

Exploring Bengali Detective Fiction through the Lenses of Companion Narrators: Ajit and Topse

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Article Detail:	Abstract
Received: 06 Sep 2026; Received in revised form: 02 Oct 2026; Accepted: 07 Oct 2026; Available online: 13 Oct 2026 Keywords— Narratology, Focalization, Narrative Perspective, Limited Narration, Companion Narrators, Detective Authority, Bengali Detective Fiction, Gérard Genette. ©2026 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).	The present study examines the role of companion narrators in Bengali detective fiction and analyses how they contribute to the construction of detective authority. Bengali detective narratives are often discussed mainly through the figure of the detective and his intelligence, observation, and analytical skill. However, in many important detective texts, the story is not narrated by the detective himself. Instead, the reader encounters the detective through companion figures such as Ajit and Topse. This study focuses on how these companion narrators influence the reader's understanding of the detective through observation, interpretation, emotional response, and limited knowledge. The study is based on selected texts by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay and Satyajit Ray, particularly Satyanweshi, Arthamanartham, Sonar Kella, and Joi Baba Felunath. The study uses the narrative theory of Wayne C. Booth along with selected narratological concepts associated with Gérard Genette, especially focalization and narrative perspective. The methodology of the study is based on close textual reading and comparative analysis. Through an analysis of Ajit and Topse as companion narrators, the study argues that detective authority in Bengali detective fiction is not presented independently, but is carefully constructed through narration. The study also shows that the limited perspective of companion narrators helps in maintaining suspense and shaping the reader's perception of the detective. At the same time, differences between Ajit and Topse reveal different narrative styles and relationships within the Byomkesh and Feluda stories. The study therefore attempts to offer a different perspective on Bengali detective fiction by shifting attention from the detective alone to the narrative process through which the detective is represented and understood.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bengali detective fiction, as a significant part of modern Bengali literature, has long attracted attention for its portrayal of rationality, intelligence, and investigative skill. Texts such as *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham* by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, and *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath* by Satyajit Ray, are

often discussed with a primary focus on the detective figure. These narratives typically highlight the detective's analytical ability and authority in solving complex mysteries, thereby placing him at the centre of critical discussions.

However, an important narrative feature of these texts lies in the presence of companion figures

such as Ajit and Topse, who function as narrators. Instead of the detective narrating his own actions, the story is mediated through these companions. This narrative strategy creates a specific perspective through which the reader encounters the detective. As a result, the reader's understanding of the detective is not direct but is shaped through the observation, interpretation, and responses of the companion figures.

While existing studies on Bengali detective fiction have largely concentrated on the detective as a figure of logic and reason, relatively less attention has been paid to the narrative role of these companion characters. The contribution of Ajit and Topse in constructing the image and authority of the detective remains an underexplored area. This gap becomes particularly significant when viewed in the light of narrative theory, where the role of the narrator is crucial in shaping meaning and guiding reader perception.

The present study seeks to examine how the authority of the detective in Bengali detective fiction is not merely inherent, but is constructed through the narration of companion figures. By analysing the narrative voice, descriptive patterns, and interactions between the detective and the companion, the study seeks to demonstrate how Ajit and Topse actively participate in shaping the reader's understanding of the detective.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to shift the focus of Bengali detective fiction from the detective alone to the narrative process through which the detective is constructed. By examining the role of companion narrators, the study offers a different perspective on how detective authority is shaped within the text. This approach contributes to a broader understanding of narrative technique in Bengali detective fiction.

The discussion will begin with a review of existing scholarship on Bengali detective fiction and narrative theory in order to identify the critical gap in the present area of study. This is followed by the theoretical framework and methodology of the study. The narrative role of Ajit will then be examined through *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham*, followed by an analysis of Topse's narration in *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath*. Finally, a comparative analysis will

highlight the similarities and differences in their narrative functions, leading to the conclusion of the study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical discussions on Bengali detective fiction have generally focused on the detective figure as the central source of logic, intelligence, and rational authority. In the case of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's Byomkesh stories, much of the criticism has examined Byomkesh as a unique detective figure whose investigative methods combine observation, intelligence, and moral judgement. Scholars have often discussed Byomkesh not merely as a detective, but as a truth-seeker whose identity extends beyond the conventional detective model. This critical emphasis has largely remained centred on the detective himself rather than on the narrative process through which his authority is presented.

Similarly, in the case of Satyajit Ray's Feluda stories, critical attention has mostly concentrated on Feluda's intelligence, modernity, and sharp observational skill. Feluda is often read as a rational and dynamic detective figure who represents both intellectual confidence and cultural awareness. Studies on Feluda frequently analyse his methods of solving mysteries, his memory, and his analytical power. However, these discussions usually place Feluda at the centre without giving equal importance to the narrative role of Topse as the storyteller.

In both Byomkesh and Feluda narratives, the detective does not narrate his own story. Instead, the events are presented through companion figures like Ajit and Topse. Despite this structural importance, critical studies have rarely treated these narrators as active agents in constructing detective authority. Their role is often seen as supportive or secondary, mainly as assistants within the plot. Such a reading overlooks the fact that the reader's entire access to the detective is shaped through their narrative voice.

Several critical studies on Bengali detective fiction have focused on individual detective texts and detective figures rather than on companion narrators. Discussions on Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's

Byomkesh stories such as *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham* often examine Byomkesh's intelligence, morality, and investigative method. Similarly, studies on Satyajit Ray's *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath* mainly focus on Feluda's rationality, observational power, and modern outlook. Critics such as Pramod K. Nayar have discussed detective fiction in relation to rationality, modernity, and popular literature. However, comparatively less attention has been given to companion characters like Ajit and Topse, whose narrative role is important in shaping the detective's authority and the reader's understanding of the investigation.

Narrative theory offers an important framework for understanding this relationship between narrator and character. Critics such as Wayne C. Booth have shown that the narrator plays an important role in shaping the reader's response to characters and events. Booth's argument that narration is never neutral becomes particularly useful in detective fiction, where the detective's authority is often built through selective presentation and controlled revelation. This idea helps in understanding how companion narrators influence the reader's perception of the detective.

Similarly, narratologists such as Gérard Genette have emphasised the importance of perspective and focalization in narrative structure. The concept of focalization becomes especially relevant in detective fiction because the narrator's limited knowledge controls the flow of information and creates suspense. In the case of Ajit and Topse, this limited perspective not only preserves mystery but also strengthens the detective's authority by making his final explanations appear more powerful.

Although narrative theory has been widely applied in literary studies, its use in the study of Bengali detective fiction remains comparatively limited, especially in relation to companion narrators. Most discussions continue to privilege the detective figure over the narrative voice that presents him. This creates an important gap in criticism, because the detective's image is not formed independently but through the narrator's observation, interpretation, and emotional response.

The present study attempts to address this gap by focusing on Ajit and Topse as companion

narrators and examining how their narrative position contributes to the construction of detective authority. By bringing together Bengali detective fiction and narrative theory, the study seeks to offer a different perspective on how detective identity is shaped within the structure of the narrative itself.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The present study examines the role of companion narrators in Bengali detective fiction and the way their narration contributes to the construction of detective authority. Since the primary concern of this study is not only what is narrated but also how the detective is presented through narration, the study requires a theoretical framework that focuses on narrative structure and the function of the narrator. For this purpose, the study draws upon the narrative theory of Wayne C. Booth and selected concepts from narratology.

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Booth emphasises that narration is never neutral. The narrator plays an active role in shaping the reader's understanding of characters and events. Through selection, description, and commentary, the narrator influences the way a character is perceived. This idea becomes especially important in detective fiction, where the detective often appears extraordinary not simply because of his actions, but because of the way those actions are narrated. In the case of Byomkesh and Feluda, the reader encounters the detective primarily through the voices of Ajit and Topse. Their narration therefore becomes central to the construction of detective authority.

Along with Booth's ideas, the study also uses certain concepts from narratology to understand the relationship between narrator and narrative perspective. Narratology helps in examining how the position of the narrator affects the presentation of events, the control of information, and the shaping of suspense. In detective fiction, the narrator often knows less than the detective, and this limited perspective creates curiosity and suspense for the reader. At the same time, it also allows the detective to appear more intelligent and authoritative. This structural relation between detective and narrator is important for the present study.

For the present study, certain specific concepts from narratology become particularly relevant. One important concept is focalization, discussed by Gérard Genette, which refers to the perspective through which events are perceived. In detective fiction, focalization through the companion narrator limits the reader's knowledge and creates suspense. Another important concept is narrative distance, which helps in understanding how close or distant the narrator remains from the detective figure. In the case of Ajit and Topse, this closeness creates familiarity, while their limited understanding preserves the detective's mystery. The concept of limited narration, as discussed by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, is also useful, because the companion narrator often does not possess complete knowledge. This limitation affects the flow of information and shapes the reader's response. Together, these concepts help in analysing how narration itself becomes an important part of detective fiction.

The methodology of this study is based on close reading of selected Bengali detective texts. Close reading allows a detailed examination of language, description, dialogue, and narrative structure. Through this method, the study focuses on how Ajit and Topse describe the detective, record his actions, and respond to his methods of investigation. Special attention is given to moments where admiration, surprise, or interpretation shape the reader's perception of the detective.

The method of close reading used in this study can also be understood in relation to the principles of New Criticism. New Criticism places emphasis on the text itself as the primary site of meaning and encourages detailed attention to language, structure, and internal relationships within the text. Instead of depending on external historical or biographical information, this method focuses on how meaning is produced through the arrangement of words, images, and narrative patterns. In the present study, close reading becomes useful because it allows a careful examination of the companion narrator's language and descriptive choices. The ways in which Ajit and Topse observe, interpret, and narrate the detective become crucial textual elements through which authority is constructed. Thus, the principles of New Criticism strengthen the methodological

approach of this study by keeping the analysis centred on the textual structure itself.

The primary texts selected for this study are *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham* by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, and *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath* by Satyajit Ray. These texts have been selected because they clearly demonstrate the narrative role of companion figures and provide useful material for comparative analysis. Thus, by combining narrative theory with close textual analysis, the study attempts to understand how companion narrators function not merely as assistants within the plot, but as important narrative agents who shape the authority and image of the detective in Bengali detective fiction.

IV. AJIT AS COMPANION NARRATOR IN THE BYOMKESH SERIES BY SHARADINDU BANDYOPADHYAY

In the Byomkesh stories of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, Ajit occupies a significant position not merely as a companion but as the principal narrator through whom the reader encounters Byomkesh. In stories like *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham*, Ajit's presence is essential because he functions as the medium through which Byomkesh's intelligence and authority become visible to the reader. Byomkesh rarely explains himself directly at the beginning of an investigation; instead, the reader comes to know him through Ajit's observations, responses, and gradual understanding. This narrative position gives Ajit an important role in shaping the image of the detective.

In *Satyanweshi*, the first meeting between Ajit and Byomkesh is important in establishing this relationship. Ajit initially encounters Byomkesh without fully understanding his identity or purpose. This limited knowledge is significant because it places Ajit in a position similar to that of the reader. As Ajit slowly discovers Byomkesh's abilities, the reader also participates in that process of discovery. The gradual revelation of Byomkesh's intelligence creates an effect of admiration and curiosity. Ajit's surprise at Byomkesh's deductions strengthens the impression of Byomkesh as a figure of exceptional intellect. In this way, the narrative authority of the detective is not immediately given but gradually constructed through Ajit's experience.

Another significant aspect in *Satyanweshi* is the way Ajit gradually learns to trust Byomkesh's method of investigation. In the beginning, Ajit often appears doubtful or uncertain about Byomkesh's observations. However, as the investigation moves forward, each correct deduction increases Ajit's confidence in Byomkesh's abilities. This gradual movement from doubt to trust is important because it guides the reader through the same emotional process. The reader's faith in Byomkesh is therefore developed alongside Ajit's own growing admiration.

Ajit's reactions during moments of revelation are also significant. When Byomkesh finally explains the hidden logic behind the mystery, Ajit's astonishment functions as a narrative confirmation of the detective's intellectual superiority. These moments strengthen the dramatic effect of the solution and make the detective's reasoning appear even more powerful.

Ajit's narrative voice is marked by a sense of honesty and immediacy. He records events from his own perspective and often admits his inability to understand Byomkesh's reasoning at the same speed. This difference in knowledge between narrator and detective becomes structurally important. Because Ajit does not fully know the solution, suspense is maintained until the final explanation. At the same time, Byomkesh's intellectual superiority becomes more visible because it is measured against Ajit's limited understanding. Ajit's position therefore creates both mystery and authority within the narrative.

In *Arthamanartham*, this pattern continues in a more developed form. By this stage, Ajit already knows Byomkesh well, yet his narration continues to preserve the detective's mystery. Although their friendship has become stronger, Ajit still remains outside the complete process of deduction. His observations of Byomkesh's silence, concentration, and sudden conclusions contribute to the image of the detective as a figure whose mind operates at a higher level. Ajit's descriptive language often creates an atmosphere where Byomkesh appears calm, controlled, and intellectually dominant.

In *Arthamanartham*, Ajit's role becomes more mature as a narrator because his familiarity with Byomkesh allows him to observe the detective more

closely. Yet this familiarity does not reduce the sense of mystery. There are several moments where Byomkesh remains silent or detached, and Ajit is unable to understand the significance of these actions. This silence itself becomes meaningful in Ajit's narration, because it builds tension and makes the reader wait for explanation.

Ajit's narrative role also becomes important in presenting the everyday human side of Byomkesh. Alongside the image of intellectual authority, Ajit records moments of ordinary conversation, friendship, and reflection. This balance between the extraordinary and the ordinary makes Byomkesh a more complete character. At the same time, it reinforces his authority because his brilliance appears within the context of normal human interaction.

Another important aspect of Ajit's narration is his emotional response to Byomkesh. His admiration is often visible in the way he describes Byomkesh's actions and decisions. This admiration influences the reader's own perception. Since the story is filtered through Ajit's voice, his respect for Byomkesh becomes part of the reader's understanding of the detective. This emotional dimension matters because detective authority is shaped not only by logic but also by the narrator's trust and belief.

Although Ajit remains closely associated with Byomkesh throughout the investigations, his knowledge is often incomplete in relation to the detective's reasoning. He can observe events and record Byomkesh's actions, but he does not always understand the logic behind them immediately. This limited narrative position controls the movement of information within the story and preserves suspense for the reader. As a result, when Byomkesh finally explains the mystery, his authority appears stronger and more convincing.

Ajit also plays an important practical role in making the detective accessible to the reader. Byomkesh's reasoning can often be complex, but Ajit's questions and reactions create moments of explanation within the story. Through these interactions, the reader gains access to Byomkesh's thought process. Without Ajit's presence, much of the detective's reasoning would remain distant and less communicative. Thus, Ajit functions as a bridge between the detective and the reader.

Thus, Ajit cannot be regarded merely as a companion to Byomkesh. As narrator, observer, and interpreter, he actively participates in constructing Byomkesh's authority. His limited knowledge creates suspense, his admiration shapes perception, and his narration makes the detective's intelligence visible. Through Ajit's narrative presence, Byomkesh emerges not only as a detective but as an authoritative figure whose image is carefully built within the structure of the story.

V. TOPSE AS COMPANION NARRATOR IN THE FELUDA SERIES BY SATYAJIT RAY

In the Feluda stories of Satyajit Ray, Topse holds an important position not only as Feluda's companion but also as the narrator of the stories. Like Ajit in the Byomkesh stories, Topse becomes the medium through which the reader comes to know the detective. In texts like *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath*, Feluda's intelligence and authority are not directly presented by Feluda himself; rather, they are revealed through Topse's observations and narration. For instance, Topse often begins by describing situations that Feluda later interprets in a completely different way. In *Sonar Kella*, he carefully records the strange behaviour of Mukul and the details of the journey without fully understanding their significance. Through such narration, the reader receives information gradually through Topse's perspective. Because of this narrative structure, Topse plays an important role in shaping the reader's understanding of Feluda as a detective.

In *Sonar Kella*, Topse's narrative role becomes important from the very beginning of the story. The mystery of Mukul's memories of his past life and the search for the golden fort are presented through Topse's point of view. At different points in the narrative, Topse records small incidents and conversations that later become important to the investigation. He notices Feluda's interest in Mukul's drawings and carefully describes the people they meet during the journey, even though he himself does not yet understand why these details matter. As the journey continues, Topse carefully records Feluda's actions, observations, and deductions. However, Topse does not always understand the full meaning behind Feluda's reasoning at that moment. This

limited knowledge creates suspense and keeps the reader curious. As a result, Feluda's intelligence appears even more impressive because it is seen through Topse's incomplete understanding.

Another important aspect of Topse's narration in *Sonar Kella* is the sense of admiration with which he describes Feluda. Topse often notices Feluda's sharp observation, confidence, and quick decision-making. During the journey, Feluda's ability to connect small details and arrive at important conclusions makes a strong impression on Topse. For example, Topse is impressed by Feluda's ability to draw conclusions from seemingly unimportant details and by the confidence with which he approaches difficult situations. Even ordinary observations made by Feluda appear extraordinary to Topse because he is unable to see the complete picture at that moment. This admiration is important because it also influences the reader. Through Topse's eyes, Feluda appears as a figure of exceptional intelligence and discipline.

In *Joi Baba Felunath*, Topse's narrative role becomes even more significant because the story contains not only mystery but also danger and tension. Topse actively accompanies Feluda during the investigation and remains close to him even in dangerous situations. He carefully observes the people around them and records the tension that develops during the case. His presence allows the reader to experience the investigation and its dangers directly. The theft of the idol and the investigation that follows are experienced through Topse's narration. In several situations, Topse records Feluda's calm and controlled behaviour, especially when dealing with difficult or threatening circumstances. This becomes more visible in contrast to Topse's own fear and uncertainty. As a result, Feluda's authority becomes stronger in the eyes of the reader.

The relationship between Feluda and Topse also adds an important emotional dimension to the stories. Unlike Ajit's relationship with Byomkesh, Topse's relationship with Feluda often carries a sense of guidance and learning. Topse not only observes Feluda but also learns from him. This makes Feluda appear not just as a detective, but also as someone whose knowledge and experience influence those around him. This aspect gives Feluda's character a wider significance within the narrative.

Topse also functions as a bridge between Feluda and the reader. His questions, doubts, and reactions often create moments where Feluda explains his reasoning. These moments are important because they make Feluda's method of investigation clearer to the reader. At the same time, Topse's limited understanding helps to preserve suspense until the final solution is revealed. His presence becomes particularly important in several situations. He records Feluda's conversations with witnesses, observes his reactions to suspicious behaviour, and describes the atmosphere of danger that surrounds the investigation. These moments make the detective process more engaging because the reader experiences the mystery through Topse's perspective rather than through Feluda's direct explanations. In this way, his narrative role becomes essential to the structure of the detective story.

Although Topse functions as the narrator, his knowledge always remains limited in comparison to Feluda. He can observe Feluda's actions and record his deductions, but he does not always understand the complete reasoning behind them at the same moment. There are several occasions when Topse is unable to understand the real significance of Feluda's observations. In *Sonar Kella*, he often fails to understand why Feluda pays attention to certain details during the journey. Similarly, in *Joi Baba Felunath*, he remains unaware of the complete reasoning behind Feluda's decisions until the final explanation is given. This limitation is important because it controls the flow of information in the narrative and keeps the mystery alive for the reader. Since the reader receives information through Topse's perspective, Feluda's final explanation often appears more powerful and convincing. Thus, Topse's limited narration becomes central to the construction of Feluda's authority.

Therefore, Topse's role in the Feluda stories is much more than that of a simple companion. As narrator, observer, and participant, he contributes directly to the construction of Feluda's authority. His admiration, curiosity, and limited knowledge shape the reader's perception of the detective. It can be seen that Feluda's authority in these stories is not presented independently, but is carefully built through Topse's narration and perspective.

VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AJIT AND TOPSE AS COMPANION NARRATORS IN BENGALI DETECTIVE FICTION

Although Ajit and Topse belong to different detective worlds created by different authors, both function as significant companion narrators who shape the reader's understanding of the detective. In the Byomkesh stories of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay and the Feluda stories of Satyajit Ray, the detective is rarely presented directly through his own voice. Instead, the reader encounters the detective through the observations, reactions, and interpretations of companion figures. As a result, Ajit and Topse become structurally important in shaping detective authority within Bengali detective fiction.

One major similarity between Ajit and Topse is their limited narrative position. Neither narrator possesses complete knowledge of the detective's reasoning during the investigation. In *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham*, Ajit often remains confused about Byomkesh's deductions until the final explanation is given. Similarly, in *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath*, Topse carefully observes Feluda's actions but does not immediately understand the logic behind them. This restricted perspective controls the flow of information and preserves suspense for the reader. Since the reader receives information through the companion narrator, the detective's final explanation appears more impressive and convincing.

Another similarity lies in the sense of admiration present in their narration. Both Ajit and Topse describe the detective with respect and intellectual admiration. Ajit frequently expresses surprise at Byomkesh's analytical ability and calm judgement, while Topse presents Feluda as disciplined, observant, and mentally sharp. Through their narrative voice, the detective gradually becomes larger than ordinary characters within the story. The reader's perception of the detective is therefore strongly influenced by the emotional responses of these narrators.

Despite these similarities, there are also notable differences between Ajit and Topse. Ajit's relationship with Byomkesh gradually develops into a mature friendship based on companionship and emotional closeness. In several stories, Ajit becomes

closely connected to Byomkesh's personal and domestic life, especially through his interactions with Satyabati. These moments create a sense of familiarity within the narrative and present Byomkesh as both an intellectual figure and an ordinary human being. Ajit's narration therefore often carries emotional warmth alongside admiration.

In the Byomkesh stories, Ajit's closeness to Byomkesh becomes especially visible after the introduction of Satyabati into the narrative. Ajit is not presented merely as an outsider observing the detective; rather, he gradually becomes part of Byomkesh's personal life and domestic environment. His conversations with Satyabati and his familiarity with the household create a sense of intimacy within the stories. These scenes become meaningful because they present Byomkesh not only as an intellectual detective figure but also as a socially connected human being. Through Ajit's narration, the reader gains access to this more personal dimension of Byomkesh's character.

In contrast, Topse's relationship with Feluda is shaped more strongly by guidance and observation. Topse often appears as a younger learner who watches Feluda carefully and attempts to understand his methods. In many situations, Topse remains comparatively quiet and observes Feluda's actions before reacting to them. This silence becomes structurally meaningful because it increases the sense of control and confidence associated with Feluda's character. Unlike Ajit, who sometimes participates in emotional and personal conversations, Topse usually maintains a more observational role within the narrative.

On the other hand, Topse often maintains a quieter narrative presence in the Feluda stories. In several moments of *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath*, he carefully observes Feluda's behaviour without immediately interrupting or questioning him. During tense situations, Topse's silence and attention allow Feluda's confidence and authority to become more visible. Instead of creating emotional familiarity in the way Ajit does, Topse's narration often strengthens the image of Feluda as a composed and controlled detective figure.

The difference between the two narrators can also be seen in the atmosphere they create around the

detective figures. Ajit's narration often produces a reflective and intimate atmosphere where Byomkesh appears thoughtful and emotionally grounded. Topse's narration, on the other hand, frequently creates movement, excitement, and adventure, which suits the structure of the Feluda stories. Through Topse's narration, Feluda appears modern, energetic, and action-oriented. Thus, although both narrators help in shaping detective authority, the nature of that authority differs according to the narrative voice through which it is presented.

Another important point of comparison lies in the role played by suspense within the narratives. Since Ajit and Topse both possess incomplete knowledge, suspense is maintained until the detective reveals the final truth. However, the emotional effect of this suspense differs in the two narrative worlds. In the Byomkesh stories, suspense is often connected with psychological tension and careful reflection, whereas in the Feluda stories suspense is frequently linked with adventure, danger, and movement across different locations. The companion narrators contribute significantly to creating these different narrative tones.

Therefore, Ajit and Topse cannot be viewed merely as assistants to the detective. Their narrative presence shapes the reader's understanding of the detective's intelligence, personality, and authority. Through admiration, limited narration, emotional response, and observation, they actively participate in presenting the detective figure within Bengali detective fiction. At the same time, the differences between them reveal how narrative perspective can influence the overall tone and structure of detective narratives.

VII. THE ABSENCE OF FEMALE COMPANION FIGURES IN BENGALI DETECTIVE FICTION

The discussion of Ajit and Topse as companion narrators also raises an important question regarding Bengali detective fiction. While male companions occupy a significant position in the narratives of detectives such as Byomkesh and Feluda, there are very few recognised female companion figures who perform a similar role. This absence can be observed in many Bengali detective stories and is not limited to

the works of a particular author. This absence is significant because companion figures play an important role in shaping the reader's understanding of the detective and his authority.

Studies on Bengali detective fiction have pointed out that the genre has historically been dominated by male characters and male perspectives. Although women appear in many stories, they are often presented as victims, witnesses, suspects, family members, or supporting characters rather than active participants in the process of investigation. As a result, they rarely receive the narrative importance given to companion figures such as Ajit and Topse. The detective and his companion usually remain at the centre of the action, while female characters occupy a more limited position within the narrative.

This tendency can be observed in the Byomkesh stories of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay. Satyabati is an important character in Byomkesh's personal life and contributes to the domestic dimension of the stories. However, she does not function as an investigative companion in the same way that Ajit does. Ajit accompanies Byomkesh during investigations, observes his methods, records events, and presents the detective's reasoning to the reader. Satyabati, despite her importance within the narrative, remains outside this particular role. In this way, Ajit becomes more important in shaping the reader's understanding of Byomkesh than any female character in the stories.

A similar pattern can be found in the Feluda stories of Satyajit Ray. Female characters appear only occasionally and usually play a limited role in the development of the investigation. The narrative is centred on the relationship between Feluda, Topse, and in many stories Jatayu. Through this all-male companionship, the reader experiences the mystery, the adventure, and the process of detection. Since Topse serves as narrator and observer, he becomes essential to the construction of Feluda's authority. No female character is given a comparable narrative position within the stories.

The presence of Jatayu in the Feluda stories also makes the absence of female companion figures more noticeable. Alongside Feluda and Topse, Jatayu becomes another recurring male presence within the narrative. As a result, the world of the investigation

remains largely male-centred. The presence of a female companion figure could have introduced a different perspective into the detective narrative and would have made the world of investigation less exclusively patriarchal. Such a character might have responded to events, danger, and investigation in ways different from the established male companions. However, despite the inclusion of both a younger companion like Topse and an older companion like Jatayu, no comparable female figure is given a similarly significant role. This absence further reflects the tendency of Bengali detective fiction to rely on male companionship as the primary narrative framework.

The absence of female companion figures is also connected to the broader history of Bengali juvenile and adventure literature. Many adventure and detective narratives were originally written for young readers and often celebrated the image of the brave, intelligent, and adventurous Bengali boy. These stories frequently presented journeys, dangers, mysteries, and heroic actions as male experiences. Within such a framework, male friendships and companionships became central to the narrative structure. As a result, women were often placed outside the spaces where adventure and investigation took place.

The importance given to male companionship can be seen in the recurring partnerships that appear throughout Bengali detective fiction. Byomkesh and Ajit, Feluda and Topse, Jayanta and Manik, and several other detective pairs demonstrate how the detective genre repeatedly relies on male companions to support, observe, and narrate the detective's actions. These partnerships help to establish trust, admiration, and authority around the detective figure. As a result, women rarely receive the same narrative importance that companion figures such as Ajit and Topse receive.

Another important point is that the absence of female companion narrators affects the reader's perspective. Since most investigations are narrated through male companions, the reader experiences the detective world primarily through a male point of view. Questions, observations, reactions, and interpretations are therefore filtered through male narrators. This creates a narrative tradition in which

masculine experience becomes the dominant mode of understanding crime, investigation, and detection.

Therefore, the absence of recognised female companion figures in Bengali detective fiction is not simply the result of individual authorial choices. It can be seen that Bengali detective fiction has traditionally given greater importance to male detectives and male companion figures. Because of this, recognised female companion narrators remain largely absent from the genre. The central roles played by Ajit and Topse demonstrate how companion narrators contribute to the construction of detective authority. At the same time, the limited presence of comparable female figures reveals an important gender imbalance within the genre. The study of companion narrators therefore not only highlights the significance of Ajit and Topse but also draws attention to the absence of female voices in the narrative structure of Bengali detective fiction.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to explore the role of companion narrators in Bengali detective fiction and their contribution to the construction of detective authority. Through the analysis of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's *Satyanweshi* and *Arthamanartham*, and Satyajit Ray's *Sonar Kella* and *Joi Baba Felunath*, it becomes clear that the detective is not presented independently within the narrative. Instead, the reader encounters the detective through the observations, interpretations, and emotional responses of companion figures such as Ajit and Topse. Their narrative presence plays an important role in shaping the reader's understanding of the detective's intelligence, personality, and authority.

The study has shown that both Ajit and Topse function as more than simple assistants within the plot. As narrators, they control the movement of information, preserve suspense, and influence the reader's perception of the detective. Their limited knowledge becomes structurally important because it allows the detective's final explanation to appear more convincing and authoritative. At the same time, their admiration and trust contribute to the image of the detective as an exceptional figure within the narrative.

The comparative analysis of Ajit and Topse also reveals important differences in narrative style and atmosphere. Ajit's narration often creates emotional closeness and reflective depth within the Byomkesh stories, while Topse's narration contributes to the sense of movement, adventure, and controlled excitement found in the Feluda narratives. These differences demonstrate how narrative perspective influences not only the detective figure but also the overall tone and structure of detective fiction.

By combining narrative theory with close textual analysis, this study has attempted to shift attention from the detective alone to the narrative process through which detective authority is constructed. The study therefore suggests that companion narrators should not be viewed as secondary figures but as active participants in constructing detective authority, as their presence is essential to the development of Bengali detective fiction.

The study also draws attention to the absence of recognised female companion figures in mainstream Bengali detective fiction. While companion narrators such as Ajit and Topse play an important role in shaping detective authority, comparable female companions rarely occupy a similar narrative position. It can be seen that Bengali detective fiction has traditionally given greater importance to male detectives and male companion figures. This absence highlights an important gender dimension within the genre and indicates a possible area for future research on narration, gender, and detective fiction in Bengali literature.

This approach may also open a broader direction for future studies on Bengali detective fiction and Bengali literary culture. By focusing on narrative perspective and companion narration, detective fiction can be understood from a different critical position beyond the detective's intelligence alone. Such a reading creates the possibility of viewing Bengali detective fiction not only as popular mystery literature, but also as an important narrative form shaped by relationships, perspective, and storytelling structure. In this way, the study attempts to contribute to a comparatively less explored area in Bengali detective fiction and suggests a new critical perspective through which Bengali literary culture

and detective narratives may be understood in greater depth.

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