

Mrinalini Sinha's 1995 study *Colonial Masculinity: The Manly Englishman and The effeminate Bengali in The Late Nineteenth Century* stresses on the far reaching impact of colonial masculinity in the spectrum of colonial and nationalist politics that emerged in the last two decades of the Nineteenth century. She takes four controversies: "the 'white mutiny' against the Ilbert Bill in 1883", "the official government response to the Native Volunteer movement in 1885", "the recommendations of the Public Service Commission of 1886", and the "Indian opposition to the Age of Consent Bill in 1891" to illustrate her point. To Sinha, however, the creation of 'effeminate Bengali' was contingent on 'specific practices of ruling' and not an outcome of a 'generalised colonial condition'. (1-2) However, on a broader spectrum, masculinity played a gigantic role in framing colonial relationships not only in Bengal but throughout India as well as contributed in framing social structures in Europe at large. George L. Mosse's 1998 work *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* reveals that the scientific practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth century were rampantly making use of the method of 'classification' (which is more political than scientific in nature) as a means of producing knowledge. This 'passion for classification' in the scientific domain resulted in 'stereotyping' in the social domain, shifting the focus from individual man to 'men in groups' closely following the dissemination of stereotypes associated with each group. Mosse further adds that: "The masculine stereotype was strengthened, however, by the existence of a negative stereotype of men who not only failed to measure up to the ideal but who in body and soul were its foil, projecting the exact opposite of true masculinity." (6) Henceforth, colonial masculinity was in need of a womanish 'other' in order to maintain 'the image of man' constructed in the European discourse. Infact, the word 'effeminate', found itself in general usage during the eighteenth century, "indicating an unmanly softness and delicacy." (Mosse 9)

There was, however a religious dimension of imagining effeminacy, pointed out by Sikata Banerjee in her 2005 book *Make Me a Man!: Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India:*

> "The British had categorized Indian men as the "effeminate other" by using a gender hierarchy rooted in a specific Anglo-Protestant interpretation of manhood-Christian manliness-defined by values of martial prowess, muscular strength, rationality, and individualism." (2)

While Indians were broadly categorized 'effeminate' in the eyes of the colonizers, specifically Bengalis were stigmatized and stereotyped as the most un-manly by the figure of 'effeminate *babu'* in the Nineteenth century. Mrinalini Sinha traces the idea of 'effeminate *babu'* being percolated in Indian society closely following the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 that challenged the Anglicist programme of the British and made them rethink colonial policies, which finally culminated in the "growing acceptance of the view that India could be best governed only through a judicious use of its supposedly indigenous

traditions", which was again, a "colonial understanding of indigenous tradition" framed by the then Orientalists or Indologists, a term that gained massive popularity. With this shift in focus, however, the former 'Western-educated Indians' (that included a large number of Bengalis) were no longer seen as 'the most trusted allies of the government' but as an 'artificial' and 'unnatural' class of people, in short 'effeminate *babus'*. (4-5) Simultaneously on the economic forum, as the former rentier class of Bengali started losing their economic superiority, the new Bengali elites were slowly getting defined by 'administrative and professional employment', in fact the Bengali middle class found themselves incarcerated in the domain of *'chakri'* (a work derived from Bengali *'chakor'* literally meaning 'servant') or 'petty clerical work' which also contributed in a professional effeminacy.

Simultaneously, harking back to Mosse's argument regarding the upsurge of stereotyping in Europe, in India, two distinct masculine identities were produced at that time, as pointed out by Sinha, martial and non-martial. Saayan Chattopadhyay's 2011 article, "Bengali Masculinity and The National Masculine: Some Conjectures for Interpretation" shows that the idea behind such classification was that "certain ethnic groups are inherently more masculine, predominantly because they possessed something like 'fighting instincts', which was conceived as the appropriate expression of manliness, marked the doctrine of martial races." Consequently, while communities like Rajputs, Pathans, Nairs, Matathas, Gurkhas, Sikhs were designated as manly, Bengalis were stigmatized as un-manly, therefore excluded from the colonial Indian army. Simultaneously, clerical jobs, as indicated by Chattopadhyay, "implied a lack of heroism, for when compared to the war-like races of the Punjab, the Bengalis did not have any stomach for fighting and submitted tamely to the periodical raids of the hill people." (270)

All these contributed in creating the image of Bengali effeminacy. Mrinalini Sinha quotes several historical documents to show how this stereotype was being disseminated. For example, Richard Orne, in his 1770 work *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* called Bengalis as "of weaker frame and more enervated character." Again, Bishop Heber, in the 1820s stated that Bengalis were thought of as 'the greatest cowards in India' and the word 'Bengali' itself was 'used to express anything which was roguish and cowardly.' Sinha notes that this 'feebleness' actually served as a justification for 'the loss of Independence.' (15) And, finally it was Macaulay himself who made an infamous description of 'the physical organization of the Bengali':

> "The physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedimentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and hardy deeds. Courage, independence, veracity, are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable." (qtd. in Rosselli 122)

And in his Essay on Robert Clive, the infamous conqueror of Bengal, Macaulay stereotyped the Bengalis in the following manner:

> "The men by whom this rich tract was peopled, enervated by a soft climate and accustomed to peaceful employments, bore the same relation to other Asiatics which the Asiatics generally bear to the bold and energetic children of Europe. The Castillians have a proverb that in Valencia the Earth is water and the men

women; the description is at least equally applicable to the vast plain of the Lower Ganges. Whatever the Bengali does he does languidly. His favourite pursuits are sedentary. He shrinks from bodily exertion; and though voluble in dispute, and singularly pertinacious in the war of chicane he seldom engages in personal conflict, and scarcely ever enlists as a soldier. There never perhaps existed a people so thoroughly fitted by habit for a foreign yoke." (qtd. in Sinha 15)

This obnoxious portrayal of Bengalis (especially Bengali middle class) contributed largely to the unquestioned assumption of Bengali effeminacy, highly reflected in the four controversies pointed out by Sinha. One might allude to Indira Chowdhury's 2001 work *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, who points out that the Bengali male, in this way was identified both with 'the frailty of women' and 'the powerlessness of the submissive slave'. (Chattopadhyay 270)

Meanwhile,as we have seen, the genre of the detective novel was, too making its introduction at the end of the Nineteenth century. Tanmoy Kundu's *Bangla Goyenda Kahini: EktiSamajik-Sangskritic Path*is an illuminating account of the social life of this very 'popular' genre. Referring to *Sansad Bangali Charitabidhan* and Dr. Sukumar Sen, he has opined that, in the realm of Bengali Detective Fiction, Priyanath Mukhopadhyay might be considered as the pioneer (*pathikrit*), who created the 'Daroga'rDaptar' series, which included almost 206 stories. Mukhopadhyay's tales featured semi-journalistic accounts of how a police officer investigates the cases he gets in his career. Interestingly, those accounts do hark backto the obnoxious stereotype of 'Bengali effeminacy' many times:

> *Bangali jati je bhiru, kapurish, alshe- Ingrejder e dhoroneraleek Kalpana je lekhakkebeshbedanahotokorechilo ta 'Daroga'rDaptar'-er onekkhsetreichokh e pore.* (Kundu 60)
>
> (The baseless imagination of the Britishers that the Bengali race is basically cowardly, effeminate and lazy used to hurt the writer quite a lot, we find it in many cases of Daroga'rDaptar.)

Anyways, it was also undeniable that, the titular *daroga* of the stories was very much an employee of the government, which indicated that the era of the amateur sleuths or 'private detectives' was yet to begin. Bengali Detective Fiction was, still very much under the influence of its Imperial masters.

However, the emergence of the *Swadeshi* Movement in Bengal provided a space for the restructuring of Bengali masculinity. Three different trajectories of discourses regarding Bengali Masculinity can be located at this time: firstly, through self-ridicule and self-irony, secondly, through reclaiming and re-imagining a more masculine past and thirdly, a *bhadralok*centered discourse that looked for a more ambivalent masculinity distinct from the second 'mythic-historical manliness'. (Chattopadhyay 266) While the first trajectory of self-ridicule and self irony was reflected in the writings of Madhusudan Dutta, Kalliprasanna Sinha, Sukumar Ray (father of Satyajit Ray), the second trajectory found a 'mythic-historical discourse' that looked for a more masculine past of the Bengalis. Chattopadhyay refers to Swami Vivekananda's "formulation of ideal masculinity comprising of *Kshatra-Virya* and *Brahma-Teja*" and Bankim's stress on physical strength and virility as examples of that second trajectory. In fact the second trajectory gave birth to the construction of *sanyasi* or *sanatan* as what J.S. Alter calls "politically proactive, assertive, even militant, rebellious and violent figure, at the same

time incorporating an ascetic, celibate and thus 'spiritually pure' masculinity" and to the growing significance of gymnasiums *(akhras)*, secret Swadeshi terrorist groups and the game of football. In this kind of historical imagination, one could encounter the glorious past presented in contrast to the present "perceived by incompleteness and lack of fulfillment." Thus, it was an 'inverse' relationship between time and masculinity, exemplified by the gendering of time itself, with a constant tension between those days *(se-kal)* and these days *(e-kal)*. Chattopadhyay looks at it as "an imaginary ideal type located in the past, followed by an uncomfortable present, and a 'phantasmatic promise' for the future, a claim." (271-274)

Alongside this line, Chattopadhyay also locates a third variant of masculinity, focusing on the middle class Bengali employed in clerical jobs *(chakurijibi)* , a "family-oriented and is a relational self, instead of being physically violent, this image (of masculinity) is effectively claiming to be paternalistic and affective in nature." This final variant of masculinity, Chattopadhyay argues, was based on the idea of mental strength and intellect (which he calls *buddhibal*) in contrast to physical power *(bahubal)*. (274-275)

Amongst these different trajectories of masculinity, on the popular literary level, we see the emergence of Byomkesh by Saradindu Bandyopadhyay in the year 1932 (1339 Bangabda) in the story 'Pather Kanta'. In the realm of Detective Fiction, his name became significant as a nascent craftsman catalysing the popular into the literary, as Dr. Sukumar Sen said:

> *SaradinduBandyopadhyay'rgourabekhanei   je tinigoyendakahinikesadharanupanyas er marjada e tulechilen*. (193)
>
> (The fame of Saradindu Bandyopadhyay rests upon the fact that he raised the Detective Fiction to the level of Literary Novel.)

We can unhesitatingly say that Byomkesh was born in the era of private detectives. Though, we do see amateur sleuths sparsely located in the Bengali literary canvas, before Byomkesh, in Debendra Bijoy Mitra, Arindham Basu, and Gobindoram, all created by Panchkari Dey between the 1910s and 1920s. But it was only Saradindu Bandyopadhyay who took the figure of a 'private detective' to a *critical* dimension.

The flourishing of this *amateur sleuth* (as opposed to the *Daroga* of Mukhopadhyay) in the hands of Saradindu, however can be linked to the larger decolonial project taking place under the Swadeshi movement. Also, asthe lion's share of the timeline of Byomkesh stories fall under the era of Swadeshi movement, we see different sides of the three Bengali masculinity discourses discussed earlier, amongst which the *Bhadralok* discourse seems to take up the dominant position. One might take "Raktomukhee Neela" as an example. The story revolves around the theft of Maharaja Ramendra Singha's royal ring that has Red Amethyst (*Raktomukhee Neela*)in it and the death of his associate ten years later.Banerjee has used different objects and elements that stand out as emblematic of masculine agency. The Royal Ring is one such object. Object here, has a direct connection with blue-blooded masculinity as well as with its astrological proof, thereby, culminating in a more complex dialogue between reason and faith with regards to masculinity. As the story has been named after the object itself, the way Byomkesh describes the Red Amethyst becomes significant:

> *"Neela jinishtaHeere,tobeneel Heere. Onyanyo Heere r mawtokebolojon er opor I er dam hoy na; odhikangshosomoy- ontotoamaderdeshe- Neela r dam dharjo hoy er daiba shakti r upor."* (Bandyopadhyay 206)

> (Neela is basically diamond, but the blue one. Unlike other diamonds, it's worth does not depend upon its weight alone, but upon its *metaphysical value*, in most of the times, especially in a country like this.)

The object attains a metaphysical value (*daiba shakti*) here, just as the *Bhadralok* masculinity was essentially disembodied in nature, playing and being played more on a psychic realm. It has been already said earlier in the story that the Raktamukhee Neela was an object of grave importance to the king, he used to consider it as his 'Bhagya Lakshmi' and used to wear it in a ring. (Bandyopadhyay) It is interesting that the ring has been endowed with feminine qualities, which is again indicative of the possession of it being the portal of masculine agency as well as the exercise of a blue-blooded masculinity. Also, Maharaja's majestic powers being indicated through his ring's *Daiba Shakti* as opposed to his own physical prowess, places his masculinity in the *Bhadralok* discourse.

In the regular framework of the detective story, the sleuth turns out to be the voice of reason. But one thing that needs to be kept in mind is that, Byomkesh was trailblazing an era populated with amateur sleuths and notpolice officers, symbolizing a critical distancing from both Imperial and institutional(izd) rationality. As rational prowess seems to eclipse physical prowess in the *Bhadralok*masculinity, reason and its exercise becomes definitive in the construction of masculinity in the Byomkesh narrative. We find, Byomkesh straddling Imperial Scientific rationality and Ethnic rationality, which in a way, symbolizes the Bengali condition during and closely after the Bengal Renaissance:

> *Ami kushanskarachhannagonra Hindu noi, kintu, bhoot-pretmaran-uchatanbiswaskorinakintuRaktomukhee Neela r oloukik shakti r uporamaratalbiswas.* (Bandyopadhyay 206)
>
> (Now, I am not a superstitious austere Hindu, I do not believe in these ghosts, goblins, dark rituals and whatnot, yet I too harbour an unquestioned faith in the supernatural powers of Raktamukhee Neela)

The apparent reason ('*kushanskarachhanna…noi*')-faith ('*atalbiswas*') dialectic here is symptomatic of a more complex Imperial Scientific rationality-Ethnic rationality dialectic, of which Byomkesh is an instance. Not only the conflict takes place externally in the final confrontation between Ramanath Niyogi and Byomkesh at the end, but it does take place internally in Byomkesh himself, and later he uses that conflict to resolve the mystery of the crime. This indicates the crisis in rationality that was pervading Bengal plagued by the contest between colonial modernity and decolonial resistance in the form of the Swadeshi. While Chattopadhyay has rightly located *Bhadralok* masculinity in the exercise of *buddhibal*, one can also locate that in exercising *Buddhibal*, the *Bhadralok* masculine was also looking for a negotiation between the Imperial Scientific rationality and a Pre-colonial Ethnic rationality, where the former was seen as masculine and the latter feminine in the Orientalist Western discourse. This kind of search for negotiation is also seen in Byomkesh himself, and is culminated in the climax of the story where he explains the negative astrological effects to Ramanath Niyogi, only to play with his 'superstitions' and make him confess the theft and murder. Quite interestingly, Saradindu carefully abstains from answering whether the stone truly bears some astrological power or not.Thus, the *buddhibal* of both Saradindu and Byomkesh seems to be a quest for negotiation between two different forms of rationality.

However, though masculinity is being played on a psychic realm, its physical manifestations are quite visible in the reason-faith dialectic at the end of the story. When Ramanath finally confesses his crime, the way he behaves is quite interesting:

> *AbyaktaektashabdakoriyaRamanathuthiyadarailo. Tahar monerbhitorkirup Prabal aabeg er sristihoiyachilo, taha amraosamyakbujhiteparinai...'chai na-chai na! eeinao Neela, Amakebanchao!' boliyadirghoshihoritoniswasfeliyaagyaanhoiyamatiteporiyagelo.* (Bandyopadhyay 214)

> (Ramanath stood up, making a strange sound. We couldn't fathom what turbulent emotions were growing inside him! ...'Oh, I don't want it, I just don't, take that wretched Neela away, save my life, please!', He fainted, passing a deep, shivering breath.)

Saradindu using the word emotion (*aabeg*), to describe such a ruthless criminal, seems to be a literary trope to effeminize him, as the tables are already turned, he has lost the battle of reasons, Byomkesh's *buddhibal* has already overshadowed that of Ramanath. Yet the outcome of the battle for asserting masculine agency is very much inscribed on the body. In this manner, we find an interesting and complex form of *Bhadralok* masculinity in Byomkesh.

Unlike Byomkesh, Feluda (created by Satyajit Ray) was born in a Post-Partition, Post-Independence Bengal. The 35 Feluda stories were written mostly for the children's magazine *Sandesh*, first published by Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury (Ray's Grandfather) in 1913 via his publishing company, M/s U. Ray and Sons, stopped in 1925 closely following Sukumar Ray's death and then again revived by Satyajit Ray in 1961. Feluda, real name Prodosh Chandra Mitra, a 27 year old private investigator is often accompanied by his cousin Tapesh Ranjan Mitra (popularly known as Topshe) who is also the narrator of the stories. From the sixth story i.e. *Sonar Kella* (The Golden Fortress) the two are joined by Lalmohan Ganguly who writes sensational thrillers under the pen-name 'Jatayu.'

What we find interesting in Ray, is the choice of using the suffix *'da'* in naming his hero. There he makes a complete departure from Arthur Conan Doyle or his immediate Bengali predecessorSaradindu Bandyopadhyay. Soham Das points out in his article *"Bangla SahityerKoyekjonBikhyatoDadader Dadagiri"* that the word *'dada'* denoted what he calls *'sneha-shasonmisrita, paropakari, sadapranocchaltarun'* (a youth that possesses a combination of love and command, benevolent and full of life). Das further notes that:

> "*Eshob dada der chakri-bakritemonchilonabollei chole, bathakleo she nam-ka-waastechotokhatokonokaj. Mulato manush er kajkeijiban er param dharma bole meneniten tara.*" (Das)

> (These *Dada*s didn't have an official profession as such, even if they had one, it used to be quite unimportant and petty. They had predominantly considered human welfare as the primary goal of life.)

One can note that, in Post-colonial Bengal, when Satyajit Ray was writing, a different *Dada* narrative was slowly getting built in the social sphere. This *'Dada'* figure, seen in Ray's sleuth Feluda, is a prime example of Ray's take on Bengali masculinity. As a man, a *'Dada'* possessed, as Das noted 'benevolence', 'vivacity' and 'a combination of love and command'. These qualities remind of Chattopadhyay's third variant of Bengali masculinity, 'paternalistic and affective in nature.' (274) Yet, the second part of what Das said regarding professions, marks a shift from that variant as the *'Dada'* figure neglected

and detested 'chakri' or official jobs as opposed to the *'Chakurijibi'Bhadralok* Bengali of the Nineteenth century. One can't help noticing an air of an alternative idea of economic independence, in the new *'Dada'* narrative. Whereas the 'effeminate babu' was 'doubly identified with weakness', with the frailty of woman and the submissiveness of a slave, the *'Dada'* was bold, strong, muscular and always an amateur. (Chattopadhyay 270) One can refer to *Badshahi Aangti* (The Emperor's Ring) where Feluda is called an 'amateur private detective.' (Ray 28) The portrayal of the masculine sleuth as an amateur, just like Saradindu, seems to be a technique to grant him a radical independence. The word *'Felu'* ('failure' in colloquial Bengali) seems to be an ironic take on the sleuth's exceptional talents, and also, on a deeper level, an ironic take on the colonial portrayal of a Bengali. Thus, the figure of *'Dada'*, as a man, one might infer, was standing at exactly the opposite front of an 'effeminate *babu*.' It can, infact, be seen as a strong challenge to the colonial construction of Bengali effeminacy.

This contrast between *'babu'* and *'dada'* as effeminacy vs masculinity is created very poignantly in the Eleventh chapter of *Badshahi Aangti* (The Emperor's Ring). The story talks about the theft of a valuable ring that was once Emperor Aurangzeb's, later gifted to Dr. Srivastava by Pyarelal Seth, a well-known businessman of Lucknow as a gesture of gratitude for curing his only living son Mahavir of his illness. Later on, for the sake of keeping it safe, Dr. Srivastava gives it to Dhiru Kaka, from whose house the ring goes missing. The reader encounters one ferocious Bonobihari Babu, who keeps wild animals as pets. Towards the end, it is found that it was Feluda who had kept the ring to himself to prevent it from being further stolen by Bonobihari Babu, who always had an eye for the ring, and even tried to attack Feluda with the help of his American rattlesnake, but the sleuth, defeats both. However, in the Eleventh chapter, when Feluda and Topshe is misguided and taken to a deserted cottage by Bonobihari Babu he says: "Felu Babu- can I have my ring back, please?" (Ray 84)The choice of calling the sleuth 'Felu *Babu'* seems to evoke the same colonial stereotype of 'effeminate *babu'*, posed as a challenge to Feluda. Thus, in order to assert his masculinity and *'dada'* identity, with Topshe as witness, he has to turn the tables.

The witness, Topshe, however confirms that Feluda has successfully asserted his masculinity at the very end:

> "I saw Feluda standing at some distance, wearing the ring on his finger. He was turning it around in the sunlight that seeped through the leaves, and reflecting the light straight into my eyes.
> I thought quietly to myself: if anyone had emerged a winner in this whole business truly like an emperor, it was none other than Feluda." (Ray 89)

The very image of Feluda emerging as an emperor confirms the reversal of the colonial stereotype of the Bengali effeminacy, firstly, through imagining Feluda emerging as the king and secondly, through the remembrance of Mughal times by dint of the ring.

The Bengali masculine was critically abstaining from violence. Ray scarcely refers to actual bloody violence in his Feluda stories. He mentions that his stories needed to be 'clean'. The tendency to maintain this cleanliness (and leaving no strain of blood), seems to go as an inversion of physical violence as a mark of masculinity. In *Badshahi Aangti* (The Emperor's Ring), Ray abstains from including any physical violence by showing that Bonobihari Babu actually wanted to take the ring from Pyarelal, by threatening him, showing his spider, but Pyarelal was so afraid that he died. Feluda points that out: 'You

were probably unaware that the sight of a cockroach gave him palpitations. Your intention was probably just to frighten him into handing the ring over to you. But the whole thing took a nasty turn, didn't it? Pyarelal's fright caused a heart attack, leading to his death." (Ray 87) The whole story, thus, uses 'courage' as an important mark of manliness (which seems to be harking back to the Nationalistic project of Bengali Masculinity in the Nineteenth century), also seen in other Feluda stories. As Pyarelal is a cowardish person, his son Mahavir must emerge as a virile man, to take revenge on behalf of his dead father. The whole portrayal of Mahavir stands as a confirmation of that.

Apart from courage, the second feature that is emphasized throughout the Feluda stories is intellect. Feluda stories are more a play of intellect than that of physical violence. Thus, Topshe, the narrator says in *Badshahi Aangti* (The Emperor's Ring), "what is most remarkable about Feluda is his power of deduction. This is a skill he has acquired simply by reading and regular practice." (Ray 28) This superb analytical ability of the sleuth popularly known as *'magajastra'* shows an important aspect of Bengali Masculinity as seen by Ray, where intelligence and rationality plays a greater role than physical virility. Thus the showcasing of intellectual ability becomes an important signifier of masculinity (with the concomitant babu vs dada trope). This, again, reminds one of an essential part of the Bengali masculinity (as a reaction against colonial stereotypes of effeminacy) pointed out by Chattopadhyay, that is the emphasis on *buddhibal* or mental prowess over *bahubal*. Ray's emphasis on *'magajastra'* exemplifies that form of masculinity.

However, unlike Saradindu, Ray has given an equal importance to physical prowess or *bahubal*, in fact *Badshahi Aangti* features a long chasing sequence, that bolsters the importance of *bahubal*. Additionally, Feluda has been portrayed as a long, stout, able and virile Bengali, as a reversal to the colonial stereotype. In this way, Ray seems to transgress the *Bhadralok* masculinity as well.

Thus, Ray has presented a unique category of masculinity, borrowing from his predecessors, yet modifying each and every model. But his positioning of *'dada'* at the exact opposite front of a 'colonial *babu'*, showcases a novel approach, in the post-colonial social milieu. It seems that Ray, in this way, has envisaged a separate fourth variant altogether adding to Chattopadhyay's categorization.

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