

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.4., 2017 (Oct-Dec)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

POETIC JUSTICE IN ASHOK KUMAR BANKER'S *MURDER AND CHAMPAGNE*

Prof. Dr. A.R. UMA RAMAMOORTHY

Research Centre in English, Saraswathi Narayanan College (Autonomous), Madurai – 625022

E-mail: umasnc70@gmail.com



Prof. Dr. A.R. UMA
RAMAMOORTHY

ABSTRACT

Crime fiction promotes moral values and poetic justice. Crime fiction exactly depicts the human's hidden mind and his consequent fall and through which it alerts the other human beings to correct their corrupt nature. Therefore, in a sense, crime fiction serves as a tragedy which aims at as Aristotle states "catharsis". "Poetic Justice in Ashok Kumar Banker's *Murder and Champagne* " discusses Ashok Banker's frank portrayal of showbiz world and for which his *Murder and Champagne* (1993) is taken for the study. The showbiz world is so corrupt due to competition, jealousy and TRB (Time Review Bureau) fever of the media and that almost dehumanize human beings. The media superstar, Don Rich needs to host a grand programme in India. The TV channel proprietor, Tom Johnson wants to gain more TRB rate for the programme and so he along with his TV anchors namely Don Rich and Sonia M plans to execute a murder-drama of Don Rich during the programme. But much to his surprise Don Rich (Saul) is really killed by a murderer hired by Sonia because she could not digest Don Rich's professional growth. Don Rich who smelt Sonia's plan baited the innocent Saul Ezekiel who resembles him and ultimately Saul is killed for the mistaken identity.

Devika and Arun, the celebrities of the programme investigate the murder like detectives. They find out the murderer and the plans of Tom, Sonia and Don Rich. Like any other crime novel in this novel also murder is committed and the killer and motive of the murder are reasoned out. But Ashok Banker like the celebrated crime novelists namely Agatha Christie, Ian Rankin, Conan Doyle, wants to establish poetic justice. So he has made his character, Carol Miranda who is the lover of Saul Ezekiel to kill Don Rich. Don Rich perhaps relishes his escaped condition prior to the death trap. Certainly, Don Rich thinks that he is an omnipotent but ultimately faces his end for the sin.

KEY TERMS: catharsis, detective, poetic justice, showbiz, omnipotent, dehumanize, Time Review Bureau (TRB) & celebrities

INTRODUCTION

Ashok Banker, a prolific writer, contributing to the growth of Indian English literature, has ventured into almost all the genres of literature. He is known in the literary arena of India due to his contributions of crime fictions. His works neatly capture the multiple layers of Indian life from the epic period. As he has an eagle-eye view on all the strata of life, his crime fiction naturally haunts the minds of the readers. Adhering to

the tenets of poetic justice, he has produced his crime fictions with minute details. Indian writers contributing to Indian English literature neglect the subject – crime fiction in their works but Banker has artistically and imaginatively contributed to the genre. Even though many novelists of US and UK tried their pens in this branch, Ashok Banker is unique, because his crime fiction counts the tick and tock of the clock from the beginning to the end.

The readers get thrilled, surprised and excited when they read the events that are delineated by Banker with precision. The readers also find an establishment of poetic justice at the end of all the novels. In fact, this provides a great satisfaction to the readers as the novelist has done good to the society – offering justice through his fictions. Still Banker's fictional works escape from didactic overtone. Hence it is necessary to find the meanings for poetic justice and didactic literature in this context. In Abram's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* poetic justice is explained thus:

Poetic justice was a term coined by Thomas Rymer, an English critic of the later seventeenth century, to signify the distribution, at the end of a literary work, of earthly rewards and punishments in proportion to the virtue or vice of the various characters. Rymer's view was that a poem (in a sense that includes dramatic tragedy) is an ideal realm of its own, and should be governed by ideal principles of decorum and morality and not by the random way things often work out in the real world. No important critics or literary writers since Rymer's day have acceded, in any but a highly qualified way, to his rigid recommendation of poetic justice; it would, for example, destroy the possibility of tragic suffering, which exceeds what the protagonist has deserved because of his or her tragic flaw. (230)

The didactic literature means:

The adjective 'didactic', which means 'intended to give instruction', is applied to works of literature that are designed to expound a branch of knowledge or else to embody, in imaginative or fictional form, a moral, religious or philosophical doctrine or theme.... (Abrams 65)

DISCUSSION

Ashok Banker in *Murder and Champagne* (1993) brings out the glittering world of showbiz to narrate a story of murder and revenge. Keeping suspense in every page of it, he has made power and evil permeates throughout the novel. Like a superhero Don Rich has omnipotent-power in his hand. Using the power and popularity, he surrogates an innocent man, Saul Ezekiel, who exactly resembles him, in the grand show, in order to escape from a planned murder. And in turn Don Rich is killed by Carol who loves Saul. In fact, all these incidents are captured in a live show – 'Rich and Beautiful Champagne Party Nite' by a famous TV channel SST which has its headquarter in Seattle, Washington. A critical comment appeared on the book cover neatly sums up the theme of the novels thus:

Set in the glittering world of showbiz, the murder takes place before the champagne bottle is uncorked. Blood then flows out... more of blood than champagne, in a lethal potion of headless, tailless, and heartless sentences. (Book cover)

The novel opens in a glittering showbiz party. As the party is hosted by the world number one megastar, Don Rich, it has been arranged in a big five star hotel called Premier Hotel in Mumbai. The programme is being captured by the world famous TV channel, SST and telecast as a live-programme. The TV channel members arrange the cameras in various places and in various angles in order to capture even the small details of the show. All the important stars and celebrities come in their "Rolls-Royces, Mercedes, Mazdas, BMWs, Dailmers, Volves, Standard 2000s, and Maruti 1000s" (MAC 7). They dressed in various costumes ranging from suit to Kanjivaram silks. They are in could-nine. Some of them stand here and there and some other are found in their respective seats. It seems that the focus lights blind them with their florescent beams. Probably more than one thousand V.I.P.s assembled in the lobby of the Premier Hotel.

The chief guest of the party, Don Rich has booked a suite in the ninth floor of the hotel and drinks glasses of whisky while the guest are waiting in the lobby of the hotel, because it has been planned that he must appear before them according to the countdown of time and exactly at 6 o'clock. He rehearses the first statement, "Welcome to the fun-house, dearies" (MAC 8). Then he dresses himself with a costly Rhineston jacket. When he prepares himself for the show, the TV channel's hosts and cameramen once again adjust the

cameras and monitors to capture the event exactly. The banner stuck on the TV channel van bears the words, "THE RICH AND BEAUTIFUL CHAMPAGNE MYSTERY NITE HOSTED BY DON RICH" (MAC 9). The dish on the top of the van receives the signals from the cameras and sends them to the satellite connected to it. There are many TV monitors placed in various places that display the events that take place in the hotel. A blonde American woman, Linda sitting before the TV monitor placed in the van, gives comments to camera-men and -women. She shouts at the Cameraman 2 to adjust his camera to capture the entry of Don Rich. It is time for Don to appear as the countdown starts. But one of the cameramen informs Linda that Don got angry when he called him over intercom. He said, "he'd slide off my mammaries with a blunt blade if I called him in his room again" (MAC 13).

Carol Miranda is the lobby manager of the hotel. Fortunately, she sights at a man standing before the reception desk. She calls him by his name, Saul Ezekiel. He turns and looks at her. But he cannot recognize her. And then he goes towards the lift to reach his allotted room. The arrangement for the big show does not attract her though it is the first biggest event that takes place in the hotel since its inauguration. She wonders at Saul's perplexed expression. She inquires, "why Saul Ezekiel, the man with whom she had spent two of the most wonderful weeks of her life in America last year, has refused to recognize her a few minutes ago" (MAC 15).

Devika and Arun Manthania are also invited to attend the Champagne Party. Devika, a film star in Bollywood, has trained herself to control her emotions during interviews. The reporters usually dart her with provocative questions but she shows a calm countenance and offers polite answer to all those questions and especially in the interview which she gave when her father died. Sometime the reporters write sensational news about her affair with the heroes with whom she acts. But in the world of Bollywood, she is generally known as an actress who is still virgin even in her twenties. However, she has contempt for Don Rich for the reason that he has spoilt her name and fame.

Arun Manthania, a twenty-six year old scion of one of the five richest families in India, sitting in the bar – Captain's Cabin, of Premier Hotel, orders for more beer. He has already finished six bottles. When the waiter looks at him with confusion, he changes his mind and orders for whisky in triple quantity, because he suddenly realizes that he has no time to go round after rounds. The waiter notices that he watches the time – 14.8 hrs on the monitor of his mobile phone. Arun decides that he has to complete the task before 6 p.m. But the number 14.8 disturbs him a lot. It reminds him of his recent loss of 14.8 million in the stock market: "Almost precisely the sum is Company Reserves for the company he was personally responsible for. A little more than four times the net profit of the same firm" (MAC 17). After the drink, he goes to the lift and presses the 'UP' button. He finds that Don Rich is standing inside the lift and he also gets into the lift before it closes.

The people of Seattle are eagerly waiting for the biggest live show and so Linda the director of the programme receives phone calls from Seattle often. Linda explains Tom Johnson (Tom Thumb), the owner of the SNN TV channel, Seattle that Don Rich has his own make-up kit and he has brought his own water supply because he does not like Indian products. She also explains that the cameras capture the happenings that take place in and around the lobby and the hotel premises. Linda gets surprised and shocked when Tom states her that "he's (Don Rich) going to try to kill him" (MAC 22). Then the television crew, Linda, Lee and Lou get confused and they wonder what plan does Don Rich conceive in his mind? However, Linda concludes "And let's just hope he doesn't decide to do it until the intros are over" (MAC 22).

Don Rich and Arun step out of the elevator. Arun looks so dull. So Don Rich pats on Arun's back and states that everything will pass away due to the roll of time. And then Don Rich reaches to Rooftop Regatta, at where the world's first biggest showbiz show takes place, while Arun enters into the ladies toilet thinking that it is men's toilet. Arun curses himself for being handicapped before Don Rich even though he has contempt for Don Rich. In the washroom, he looks at his face on the mirror and angrily shouts, "Damn you, Don Rich, Damn you to hell" (MAC 26). Hearing the words of Arun a lady from one of the wash rooms echoes "I second that.... Damn Don Rich to goddamn hell" (MAC 26). The voice and the words of the lady bring Arun back to his consciousness and he realizes that he is standing in the ladies' restroom. But the words of the lady surprised him.

The expecting moment has arrived. All the V.I.P.s and V.V.I.P.s have already assembled in the Rooftop Regatta. The cameras operated by Lin, Lou and Lee are busy in capturing the events with minute details. Linda sitting in the van sends the video to the SNN in Seattle through the dish kept on the top of the van. The live show is being watched by two billion peoples of the world. The hotel manager, Ashutosh Mitra is so anxious about the neat conduct of the show as it is the first biggest show since the inauguration of the hotel: "This was the moment, most crucial moment of his career. The pivot of his entire hoteliering life. The event of the year. The guest list to beat all guest lists" (MAC 27). He requests the guests to take their respective seats because as per the countdown in two minutes time the host, Don Rich arrives. The guests are eagerly looking at the doorway to watch the arrival of Don Rich. Meanwhile, Mitra instructs the audiences, "Please don't touch your champagne glasses until the host picks his up for the toast. The waiters will now fill your glasses. I repeat, wait until the host, Mr. Don Rich, raises the toast" (MAC 29).

Arun identifies Devika's inner fury when she says that she also wishes for the death of Don Rich. Then they realize that they are late to the programme as the countdown starts. So hurriedly they enter into the Rooftop Regatta and take seats which are meant for someone else. The next minute Don Rich appears before the cheering crowd of the restaurant. The giant screen behind Mitra comes alive and Sonia M, the anchor of the programme announces, "Good evening and welcome to this super-exclusive edition of Rich and Beautiful.... I take you, then, to the one and only Don Rich, hosting tonight the show of shows, the Rich and Beautiful Champagne Mystery Nite!" (MAC 33).

Don Rich raises the glass brimmed with champagne. The celebrities also raise the champagne glasses like Don Rich in the air in order to show their happiness. Arun holds his glass steadily. Devika smiles painfully and holds the glass: "From her expression he understood at once that she didn't drink any alcohol not even champagne on a special occasion" (MAC 22). Now on the television screen Don Rich's face is beaming and he states, "I'm Don Rich and you're beautiful" (MAC 35). Then he welcomes the gathering and asks them to drink for India. Now all the celebrities drink the champagne from their glasses. Don Rich quaffs the glass and tosses it back over his right shoulder which is deftly caught by his assistant. Tossing glasses is his unique style. But in a few minutes Don Rich drops down on the ground before the eyes of the two billion people of the world as if he is dead.

Many, like Carol Miranda think that the dead-scene is enacted by Don Rich to create sensation to the show. And many other think that Don Rich is really dead. Somebody call for the doctor and some other call for the police. In fact, the doctor and the police are found in the celebrity crowd. Many start moving towards Don Rich's body which is lying in the pit. Ashutosh Mitra and some waiters do not know what to do. Arun Manthania moves towards Don Rich but a voice coming behind him warns him that he should not touch the body. It is Police Commissioner Mehra. He orders to fetch the hotel doctor. Dr. G. Patel, the criminal attorney is also found near Arun. Editor, Guha stands near the attorney. Doctor, Kalwachia from the crowd goes near the body. Now the corpse is surrounded by Mitra, Arun, Mehra, Patel, Guha and Kalwachia. Dr. Kalwachia checks the pulse of the body and announces that Don Rich is dead due to arsenic poison.

The police and the lawyer wonder how it could be possible for Don Rich to swallow arsenic before the eyes of millions of audiences. Arun guesses and tells that Don could have mixed arsenic with the champagne and drank it. Then they question, "why did he choose to do it here and now?" (MAC 52). Mitra then raises a doubt saying as everybody drank the same champagne and how it was possible for Don Rich to mix arsenic poison. However, Guha and Mitra strongly believe that it was impossible for Don Rich to consume poison while everyone was watching him keenly. They are also doubtful about the closed door of the restaurant and the inactive phone lines. The Rooftop Regatta is isolated from the rest of the hotel. But Arun states that they are not cut off from the world as the TV channel connects them to the world: "It was displaying an image of the seven of them clustered around Don Rich's corpse. We've just become the stars of the show' he quipped" (MAC 54).

Sonia M announces from the SNN studio in Seattle that "tragedy has struck tonight on the Rich and Beautiful show hosted by Don Rich" (MAC 55). Still she requests the audience in the Rooftop Regatta to sit quietly to carry out the show further. She informs the audiences through the big screen that Don Rich has already predicted his death before he left for India and so he wrote a letter about it and sent it to her. She also

states that she acts as per the instructions given on the envelope – Don Rich wrote that if something happened to him in India, Sonia had to read the content of the letter. Therefore, she reads the letter to the audience of the world:

‘Prayashchitta is the Hindu word for atonement. Traditionally, it refers to a ritualistic process by which the sinner purifies his soul. As you all know, I’ve always been a deeply moral man at heart – ‘.... One of these individuals about whom I have learned more than was perhaps proper for me to have known, has decided to kill me. He is an Indian. He will almost certainly kill me in Bombay.... I have seven names. One of them is my murderer-to-be. (MAC 63)

The president of the SNN TV Seattle New Network, Tom Johnson suddenly appears on the screen. He says that Don Rich predicted that he might be killed by someone, who is now among the celebrities in the Rooftop Regatta. So he requests the audience to find out the culprit and make him stand before the court of law. Then Tom picks up a sheet of paper from Sonia M and reads the seven names from it: “D.G. Patel Attorney, Ashish Mehra, Police Commissioner; Dilip Guha, Editor; Johnny Pande, Film-maker; Behram Kalwachia, Doctor; Ashutosh Mitra, Hotelier and Arun Manthania, Businessman” (MAC 64-65). Hearing the names, the audiences become dumb in shock. Many drop their champagne glasses. The men mentioned in Don Rich’s letter are also shocked. Arun, who is much confused and stunned by the words of Tom Johnson madly states “... that one of us,... murdered Don Rich. If so, then this is certainly the craziest, flakiest, murder ever committed” (MAC 68).

Arun, then comes to his consciousness and decides that his first duty is to find out how Don Rich was killed. He states that it needs the help of Dr. Kalwachia to examine whether Don Rich is really dead; the investigation of the murder must be carried out by Mehra; the legal minded Patel is needed to probe into the matter; Mitra is needed to find out the means and ways of the murder and finally Pande is needed to recall precisely where was everyone in the room when the murder took place. Above all Guha and Arun should collate all the findings and apply all the theories to trace the method that the murderer has used. Hearing Arun’s statements one of the women from the audience questions, ‘how can the suspects investigate themselves?’ Meanwhile a man from the spectator group scolds at them using derogatory terms. Suddenly someone from the celebrities group comes down and stands in the pit. Arun turns to look at her and he finds that the lady is Devika. She consoles him saying, ‘stay brave’.

Devika, then, addresses the crowd. She feels sorry of the ironical event that took place in the restaurant. She speaks on giving evidences from Hindi and English movies. Her speech makes the audiences to accept her views. Even Arun wonders at the power of her intuitive and investigative brain. She then elaborates that the murderer has done some homework to execute this plan before the eyes of two billion people. Hearing Devika’s statement Guha asks her whether the murder was committed to create media-hype and also he complains that no media commits such a grave-thing for its popularity. Therefore, Devika walks towards the dead body and pulls the table cloth that covered it. She angrily states:

“Even at a preliminary glance, I’d venture
two possibilities....”

“One, this man isn’t really dead. And two,
he isn’t Don Rich.” (MAC 79)

Confused by the speculation of Devika, Arun states that the first doubt of Devika can be set aside because Dr. Kalwachia has examined the corpse and declared that the person is dead. But Devika cross-questions the doctor and makes everyone to accept that Don Rich was not poisoned by arsenic. Meanwhile Mehra speculates that the man was dead due to a stroke. Devika brushes aside his point of view. She then states: “Suppose we assume that Don Rich wasn’t poisoned after all. That in fact he isn’t even dead. That in fact he isn’t even dead. That in fact that alleged corpse over there isn’t even Don Rich. Then we –” (MAC 83).

Devika, finally arrives to a conclusion that it is a death-drama which has been played by media. All the seven accused men and the audience then expect Devika to reason out who is that man and whether Don is really dead. Arun immediately comes for the rescue of Devika and states that some drug can stimulate death-like trance condition. Hence the doctor examines the dead body and strongly believes that Don Rich is dead and cold. Devika further insists that the doctor should examine the body still further. Then the doctor and Arun find a red spot at the left underarm of the dead body and the doctor declares that it looks like a hole

caused by piercing a bicycle spoke – “very popular murder weapon in South Africa” (MAC 87). Devika also explains that there is a possibility of inserting the spoke into the victim and makes him survive for a few more minutes. She suspects that the spoke was pierced into Don Rich’s on the way to the restaurant, probably in the elevator. Then she herself brushes aside her statement and states that the spoke was not inserted into Don Rich’s in the lift, since both Arun and herself were in the lift with Don Rich: “Only him and me and no one else. We even talked” (MAC 94).

The hypothesis of Devika supports by Pande’s conclusion – there are two Don Rich(s). It is concluded by Pande that there are two Don Rich(s) and two witnesses – one is Devika and another is Arun. But Pande’s suggestion of making a psycho-autopsy is criticized by the doctor who feels that the test may not be a useful one as the dead is suspected for its identity. Pande also speculates that either Arun or Devika would be the killer because they could have probably affected by Don Rich in one way or the other. Sensing Pande’s mind, Devika immediately puts the blame on Arun by raising a question whether Arun has killed Don Rich for some personal reason. Watching all these conversation, comments and arguments of the seven suspects and Devika, the TV viewers and the celebrities in the Rooftop Regatta get confused.

Meanwhile the TV crew namely Lin, Lou and Lee in the channel van parked outside the hotel discuss many unwanted events and also the interest and interference of Devika in the matter. Sonia M also feels bitter about Devika’s intrusion, as there is no part of Devika in the script of death-drama, originally planned by her, Don Rich, and Tom Johnson. Lin suspects that Don Rich is really murdered and she slumps in Lee’s arms. Lee consoles her saying:

But Don wasn’t really dead; that body up there was just an actor playing Don, wasn’t it? And even that actor wasn’t really dead; he was just acting brilliantly.... He couldn’t really be Don. No way. Don was somewhere in the hotel, watching the whole circus on a tube and laughing at the mayhem he’d wrought? Wasn’t he? (MAC 108)

Carol Miranda, at the other part of the hotel follows a person who could not recognize her. She is one of the best in the IIM, Ahmadabad and hotel management student who got appointment in Premier Hotel, a number one five-star hotel in Mumbai. She was sent to France to get rigorous training in hotel management. There, she met Saul Ezekiel and fell in love with him. He was a successful off-Broadway actor. He had a lucky break when he had landed a plum role in an American Playhouse movie. Seeing a very handsome man, Carol’s lust and not her love spread throughout her body. Then she slept with him every night and she had learned as much about sex as about hotel management. This proximity between them turned into love. They started loving each other. However, she returned to India in a belief and as promised by him, he would keep in touch with her. Carol now seeing Saul Ezekiel gets excited. But Saul could not recognize her. So she follows him upto his room, 217. She knocks at the door but there is no reply. Hearing the knocking sound the tenants of other rooms come out and look at her in suspicion. In fact, they are talking about the murder that took place in the restaurant. Carol could not understand what they are talking about. So she uses the staff passkey and opens the door of room, 217. She goes into it and shuts it from inside.

Meanwhile, in Seattle, Tom Johnson is over rejoiced about the success of the show, except the real murder. Sonia M, on the screen asks the audience to untie the puzzle in Don Rich’s death. Then, she plays a video tape which was sent by Don Rich before he boarded on the flight to India. The video tape shows the face of Arun Manthania and in the background Don Rich speaks:

“Hi, I’m Don Rich and you’re beautiful!”

“I have some good news and some bad news....”

“The good news is that almost everyone watching this tape is going to get a treat.... “The bad news is that two people aren’t going to enjoy this.”

“Anil Manthania, Mr. Corporate Integrity, didn’t like it when I asked him to respond to rumours that he was manipulating the stock market,...

The grapevine suggest theories ranging from (1) his masterminding an international financial scam which necessitated this apparently dubious move in order to reap a large gains at the end of the read; to (2) a simple death wish.... Arun Manthania, himself may have had a hand in precipitating the

imminent collapse of the Manthania empire, possibly as a means of revenging himself on a father, who he once claimed was directly responsible for his mother's suicide.... (MAC 122-32).

Don Rich, on the video tape also talks about Devika. Though Devika is addressed as virgin heroine in her thirties, she is not so. Don Rich reveals the secret about her. He states that she once slept with Johnny Pande and became pregnant. When she asked him to marry her, he simply denied her saying that he already had a family. So she aborted the child and evolved out as if a virgin heroine. She knows that this secret is known only to her. But much to her surprise Don Rich, the senior journalist throws light on this hidden secret. So she heavily feels insulted. Arun clutches the hands of Devika and wants to go out of the restaurant. But the doors of it were closed from outside. All the people of the world come to a conclusion that the murder was committed by either Arun or Devika. Then Patel states, "And by telling us about this terrible instrument and method of murder, naturally she hoped to prove her an innocence" (MAC 140).

However, much to the surprise of everyone the doors of the restaurant fly open and Carol Miranda walks into it. She goes nearer the dead Don Rich and removes the table cloth. The she confirms about his death and in between sobs she states, "You killed my Saul...You killed Saul Ezekiel' who was also an American actor exactly resembled Don Rich... but it's time he always had a fantastic resemblance to Don Rich. He got his best role in a television movie, for that reason, because he looked so much like a famous TV show host" (MAC 143). She also elaborates that she was confused, when he did not recognize her in the morning. She also had a doubt about his identity. So using the passkey she went into Saul's room situated next to Don Rich's suite. She did not find Saul there. Instead she found a new make-up kit and a script of the night's mega-show. She could not guess anything from the script because it contains only notes, exposition and briefing.

Hearing this Devika gets courage and asks Patel to arrest the killer if Carol shows him. Then, she, herself states that there are two murderers involved – one is a man and the other is a woman, in this murder as Patel stated. It was a man who closely worked with Don Rich and bore all humiliations. He might have killed Don Rich with the spoke and kept it in the ladies' toilet. Another murderer is a lady, probably Don Rich's colleague who has a professional jealousy on Don Rich or she may his ex-lover. Devika's guess is only a detective reasoning of the murder.

Arun guesses that the murderer is cameraman 4 who always accompanied him in the lift and to the show. Devika confirms Carol's words saying that the killed is not Don Rich but Saul Ezekiel because Don Rich does not have a scar on his cheek but the dead contains a big scar on his cheek and has concealed it with over-make-up. As an actor she noticed it earlier when the duplicate Don Rich entered into the restaurant since she had seen the original Don Rich very closely when once he took interview of hers. Devika, finally states that Don Rich really played the game of murder in order save himself from killing. Everyone is relieved and Arun thinks that Devika is "a real-life heroine, not just cheese cake Hindi film bimbo hamming her way through some cheap remake of an Agatha Christie or an Alfred Hitchcock" (MAC 157).

Devika now requests the police to arrest the Cameraman 4 and Sonia M who actually committed the murder. Mitra raises a question – why did the cameraman 4 killed the false Don Rich as Sonia M in Seattle scripted everything and why Saul Ezekiel was hired? Hearing it Devika's active brain works very fast and she explains that it is Don Rich, who is alive now has hired Saul to play his part in the show in order to protect himself from the murderer and to make the show popular. Don Rich who has been watching all the happenings of the restaurant now appears in Rooftop Regatta and states, "That's the last thing on Earth I would have done" (MAC 161). Now Don Rich addresses the audiences amidst the applause and cheers of them. He clutches Arun and Devika on his both sides and informs the audiences that the news found on the videotape about these two persons are fake and prepared only for the 'champagne show'.

Don Rich also appreciates them for their detective interest in finding the truth behind the murder. He feels sorry for the death of Saul, which he never expected while he was hiring him for the show. "But I promise you this, folks I'll personally sign a cheque for a hundred thousand US dollars to his next of kin" (MAC 165). Then he appreciates Arun and Devika once again and in superlative terms he states, "so I want you to give them a big hand, 'cause these are the stars of this show tonight. Arun Manthania and Devika. They are the

detectives. They didn't just solve the mystery puzzle. They solved the real mystery too! They're the stars, Me, I'm just the guest appearance!" (MAC 166).

Carol Miranda is not able to digest the murder of Saul, while others are laughing and cheering as if they are in a celebration. She cries and thinks that Don Rich, the murderer is laughing and along with him the entire world is laughing. She suspects that Don Rich had already known about Sonia's plot and therefore he hired Saul to play his part in the show. Though Don Rich is not the actual killer, he is the one who is responsible for Saul's death. However, Don Rich explains Tom over phone that "so in a way... I did kill him. I caused his death.... I committed murder, before half the world, and get away with it! Howzatt! (MAC 174) Arun and Devika sitting in their place in the restaurant count the countdown for the show to come to an end. Carol could not bear the boisterous laughter of Don Rich who celebrates his victory on the dead Saul. She clutches a champagne bottle corkscrew opener and stabs Don Rich with it, till he falls on the ground, dead: "And Don Rich dropped dead. Again" (MAC 185). She has taken revenge for her lover's death.

Ashok Banker's novels are not only the tales of suspense but also they touch issues related to true love, power, evil, good, lust, terror, injustice and so on. The theme is triumph of good over evil. The aim is that the destruction of evil power by true, selfless love and justice. The struggle with different persons who are embodiment of evil power is eternal. The seeds of evil keep on sprouting and growing and the darkness in which they flourish also continues to spread but the sources of light ultimately weed them out. His novels prepare the readers to face the difficulties related with power and evil which sometimes match with their real life. This experience makes them learn to differentiate good and evil. His novels offer an opportunity for an interesting and unique investigation of power, evil and their various representations and also how natural justice is established at the end of the novels.

Don Rich in *Murder and Champagne* is a world famous celebrity who uses his power to escape from the death trap by appointing a surrogate for him. He uses the poor Saul Ezekiel to stand in his place in the grand celebration – 'The Rich and Beautiful Champagne Mystery Nite' at a star hotel called, Premier Hotel in Mumbai. Saul who does not know the death trap accepts the offer and plays the role of Don Rich. The media hype and the money that Don Rich possesses make him to play a game of death to create sensation for the show, all over the world, as the programme is live telecast. The programme organizer, Sonia M who is in the Seattle station makes the programme more interesting using her clever broadcasting technique. The power with Don Rich, Tom Johnson and Sonia M goaded them to do such an evil act. The important celebrities namely Arun, Devika, Pande, Patel, Mehra, Dr. Kalwachia, and the cameramen - Lee and Lou and Linda and others are innocent who do not know the murder plan. But these people are used by Don Rich and Sonia M to stage the death-drama to create mass-attraction to the programme. But the death-drama ends in real murder of Don Rich's surrogate, Saul. The motive of the murder is also intelligently investigated by Devika and Arun and that becomes a turning point in the novel. This also serves suspense to the novel. Banker has maintained the suspense till the end of the novel like any other crime novelists. Therefore, it is reasonable to discuss the features of detective crime fiction here:

The detective story is a genre of fiction in which a detective, either an amateur or a professional, solves a crime or a series of crimes. With few exceptions, the crime involves one or more murders (occasionally, detective stories may revolve around spectacular thefts or blackmail, but this is rare). Because detective stories rely on logic, supernatural elements rarely come into play. The detective may be a private investigator, a policeman, an elderly widow or a young girl, but he or she generally has nothing material to gain from solving the crime.

Mystery stories, unlike police procedurals, thrillers, true crime stories, and other crime-related genres, are typically focused not on the blood, gore, and horrific details of murder but, instead, on the puzzle of an unsolved murder. While contemporary mystery writers may dwell on graphic details or graphic sex, this is still somewhat rare. In fact, most "classic" mysteries fall into the category of "nice, clean" murders in which the victim is whacked on the head, poisoned, stabbed, or otherwise killed in a single blow with little or no suffering involved. (<http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/vandine.htm>)

The ability to control others and induce fear in them enhance ego and gives a sense of self importance which is manifested not only in the character of Don Rich but also in Sonia M. Don Rich is very rich and he has popularity all over the world. Using his power he buys Saul Ezekiel who resembles him. The poor Saul who does not know the death trap immediately accepts to play a surrogate of Don Rich. But the real fact is that power has its own negative side. Power brings problems along with control and authority. It has its own set of disadvantages and abuses. It is difficult to wield it judiciously and rationally.

When power is legitimized or sanctioned, it becomes authority. The TV channel had given Sonia M to organize the programme. So she takes things for granted and solely planned to kill Don Rich during the show. She cannot digest the growth of Don Rich who is her professional partner. However, the plan of murder is very interesting and the real murder takes place before the eyes of two billion peoples of the world. If power is offered to wrong people like Sonia M and Don Rich, it will ultimately creates doom not only to the persons who hold it but also to the people who around them. Power corrupts the mind of the people. Even an empathetic person turns into an evil doer, if unlimited power is given to him. Neeta Modi while commenting the nature of power observes thus:

Studies have revealed that greater a person's power lesser, is his empathy for others. Secondly, powerful people act quickly in a given situation and help even strangers in distress promptly. They are usually creative and less susceptible to external pressures. (29)

The celebrities namely Arun Manthania, a business tycoon, but a recent failure in his business transaction; Devika, a film star and still called a virgin in her thirties; Police Commissioner, Mehra; criminal attorney, D.G. Patel; senior editor of a popular magazine, Guha; hotel manager, Ashutash Mitra; film-maker, Johnny Pande and Dr. Kalwachia do have power in their hands through their professions. Arun Manthania has recently developed hatred for Don Rich who indirectly involved himself in bringing down Arun's companies' shares and he also cast 14.8 crore loss to Arun. So he curses Don Rich and in a fit of anger wants to kill him. After taking more whisky and champagne Arun wants to go to Rooftop Regatta at where the grand champagne party takes place. On the way, he enters into a toilet and looks at his image on the mirror and then loudly shouts "Dam you, Don Rich Dam you to hell" (MAC 26).

Devika, one of the famous Bollywood actresses, has lost her popularity because of Don Rich. So she also wishes for Don Rich's death and wants him to go to the hell. The other celebrities namely Mehra, Patel, Mitra, Guha, Pande and Dr. Kalwachia are trapped in the drama of Don Rich's death though they are in no way connected to him. But their power and status trap them in the evil plot of Rich's murder. The power in one makes him soar high and causes harm to him at one situation. The same power often creates contempt in people's mind and ends in enmity. The power that the celebrities of the Rooftop Regatta possess reflects Toffler's view on power. He states that, "Power which defines us as individuals and as nations is itself being redefined" (MAC 7).

The death-drama is staged by three persons namely Don Rich, number one TV anchor; Sonia M, one of the popular anchors of SNN TV channel and Tom Johnson, the owner of SNN TV channel in Seattle. Using their celebrity status the three decide to play Don Rich's death-drama as a sensational programme. They have selected Mumbai which is India's Bollywood to execute their plan. The evil power in them makes the readers to compare them to Satan and his team members namely Mephistopheles and Beelzebub and the plan that they made in the Hell to war against god in a fair or foul mean. They work against the law of natural justice using their evil power. Some theorists believe that to do evil one must feel a certain way or should have certain emotions at the time of acting. Hence it is worth quoting the views of the theorists about evil here:

Evildoers take delight in causing harm or feel hatred towards their victims. (Thomas 76-77)

There are just two components of evil: pleasure and wrongdoing....Evil acts are wrong acts that are pleasurable for their doer. (Steiner 189)

Generally, media is called the fourth estate and it should work along the line of truth and justice. But now-a-days, many number of media-channels deviate from moral path to gain popularity. In fact, free and impartial media is an integral part of a democratic society. But today the globe has changed and media are also dictated by money and power. It is not reliable or trustworthy as they play important roles in formulating and changing public opinion and by doing so they never bother about the consequences. Nicholas Sheltroun in his

article has enumerated different functions of media through wizarding newspaper, the *Daily Prophet*: “political, watchdog, sensational tabloid, entertainer, educator and propaganda machine” (61).

Humans commit evil while trying to fulfill their selfish desires. The self yearns for pleasure, materialism, power, glory, wealth, popularity and many such things. A person even resorts to deceit, dishonesty, corruption and murder to achieve all the treasures that he wants for. Even attachment to someone or something causes him to commit evil. According to Hinduism the self is a mere illusion – *maya* which leads to ignorance and evil. Hinduism, especially, the *Bhagavad Gita* traces evil to excessive desires just as Platonic philosophy does. Shir Kirshna repeatedly stresses the need to control one’s desires because they ultimately lead man on the path of evil. He preaches in the *Gita*:

When a man dwells upon objects of sense,
Attachment to them is born,
From attachment, desire is born,
And from such desires anger arises,
From anger arises delusion,
And from delusion loss of memory,
From loss of memory the destruction of intelligence,
And from this destruction, he perishes. (II 62-63)

Don Rich and Sonia M are the important and powerful persons of SNN TV channel in Seattle but they are evil by nature. They use their evil force to commit a real murder which is against to the laws of media. In India, at Rooftop Regatta, Don Rich appears before the audience. Simultaneously Sonia M “the Seattle hostess who was currently sitting before a 2000-strong studio audience in Seattle, Washington DC” (MAC 33) cheerfully announces the appearance of Don Rich on the stage. Don Rich, the host of the programme welcomes the celebrities and asks them to drink the champagne already kept in their glasses. Don Rich also gulps the entire champagne from the glass and in a few minutes, he drops down on the ground. Now as per the plan, Rich’s death-drama is staged. The audiences who do not know this plan are shocked. People who watch the show want to know what had happened to Don Rich. They also want to know whether Don is alive or dead. However, the drama has to be carried out as if everything is real. So one of the evil doers or the plot designers, the founder of SNN TV, Seattle appears on the TV screen and addresses the audience:

Tom Johnson President and founder of SNN broke in the middle of a conference with three other directors of his company’s board and watched his highest paid employee – a base salary of \$ 3 million plus share options equivalent to another \$ 2 million annually – drop dead on his network highest rated programme to date (MAC 40).

The evil doers Tom Johnson and Sonia M want to make the show further sensational. So Sonia announces through the channel that Don Rich had already posted a letter to the studio in which he had predicted about his death which would take place in India. And he also asked Sonia to read the letter if something wrong happened to him in India. Mean people think ‘death’ as a big thing. But Gita says, “Death helps man to release himself from *maya* of life or evil doings of life. It says:

Living beings are attracted
Or get deluded
Due to Maya (ignorance) which
Envelops the real knowledge. (V, 15)

Sonia M who does not understand the *maya* associated with death and life, reads the letter of Don Rich to the audiences through the channel. Don Rich in his letter stated that as a TV host of many programmes he had confronted many individuals with the accusation of the alleged misdemeanor. So if anything adverse happens to him in India, he will take it as his “‘Prayashchitta’ – is the Hindu word for atonement” (MAC 59). Hence in the letter it is stated that “One of these individuals about whom I have learned more than was perhaps proper for me to have known has decided to kill me. He is an Indian. He will almost certainly kill me in Bombay” (MAC 60). Don Rich has also written the name of some celebrities whom he interviewed. They are Pande, Patel, Mehra, Guha, Mitra, Arun, Devika and Kalwachia. Much to the surprise of the audiences, these seven men are standing around the dead Don Rich. In fact, as they are the important celebrities occupying high positions who

rushed near to Don Rich to find out whether he is dead or alive. But the accusation makes them get confused and they decide to find out the real culprit in order to bring order and to establish natural justice. Meanwhile the evil Tom Johnson appears on the screen and pretends as if he is heavily shocked and vows to get justice for the murder of Don Rich:

But justice can be brought to us. To Don's memory. And to the heinous villain who perpetrated this dastardly act. (MAC 63).

Don Rich, Sonia M and Tom Johnson of *Murder and Champagne* can be related to Satan for their evil nature. Satan warred against God with the help of other fallen angels in order to capture heaven. When he failed in his mission, he created hell and started ruling man in order to sabotage God's creation, man. In fact, evil is easily contagious. Evil is seen as malignant, external thing. It is the absence of relation and inability or unwillingness to relate to another human being. Evil is a demonizing term that leads to hatred and violence. It is irrational, mystical and obscure and has several shades of meanings:

Traditionally all of life's 'minuses' have been lumped together under the rubric of evil. In its broadest sense evil can cover everything adverse in human lives from wars and massacres to drought and plague. (Garrard 320)

Don Rich and Sonia M outwit each other in executing their evil plans. Sonia M has hatred for Don Rich because professionally she cannot compete with him. Hence utilizing the opportunity of death-drama, Sonia decides to kill Don Rich and for which she hired cameraman 4 to execute the plan of murder. Considering Sonia M's evil nature, one can compare her to that of Lady Macbeth of *Macbeth*, Kooni of *Ramayana* and Shakuni of *Mahabharata*. Moreover Sonia M uses the oldest method to kill Don Rich in order to escape from the law of justice. Lady Macbeth turned into a psychopath after Duncan's death. But Sonia M feels no guilty about her act. The sin that she has committed cannot be washed away even if she surrenders herself under the feet of god. According to Mary Midgley evil can be equated to sin and sexuality and she states thus:

Evil acts are not those acts that sinfully transgress conventional sexual and social customs, but rather those acts that (without consent) wrongly inflict life-wrecking harm and suffering on others. Moral evil refers to acts like torture, on a large scale to call such acts evil is not outdated. (3)

Don Rich with Sonia M and Tom Johnson stages the drama of death, but escapes from the claws of death. He has beautifully planned to execute the murder with a series of supportive elements. Accordingly, as he sketched, the way and mean of the murder have been executed. Then Sonia M reads the letter which was supposed to be written by dead Don Rich before his death. There are seven important celebrities who are doubted by Don Rich for his death. Then the appearance of Tom Johnson, the owner of SNN TV channel and his vow for finding the murderer surprise the audiences. The entire world is eagerly watches when Sonia plays a video tape in which Don Rich indirectly accuses Arun Manthani and Devika. Don Rich on the screen of the TV states that there are two people who are not going to enjoy what he is going to say. Then the figure of Arun Manthania appears on the screen and in the background Don Rich voice ridiculously states that Anil Manthania father of Arun Manthania had manipulated the stock market in order to drop the value of many companies which he wanted to take over. Don Rich also states that Anil Manthania is always unhappy about his son's performance in the corporate environment. Arun Manthania himself has had his hand in precipitating the collapse of the Manthania empire, possibly as a mean of revenging himself on a father who he once claimed was directly responsible for his mother's death. The one important thing is that as a senior journalist Don Rich alone knows all these details about Manthania's'.

The TV screen, then, shows the face of Devika and in the background Don Rich speaks. He reveals the hidden history of Devika. "If Devika was dexter here, then Johnny Pande was sinister" (MAC 134). Devika had a relationship with Johnny Pande, and she also had a physical encounter with him once and due to that she became pregnant. But when she approached him, he denied her by saying that already he was married and had a family. So she went for an abortion and from that day onwards she has started living in the name, 'virgin actress'. Don Rich alone knows this matter about Devika. Suddenly the TV screen becomes blank. The words of Don Rich make the audiences to doubt Arun and Devika. Thus, Don Rich has created a platform for the people to accuse Arun and Devika. The evil plot executed by Don Rich can be compared to that of demons. The demonic mind in him propels him to act in such a negative way to blame Arun and Devika for the murder.

However, in real, Don Rich has baited Saul Ezekiel in the death-drama and the murder is committed. Neeta Modi comments on the mind of demonizing man thus:

‘Demonizing’ means thinking of other as inherently evil. Evil tends to demonize which in turn according to Geddes, leads to ‘violence and destruction’. Demonizing has various degrees and the worst is to think of others as inherently evil and to deny them basic human respect. They are akin to evil demons and therefore too inhuman to deserve normal human respect. (153)

The vanity in Don Rich, his professional achievements and his fear that someone may kill him, due to his media-popularity make him to cooperate with Sonia M and Tom Johnson to stage the drama of death. But the real death caused to Saul Ezekiel surprises even Tom Johnson. It is purely a plan of Don Rich who has already smelt the danger that may happen to him in India. According to Anne Votlesen, Don Rich like people’s spirit works when “it is fear and insecurity about identity which when seized upon, rhetorically” (295). Actually, Sonia M appoints cameraman 4 to kill Don Rich. But the real Don Rich replaces the duplicate Don Rich (Saul Ezekiel) in his place to escape from the trap of Sonia. The fear that someone may kill or destroy his life demonizes him. Don Rich, who fears that his life is at stake, readily plans to destroy Saul in order to escape from death trap. When the duplicate Don Rich (Saul Ezekiel) is identified by Devika and Arun through their investigative mind, Don Rich appears before the audiences like Satan who stood before the fallen angels in the Pandemonium.

Don Rich appears and addresses the audiences as if he is not responsible for the death of Saul. He speaks to them with his usual boisterous laughter. He asks them to be cheerful and to continue the champagne party as its host is found alive before their eyes. He announces that he feels sorry for the death of Saul who resembles him. He also adds that “I’ll personally sign a cheque for a hundred thousand US dollars to his next of kin” (MAC 165). Hearing the announcement the crowd further appreciates him for his kind heart. However, his heart fails to speak to him. Like Dr. Faustus he does not feel guilt for his evil action. Instead, he feels happy that he has escaped from death. In fact, this is the real-self of demonized person. His sin is worse than the real murder. He did not actually commit the murder but knowingly baited the innocent Saul, which, according to Hindu Dharma, is the worst of all sins. Moreover he is boastful that he had made the murder to take place before the eyes of millions of people:

He, yes, he had known about Sonia’s plot to kill him.... I hired him and what a damn good idea it was.... A damn good idea.... I didn’t actually shove the spoke into his heart. But I used him as a sort of protective shield. A bulletproof vest. A condom. And he was killed instead of me. And I knew he was going to die instead of me. So in a way, in a teensy weensy way, I did kill him. I caused his death.... Hey, what a great kick. I committed murder before half the world and got away with it! Howizatt! (MAC 173-74).

Don Rich is basically a little evil in nature but he turns into demon when his life is at stake. There is a psychological disturbance that occurs in his mind and generally it is common with any human being. Still a moralistic and religious society does not accept man’s evil in any form – even as a protective shield. Human beings indulge in a demonizing hatred on others under the pressure of fear, insecurities, misgivings, suspicions and violent aggressive propensity. They begin to regard themselves as superior to others and regard their enemies as evil and monstrous beings incapable of anything good and humane. Paul Formosa attributes the origin of demonizing in human psychological tendencies thus:

Those tendencies are not created but merely inflamed and directed, by political rhetoric about the inhuman evil enemy! Even without political fuel, the fire of demonizing can burn of their own accord. (7)

Generally in a detective fiction, there is crime and then the motive and the doer of the crime are detected by one or more shrewd detectives or sometimes by police. A detective fiction usually opens with an introduction to the mystery that it hooks young readers. A detective story works through a series of clues and ends with the detective solving the puzzle of crime and bringing the perpetrator to justice. While some mysteries end with an unknown subject being the criminal, the convention is to conclude based on evidence provided in the book. Ashok Banker’s *Murder and Champagne* shares the common features of detective fiction in all respects. In detective novel, the detective must usually be the protagonist of the novel, who is portrayed as an intelligent

person and has a critical and investigative brain to find out the cause and reason of the mishaps. Moreover in a detective novel, there must essentially a murder or more. It is necessary to quote the salient features of detective novel at this juncture to understand about it:

Detective stories feature at least one murder which occurs at the beginning of the story. The 'how to' of murder – whether it is by shooting, stabbing, poisoning, asphyxiation, drowning or some other technique – is for the writer to invent. No murder however is perfect. The murder scene works best in a 'closed space' such as a country house, a train carriage, or a cottage. It also serves as the site of multiple clues for the detectives discerning eyes. Depending on the plot, more murders can occur throughout the story, but it must begin with one. (<http://www.ehow.com/info-8415137-detective-story-ideas.html>)

Every crime fiction has one or more detectives to investigate the crime. The detective is essentially the hero or the heroine of the detective story. He or she can be an amateur such as Sherlock Holmes or a professionally trained detective from the police department. However, the rules of the genre dictated that the detective must be an outsider. He or she should not be related to the suspect or the victims. In addition he or she should have a keen eye for details and a passion for logic. Ashok Banker like Shakespeare in all his detective novels has broken the traditional view – detective must be an outsider. In *Murder and Champagne* the accused are Arun and Devika. But much to the surprise of the audience of the Rooftop Regatta and the readers of the novel, these two persons turn into detectives and they investigate the reason and motive of the murder of Don Rich.

The critical and analytical mind of Devika and the supportive views of Arun aptly find the culprit and also the reason of the murder. Though Devika and Arun have personal hatred for Don Rich and wish for his death, they are not murderers. Still the video tape of Don Rich makes the audiences to accuse Arun and Devika and the audiences suspect that they get closely involved in the murder of Don Rich. However, with her controlling emotions, analytical mind and communicative skills, Devika intelligently finds out the motive of the murder and the murderer:

The problem of the crime must be solved by strictly naturalistic means. Such methods for learning the truth as slate-writing, ouija-boards, mind-reading, spiritualistic sēances, crystal-gazing, and the like, are taboo. A reader has a chance when matching his wits with a rationalistic detective, but if he must compete with the world of spirits and go chasing about the fourth dimension of metaphysics, he is defeated *ab initio*. (Dine 185)

Don Rich, actually Saul Ezekiel falls on the ground after sipping the champagne from his glass kept in the Rooftop Regatta's party table. Immediately the important celebrities or the seven accused go near to him to find out whether he is really dead or not. Dr. Kalwachia, one of the celebrities standing near the dead Don Rich tests the pulse and announces that Don Rich has committed suicide or murdered by someone using the arsenic poison: "Kalwachia felt about for a pulse in the showman's neck then shook his head once, emphatically. He examined the prostrate man's eyes, then peered closely at his lip. "damn" "Arsenic" Kalwachia said, wagging one long bony finger,.. ((MAC 48). The words of the doctor surprises Arun and so he challenges the doctor posing questions about the murder. But the doctor confirms that the death has happened because of the effect of the poison: "Son, he said quietly, 'if this man didn't die of arsenic, I'll eat his hat with soya sauce'" (MAC 49). So Arun and others around the corpse and also the audience surprise at how could Don Rich consume arsenic before the eyes of some two billion peoples and even if it is so, then how can the arsenic work immediately in his body. As everyone is confused about the reason and the nature of the death, Devika readily comes forward to clear the doubts about the murder. In a sense Devika can be compared to Agatha Christie's Poirot or Marple in her method of detection:

What is significant about Poirot and Miss Marple, however, is that in many ways they do not fit comfortably into the pattern of the genius detective in the mould of Dupin or Holmes. Their methods involve careful observations and common sense, and, in Miss Marple's case, a general abstraction of human nature from the particular of the inhabitants of St. Mary Mead. In this respect, like Grissom in *C.S.I.*, they do not need a master criminal to battle, all they need are clever crimes, or simple crimes

that have been cleverly concealed or simple crimes in which the detective's investigations are either wittingly or unwittingly complicated by chance or by human action. (Scaggs 42-43)

Like a professional detective Devika possesses inquisitive mind and sharp detective spirit. Though it seems that the words of Devika divert people from the cause of the murder, yet in the end, her opinion helps to find out the culprit. She points out the door of the restaurant which has been closed from outside and so she arrives with a conclusion that the murderer has no chance to escape from the restaurant and also no outsider has a chance to get into the hall. She gives an example from an old story to the present situation: "It reminds one of those old golden age murder mysteries – the ones in which a group of sophisticates are invited to some isolated spot, almost always a gothic mansion in the wilderness, and then they find themselves confronted with a murder and realize that all of them are either victims or suspects" (MAC 74-75).

Giving example from the old story, she relieves the seven persons who are being accused for the murder. Though all the accused feel a little happy about Devika's investigation, Johnny Pande does not like her beaming spirit in investigating the murder. She even suspects that the murder is not a real but a drama played by Don Rich, Sonia M and Tom Johnson. However the idea – "this might all be a game designed by the network to entertain its viewers" (MAC 78) is opposed by Guha who thinks that media never plays such murder game for gaining popularity. Moreover, he points at the dead body and questions how a network stakes man's life for popularity. Devika's boldness and her inquisitive mind make Arun to join her in the investigation. So he states that as per the doctor's statement that the death is real and it has been caused because of the consumption of arsenic. Hence she asks a serious question – "arsenic poisoning leaves no visible trace at all – am I right?" (MAC 81) and for which the doctor says that the man might have faced his end consuming something else. The answer of the doctor seems evasive. Devika then closely examines the corpse and then states that the man was killed by a bicycle spoke as there is a small hole found on the neck of the dead:

Bicycle spoke. Very popular murder weapon in South Africa. Take a bicycle spoke sharpen the point, go up to the intended victim, insert it forcefully between the ribs, pierce the heart, and *khaka*, victim is dead. Like this man here. (MAC 87)

Guha supports the view of Devika and explains how the bicycle spoke is used to kill persons especially in prisons in South Africa. Arun then raises a doubt – as there was nobody near the dead man when he collapsed and then how he was killed. Devika, for which, explains that it is the beauty of the spoke method – the spoke makes a small hole in the heart when it is pierced. This enables the victim to continue to survive for a few minutes without any indication except a slight heaviness in the chest and after a while suddenly the victim drops dead. Dr. Kalwachia also accepts Devika's view.

Using the spoke method, the murderer has killed Don Rich (Saul) not before the eyes of the audience but somewhere probably in the elevator, on the way to the restaurant. Moreover, it is the murderer who locked the door of the restaurant from outside since all the celebrities have already assembled in the Rooftop Regatta. She also remembers that Arun was in the lift with Don Rich and later Devika also joined with them. So, surely, the murder was not committed in the lift. Then she arrives at a point that there are two Don Rich(s) if her speculation is right: "He means we've just proved my theory. Which one? Pande said solemnly: Two Don Rich. Double role" (MAC 95).

Hearing all these, Pande comes out beaming with an idea that if Devika is right, then the original Don Rich can be identified using psycho-autopsy method. Dr. Kalwachia immediately opposes it by saying that it is a ridiculous test since the dead is suspected of its real identity. Mehra, Patel, Kalwachi, Pande, and Arun appreciate Devika who has brilliantly investigated the method, how Don Rich (Saul) was killed. Devika, then leave the matter to the police to investigate about the motive of the murder.

Sonia M suddenly appears on the screen and plays a video that shows how Arun and Devika were once affected by Don Rich's interview. So the audience and others think that both Arun and Devika are the murderers. Arun and Devika take the video content as an insult and they want to leave the party. Yet the police officer does not allow them to go out as they are somehow related to the dead Don Rich. Meanwhile a woman walks into the restaurant. She is Carol Miranda and he looks tensed. She walks towards the dead Don Rich and much to the surprise of the audience she takes the corner of her saree, wets it with her saliva and rubs the cheeks of the dead body with it. Then she announces that the man who is lying dead is not Don Rich

but Saul Ezekiel who resembles Don Rich. She doubts that somebody or Don Rich himself, has purposely baited Saul Ezekiel and made him die in the hands of the murderer.

As Patel has already doubted, there are two persons involved in the murder. One may be a man and another may be a woman. But 'who they are' is the great question that rises before them like a mountain. Devika once again uses her sharp brain and with the help of Arun starts her investigation. She thinks that the woman who involves herself in the murder of Don Rich may be the ex-love of him or she may be a professional counterpart of him who has a strong disapproval of his growth. Devika also states that the culprit has hired someone – probably a waiter or a cameraman who has the opportunity to move around the hotel during the show, to execute her plan. Unfortunately, the appointed person has wrongly killed the duplicate Don Rich (Saul Ezekiel) because of mistaken identity.

Devika also announces that the killer has inserted the blood-strain spoke in one of the taps of the ladies toilet. She also states that she went to the restroom before the start of the show and was surprised to see red-coloured water running out of the tap. She could not take it seriously at that time, because she was in a hurry to attend the show. Hearing this Mehra asked why the fellow has used the ladies' toilet. And for which Arun comes out with an answer. He states that the picture on the doors of the men's and ladies' toilets – King of Hearts and Queen of Hearts look almost the same. So the killer might have gone into the ladies toilet thinking that it was men's. Arun also confesses that he himself wrongly entered into the ladies toilet before the start of the show because of this picture confusion – once again the identity crisis.

There are one or more motives in a detective story. The motive alone is the cause for the murderer to commit murder(s). Hence, it is necessary for the detective to trace the motive. If the motive is clear then it will be easy for the detective to arrive at the point, 'whodunit'. Patel then forces Devika to describe the motive of the murder, because murder is not committed without any motive. He asks:

The only item we lack was motive. Without motive, the most excellent cases fall through like a boot through rotten planks. Motive is the difference between premeditated murder and manslaughter, between the noose and a life sentence or less. Between complete justice and partial justice. Motive is the *raison d'être* of professional like myself and Mehraji, the stuff of which our success is made. (MAC 138-39)

Carol then questions Devika why the killer had to kill Saul and what is the motive behind it. Devika explains that it is Don Rich who expects that he may be killed in the show and so he has appointed Saul to play his role in order to escape from death: "Yes, I wouldn't be surprised if that's the reason why he did hire Saul. To protect himself from his murderers" (MAC 160). Moreover, as an actor Devika has already noticed the scar on the cheek of the dead man which is hidden with over-make-up. The scar is absent in original Don Rich. Devika further states that Sonia M is the direct rival of Don Rich. In fact, Sonia M was very happy when Don Rich informed Tom Johnson that he would retire from service soon. But Tom compelled him to continue and so Don Rich accepted the request. Hence Sonia, who could not compete professionally with Don Rich, decided to kill him. She has appointed cameraman 4 to kill Don Rich because the cameraman alone was not available in his place for a few minutes before the start of the show. Don Rich, who has been watching all this on the screen, sitting in his protective place, now appears in the Rooftop Regatta as the investigation is over and the motive of the murder has intelligently been detected by Devika.

A work of literature always aims at poetic justice. Accordingly, vice has to be rooted out or removed and virtue must be made triumph. Ashok Banker, as a true literary artist aims at establishing poetic justice in this novel, *Murder and Champagne*. In crime fiction, generally natural justice is established in the end. The law court endorses natural justice. If there is a meager chance for law court to establish natural justice, then poetic justice is the ultimate tool for the author to accomplish natural justice. Hence, it is important to analyze when and how the principles of natural justice work? One of the web sources is much helpful here to understand it. It elaborates natural justice thus:

Natural justice is another name for common sense justice. Rules of natural justice are not in codified form. These principles imbedded or ingrained or inbuilt in the conscience of human being. It supplies the omission made in codified law and help in administration of justice. Natural justice is not only confined to 'fairness', it will take many shade and colour based on the context. Thus natural justice

apart from 'fairness' also implies reasonableness, equity and equality. They are neither cast in a rigid mould nor can they put in legal straightjacket. These principles written by nature in the heart of mankind, they are immutable, inviolable, and inalienable. It is true that the concept of natural justice is not very clear and, therefore, it is not possible to define it; yet the principle of natural justice are accepted and enforced. (<http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article/article/principles-of-natural-justice-in-indian-constitution-1519-1.html>)

The question of natural justice or poetic justice is the main target in a detective novel. In *Murder and Champagne*, the author cautiously establishes the poetic justice and the natural justice is implied. Don Rich, who is alive cheers up the audience and turns the death scene into a celebration. It is a celebration only to himself and the peoples because he is alive. But it is a great loss to Carol. Even Arun appreciates Devika's beauty and intelligence and he imagines himself and Devika to that of the detective couple of Agatha Christie's novel:

Arun knew he meant the *Partners in Crime* TV series based on the Agatha Christie novels about a married couple who investigated mysteries, Tommy and Tuppence. He knew Devika knew it too, and he liked that thought, that he shared this trivial knowledge with her. (MAC 164)

Don Rich, speaking to the public announces that he feels sorry for the poor dead Saul. So he wishes to give a hundred thousand US dollars to his next of kin. The words of Don Rich infuriate Carol. She knows that Saul has no near kith and kin. In fact, Don Rich also knows that Saul has no immediate relations. The only person with whom Saul maintained intimacy was Carol. Hence she could not digest Saul's death and even more Don Rich's announcement. She angrily thinks that "Saul was dead. He had been brutally, cruelly murdered – a spoke through the heart, dear God – and all these people were laughing and cheering like they were at party" (MAC 171). Carol enunciates the situation. Though Don Rich knows about Sonia's plot, he purposely baited Saul. The last thirty second of the countdown of the show is counting on the clock. The minds of Arun and Devika curse Don Rich who has escaped from death even after damaging their images in the public. They wish Don Rich to die. Like Emerson's poem, "Brahma", Don Rich appears as 'the killer and the killed'. He is very happy about his omnipotent condition. The entire world adores him as he has escaped from murder, using his tactics. But if he is killed, the people will welcome it as an entertainment, since he is root-cause of the all these happenings. Poetic justice, perhaps, can be established, if he is killed for his blunder – baiting an innocent Saul:

They loved him. They adored him. They thrived on him.

They were the grass and he was the breeze.

They were the flock and he was the shepherd.

He was their God.

They worshipped him weekly at the altar of Rexus televisionous.

They were happy to see him alive again. They couldn't have become his death'

But, at the same time, it had been fun, watching him die.

Watching God die was also entertainment. (MAC 182)

Carol, who watches the gala of Don Rich and the audiences, decides to take revenge for the murder. She grabs a thing – a champagne bottle corkscrew opener, and runs towards Don Rich who is standing in the pit. Much to the surprise and shock of the audiences, she stabs him again and again until he drops down dead on the ground amidst the pool of blood. Don Rich, himself accepts the act of Carol and so he states "Yes.... And took her hands in his" (MAC 185) and drops dead. Poetic justice is established at the end of the novel by the novelist through Carol's act. Arun and Devika are happy about Don Rich's death. 'The Rich and Beautiful Champagne Mystery Nite' comes to an end. Meanwhile Ashutosh Mitra, who is good and virtuous, wants to answer his conscience. He feels guilt for all these murders which have happened when he is in charge of the show. So he resigns his job. Thus, natural justice is brought out at the end of the novel in the human-court in which everyone has answered to his/ her conscience.

REFERENCES:

Banker, Ashok Kumar. *Murder and Champagne*. Calcutta: Rupa & Co, 1993. Print.

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 3rd Edition. New Delhi: Macmillan Publishers India Ltd., 1978. Print.

<http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/vandine.htm>

<http://www.ehow.com/info-8415137-detective-story-ideas.html>

<http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article/article/principles-of-natural-justice-in-indian-constitution-1519-1.html>

Modi, Neeta. *Power and Evil in Harry Potter Novels*. Jaipur: Satyam Publishers & Distributors, 2014. Print.

Thomas, L. *Living Morally*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989. Print.

Steiner, H. "Calibrating Evil." *The Monist* 85.2 (2002): 183–193. Print.

Midgley, Mary. *Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984. Print.

Garrard, Eve. "Evil as an Explanatory Concept." *The Monist* 85.2 (2002): 315-321. Print.

Formosa, Paul. "Understanding Evil Acts." *Human Studies* 30.2 (2007): 1-17.print

Van Dine, S.S. "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories." *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Howard Haycraft. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1992. Print.
