INTRODUCTION
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Introduction:

The present study attempts to analyse and interpret the crime and mystery in the select novels of Phyllis Dorothy James. She is supposed to be the “second Agatha Christie” and “the new queen of crime” her literary achievement includes crime fiction, detective fiction, as well as mystery fiction. Crime, mystery and detection run equivalent in her novels. The novels have multiple implications. They record the picture of living people in the merciless and hostile universe. Her characters always associated with crime, murder, conspiracy, and full of intense passion. They come from every part of the society – gangsters, criminals, serial killers, politicians, medical world and also administrator, etc. it is said that James is a novelist who happens to put her characters into mystery stories. The aim of the writer seems to present the universal problem of human being i.e. crime and its circumstances. Her novels are in the tradition of English Detective Fiction but they go beyond the stereotypical fiction with their subtly realistic characterizations, complex motivations, and sophisticated plot. She explores the increasing violence and insecurity of contemporary society and bureaucracies of the United Kingdom. The kind of detective story James writes belongs to the genre of the classical detective novel, the formal puzzle, the traditional English mystery. She is associated with the golden age of detective fiction in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the present research work an attempt is made to explore the genius of P. D. James. There are a number of common aspects of her literary personality reflected in both genres- crime fiction and mystery fiction. She, very carefully, handles the elements of intrigue, conspiracy,
detection, suspense, sex, love, jealousy, hatred, and homosexuality to sustain the interest of the readers. Her novels are readable with multiple characters, well-knit plot, curiosity of the story, and geographical locale as a setting. Her novels are set either in the metropolitan world of London or in the countryside of England with every class of society. She painted her photographic memory in her most of the novels. For example the experience of administrator of Home Affair Department as well as National Health Service etc. In this respect, she could be compared with Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christies, legendary figures of Crime and mystery fiction. Mystery, thriller, detective story, are some of the terms used by various writers for the crime or detective fiction genre.

The aim of the research is to throw light on the several types of crime and criminals which are existed in our society. So, the study will focus on many categories of crime and criminals in the novels of James. Crime, mystery and detection are the prime motto of the novelist therefore her literary work concerns with the genre crime fiction and detective fiction. Her novels display a considerable artistic merit that has not yet been sufficiently appreciated. In order to maintain the law and order in the society her novels are the major source to know about everyday crimes, victims and murderer’s individual psychology.

The research work also takes a survey of an entertainment fiction i.e. Crime fiction and Mystery fiction. Crime fiction is the genre of fiction that deals with crimes, their detection, criminals and their motives. It is usually distinguished from mainstream fiction. It has several sub-genres, including the detective fiction, legal thriller, courtroom drama, and hard-boiled fiction. The crime fiction moves around crime and its various types. For example sexual crime, cyber-crime, organized crime, white-collar crime, blue-collar crime, corporate crime etc. It is a typical
nineteenth and twentieth century genre dominated by the British and American writers.

Mystery fiction is often used as an equivalent for detective fiction or crime fiction. It is a novel or short story in which a detective (either professional or non-professional) investigates and solves a crime. The term ‘mystery’ is concerned with a secret, a riddle or a puzzle. The term ‘crime’ and mystery may in certain situations refer to a completely different term, where the focus is on the other personality in human beings.

Hypothesis

It seems that Phyllis Dorothy James through her crime and mystery fiction explores the aspects of crime, mystery, detection, suspense, thriller, romance, adventure and offers the different icons of crime and mystery and thereby carves niche for herself in the broader genre of popular fiction. Therefore, the present study tries to analyse and interpret the select novels in the light of crime and mystery.

The Significance and Objectives of the Study

The present research work ‘A study of Crime and Mystery in the Select Novels of Phyllis Dorothy James’ is thematic and analytical. It deals with the aspects of investigation, mystery, murder, suspense, puzzle, crime, detections, dystopian modernity, a thriller, etc. Therefore, the study includes the fourteen chronologically published novels of James. The select novels are the crime and mystery novels of James in which she depicts the picture of London bureaucracies, the criminal justice system, violence and insecurity of the contemporary society. The major motto of the study is to explore the ‘Crime and Mystery’ in the
novels of James. In order to limit the scope of the study twelve chronological representative novels of an Adam Dalgliesh mystery series are selected.

The present study needs to have the global perspective otherwise it would be inadequate and incomplete. The term ‘crime’ and ‘mystery’ are completely very vast and it is linked with literature and social temperament. The crime and mystery is social and literary phenomenon. There are certain reasons behind the selection of the novels. First of all, crime and mystery are the global matter which is reflected in socio-literary field. Secondly, the terms are associated with human life. Hence, it would be interesting to study different literary traditions, and contemporary crime, mystery writers and their contributions in these phenomena.

The primary objective of the present work is to study the nature of the crime and mystery, and to make a comprehensive statement on the concept of the mystery as well as crime. The novels comment on crimes, their detections, criminals and their motives. The present study proposes to make a study of British bureaucracies, a society under the influence of crime, detection etc. Crime and mystery are the major threads of the present research work. Some authors have depicted their perception of the crime and mystery, but James used detections, suspense, thriller, mystery and its investigations in the select novels. Her novels are in the traditions of English detective fiction but go beyond the stereotypical fiction with their subtly realistic characterizations, complex motivations, and sophisticated plots. Therefore, an attempt is made to define the terms crime and mystery, which are connected with other terms such as, detective, thriller, locked-room mystery, etc.
The study will also unfold the viewpoint of James, and the nature of the mystery and crime. The both fictions come under popular literature. Hence, the present study will underline the genre popular literature and its framework and perspective. However, the major objectives are as follows:

- To discuss the concept of ‘crime’ and ‘mystery’ in the light of the novels of James.
- To discuss the theoretical framework of the crime fiction and mystery fiction.
- To examine the select novels of Phyllis Dorothy James in the light of the crime and mystery.
- To study the concept, mechanism and types of crime and mystery utilized by James.
- Comparing and contrasting these terms with those of earlier writers and with her contemporaries.

The Scope and Limitations of the Study

The novelistic vision of a novelist cannot be defined, analysed and interpreted only with the study of her particular novels. The novelistic vision depends on the overall consideration of at least her major novels. Hence, the scope of this study is not distended. It is only related to the selected major novels with reference to the selected theme. James has occupied a major place in the history of the crime and mystery fiction. With nineteen bestselling novels and three works of non-fiction to her credit over the past five decades. At the impressive age of ninety-three James continues to rank among the most enduring of the British crime writers.
Generally, James’s novels give attention to the significant and contemporary issues like crime, mystery, dystopian vision, violence and insecurity of the society. There are the book length works written by James. In her writing career she has also published a number of short-stories and short essays, which remain to be collected. She is well-known for her two series of the crime and mystery novels, namely Adam Dalgliesh mysteries and Cordelia Gray mysteries.

The present research work includes the fourteen chronological published novels of Phyllis Dorothy James. It focuses on the James’s novelistic vision in terms of crime and mystery as reflected in her select novels only.

Select Novels

The select novels are from an Adam Dalgliesh Mystery Series. They are -

*Cover Her Face* (1962)
*A Mind to Murder* (1963)
*Unnatural Causes* (1967)
*Shroud for a Nightingale* (1971)
*The Black Tower* (1975)
*Death of an Expert Witness* (1977)
*A Taste for Death* (1986)
*Devices and Desires* (1989)
*Original Sin* (1994)
*A Certain Justice* (1997)
*Death in Holy Orders* (2001)
*The Lighthouse* (2005)

All these representative novels of James are international bestsellers, which follow the rich tradition of Golden Age writers like Agatha Christie, Dorothy Leigh Sayers, Margery Allingham, and Ngaio Marsh.

It is not possible here to analyse her each and every novel of her writing career. In order to limit the scope of the study, the research will underline James’ Adam Dalgliesh mystery series. The complete series will represent the concept of the mystery and crime. The other major novels for example Cordelia Gray Mysteries are not discussed here in detail with reference to the chosen theme. Her short stories, short essays, non-fiction, memoir, also do not come in the present research work. At the same time, several issues like narrative technique, style, setting, and other concern are also not mentioned in the research work.

Thus, it will limit the scope of the present study to the discussion of the crime and mystery with reference to the select novels. Therefore, the objective of the study is limited one.

Research Methodology

For the present research work ‘A Study of Crime and Mystery in the Select Novels of Phyllis Dorothy James’, the emphasis is laid on a close reading of the collected data (primary and secondary sources). So, analytical, interpretative and evaluative methods are used for the present study. The research work has also made critical evaluation of the novels under study.

The present research work is organized into five chapters, and Introduction. Initially, the introduction is divided into six small sections. The Introduction to the research work gives brief information about life
and works of Phyllis Dorothy James, influence on the writer, review of criticism, the significance and objectives of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, and methodology used.


**Life and Works of Phyllis Dorothy James**

“I feared that if I didn’t settle down and write a novel, I’d end up an old lady telling my children and grandchildren that I had always wanted to be a writer”. (James 2)
Phyllis Dorothy James, a postmodern British crime and mystery novelist, short story writer, non-fiction writer, essayist and critic, was born in Oxford, England on 3rd August, 1920. She is commonly known as P. D. James in the literary world and very famous for several crime, mystery and detective novels introducing the Scotland Yard’s poet Adam Dalgliesh who is the most intellectual and a professional poet and Cordelia Gray as her detectives.

As far as her masculine sounding surname James points out about her original identity. Nigel Farndale in his interview PD James interview: ‘I have lived a very happy and fulfil life’ comments overall opinion about James, “combined with her masculine surname these have led some readers over the years to assume that P. D. James is man. Her genre, crime fiction, might be considered more manly than womanly, too, were it not for the fact that so many of the most successful crime writers have been women: from Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers to Ruth Rendell and Patricia Cornwell” (Interview with Nigel). James who chose sexually ambiguous initials possibly “to confuse readers,” she said, and her maiden name because “I had no wish to write under my married name”—James “is the essential me and my family name from the beginning” (Robertson 1). She is one of the most prominent living and leading crime, mystery and detective novelists in post-war British crime fiction who is considered as “a delightful and learned woman, all of whose qualities are reflected in her work” (Barzun 253).

James was the eldest daughter of her parents, Sidney Victor and Dorothy May (Hone) James. Her father was a tax inspector. Her grandfather, Edward Hone, was Headmaster of the Choir School and her
grandmother ran the boarding school. Her paternal grandmother, Walter James was a good linguist who for some years worked for the British and Foreign Bible Society. When James was eleven, her family has settled in Cambridge, where she has studied in British School in Ludlow and the Cambridge High School for Girls. When she was sixteen, she had to leave the school because her father did not believe in higher education especially for girls. After leaving the school, James worked in the tax office for three years to support her family. Because of her experience in the tax office, she could avail a next job as an Assistant Stage Manager for the Festival Theatre in Cambridge.

James was nineteen years old when the World War-II (1939-1945) began, and at the age of twenty-one she married with an Anglo-Irish doctor Ernest Conner Bantry White, who is a medical officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps on 8th August, 1941. She has two daughters Claire and Jane who born in 1942 and 1944. Meanwhile, her husband White suffered from schizophrenia and returned back from the war in 1945. He had to often hospitalize due to mental illness, and as he was unemployed, he could not support his family until his death in 1964. He did not receive war pension, and the family had to go financial crisis.

James went to evening classes to support her family and studied hospital administration during 1949 to 1968. She served as administrative assistant in London. Her intelligence and determination took her towards the high place through Britain’s civil service. In 1968, she qualified an examination to become the principal in the Home Office. Her first appointment was in the Department of Home Affairs, and during 1972 to 1979 she was appointed in the Crime Department, London. She worked in Government service until her retirement in 1979.
James began her literary career in the mid-1950s, enjoyed with professional life. When she was forty-two her first novel, *Cover Her Face*, was published in 1962. During her professional career, she served in the Department of Administration, Home Affair, Health and Crime. Being a creative writer her work experience is reflected in her novels. The war had a profound influence on her life and later writing. She was very much influenced by such diverse writers as Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, Dorothy Leigh Sayers, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, Evelyn Waug, Graham Green, Josephine Tey, and G. K. Chesterton, Margaret Drabble. She tries to experiment the crime novels with mystery and detective form. She was profoundly influenced by an American crime writer like Dashiell Hammett and Ross MacDonald. Beside that she read some American novelists including Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and John O’Hara and others.


In Cordelia Gray mysteries *An Unsuitable Job for Woman* (1972) and *The Skull beneath the Skin* (1982), Cordelia Gray plays a role of a detective. Her literary career also includes the dystopian novels, *The
Children of Men (1992), and Innocent Blood (1980), which represent the tale of dystopic Britain. She has written a non-fiction Talking About Detective Fiction, which was published in 2009. The book is about an inquiry of the origins and development of crime mystery and detective fiction. She wrote her autobiography named Time to Be in Earnest: A Fragment of Autobiography which was published in 1999. She has also published a number of short stories in mystery collection as Winter’s Crimes, Ellery Queens Murder Menu, and Ellery Masters of Mystery. She was credited for her own play A Private Treason was staged in 1985 in London’s West End Theatre.

During the 1980s many of James’ crime and mystery novels were adapted for the film and television by Anglia Television for the ITV network in the United Kingdom. These productions have been broadcasted in other countries like the USA on its PBS channel. These productions featured Ray Marsden as Adam Dalgliesh. The BBC has adapted Death in Holy Orders (2003) and The Murder Room (2004) as dramas, in which Martin Shaw played a role of Adam Dalgliesh. Her novel The Children of Men (1992) served as the inspiration for a film named on the same novel which is released in 2006. Despite its substantial changes from the book, James was reportedly pleased with the adaptation and proud to be associated with the films. She wrote her novels in the tradition of the British crime storytellers.

An exceptionally gifted and real artist, James has received worldwide recognition and a number of awards and honours within a short span of time in her writing career. She was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1983 and made a Life Peerage, Baroness James of Holland Park (of the south world in the country of Suffolk), in 1991. She was made a member of the Governor’s Board of the BBC and was
made a commander in the British Empire in 1992. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and of the Royal Society of Arts. She was also a member of the Arts Council, where she was Chairman of the Literary Advisory Panel, on the Board of the British Council and as a Magistrate in Middlesex and London.

As a creative writer she has won some other prizes and awards for her crime writing in Britain, America, Italy, and Scandinavia, like the Mystery Writers of America Grandmaster Award in 1999 and The National Arts Club Medal of Honour for Literature (US). Along with these prestigious awards she won several other awards too. In 1971, she got the Best Novel Award of Mystery Writers of America for the novel *Shroud for a Nightingale* and Crime Writers Association’s (CWA), Macallan Silver Dagger Award for the same novel. In 1973, she again won The Best Novel Award of Mystery Writers of America for the novel *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. In 1975 she received CWA’s Macallan Silver Dagger Award for the novel *The Black Tower*. She won the same award in 1986 for her novel *A Taste for Death*. In 1986, her novel *A Taste for Death* won the Mystery Writers of America Best Novel Award. In 1987, she received CWA’s Cartier Diamond Dagger Lifetime Achievement Award for her writing career. In 1992, she was awarded the Deo Gloria Award for the novel *The Children of Men*. In 1999, she won the Mystery Writers of America Grandmaster Award. Her two novels shortlisted and one novel long listed for the above awards. In 2002, her novel *Death in Holy Orders* shortlisted for WH Smith Literary Award. The novel *The Murder Room* has shortlisted for British Book Awards Crime Thriller of the Year in 2005. In 2007, her novel *The Lighthouse* was long listed for the award, Theakston’s Old Peculiar Crime Novel of the Year Award.
James’s constant commitment to literature brought her numerous lifetime achievement and nominations. She has received honorary degrees from seven British universities, including University of Buckingham (1992), University of Hertfordshire (1994), University of Glasgow (1995), University of Durham (1998), University of Portsmouth (1999), University of London (1993) and University of Essex (1996). In 1997 she was elected the President of the Society of Authors. Critics often compared P. D. James with Agatha Christie and many others from the “Golden Age Crime Fiction.” James who is considered one of the leading writers still lives in London and Oxford and writing novels and non-fiction.

**Review of Criticism**

As a prominent crime and mystery writer of today’s popular form of crime and mystery fiction, James occupies a major place in the Postmodern British Literature. She follows the rich tradition of Agatha Christie, Dorothy Leigh Sayers, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, and Josephine Tey. Her novels are touch with social and moral temperament and expose ‘others’ which exist in the human being and the same time portrayed the realistic picture of world which is not exaggerated or artificial. For example known and unknown personality of the people. Readers cannot imagine her writing a novel which was not a detective story or a book does not include death. Her novels are mixed with death and detection.

James has pointed out in her autobiography, *Time to Be in Earnest*, “Death has always fascinated me and even in childhood I always aware of the fragility of life” (12). She has a large and varied readership beyond the boundaries of the genre and is praised by critics in the literary
journals like the *Times Literary Supplement, The Literary Review*, and *A Catalogue of Crime*. The select novels for the present research work have been generally very well received by the critics.

SueEllen Campbell in her article, “*The Detective Heroine and The Death of Her Hero: Dorothy Sayers to P. D. James*” comments on the traditional strength of women as the writers of the detective fiction. Among major writers, Dorothy Sayers and P. D. James are thus conspicuous as the creators of such themes like crime, sexuality and romance in their novels. She further rightly comments on the well-developed character in James’ novel:

Like Sayers, James already had well-developed male detective character whom she allows to appear in this book, even though Cordelia Gray is herself a detective. But James pushes her chief Superintendent Adam Dalgliesh far into the background of *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*: he appears in person only for a few pages at the very end of the book, and then only after Cordelia has solved the mystery. These two have only brief contact with each other, and so there is never any potential for an intimate relationship like Harriet and Peters. (502)

Erlene Hubly, in his article, “*The Formula Challenged: The Novels of P. D. James*”, places her in the classical detective tradition and compares her with Christie and Sayers. He says that, “she is the best writer of the 1960s and 1970s in that difficult art”. Further he quotes the critical opinion of Robin Winks, who argues that James’s work is “the most convincing debut in the last decade” (511). Norma Siebenheller in her study on James’s novels points out that:
She stresses neither her plot (twisted though it may be) nor her detective (interesting as he is). In James’s work, crime itself is the focus, not just the murder, but its effects on all who are touched by it. This corrosive, destructive aspect of crime, the way it shatters the lives not only of the criminal and the victim but also of their families, their friends and other innocent people ensnared in its net, is the major James theme, and one she returns to in each of her books. (6)

Further she rightly points out about James approach about the matter of death:

…. was determined from the beginning to create a “real” detective to solve her fictional crimes. She feels very strongly that death is a serious matter and should be written about seriously, even within the confines of the mystery novel. (3)

As a writer of murder mysteries like Cover Her Face, Death of an Expert Witness, and The Murder Room, etc. James departs from the classical British “puzzle” approach. Her world is peopled with interesting, varied characters, and believable effects of crime on everyone. “James was determined from the beginning to create a “real” detective to solve her fictional crimes. She feels very strongly that death is a serious matter and should be written about seriously, even within the confines of the mystery novel” (ibid 3).

In his interview with James entitled “P. D. James and the Mystery of Iniquity” Ralph C. Wood who is the University Professor of Theology and Literature at Baylor University appreciated James and labelled her as ‘queen of crime’. He further explains that:
Readers of mystery novels know that P. D. James is the reigning British Queen of Crime, a worthy successor to Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers. She is indeed the master of all the English crime novel conventions: a cozy bourgeois atmosphere (preferably a professional enclave), this complacent world horribly disrupted by a murder, the naming of internal as well as external suspects, a further set of complicating murders, the sorting out of various alibis, the inevitable false leads, and the ultimate solution by her detective hero, Adam Dalgliesh. The criminal is finally caught and punished, and moral order is restored, even though much good has been destroyed in the process. (350)

Robert Bernard has writing in the Journal *Armchair Detective*, who cites both James and Ruth Rendell as “the two foremost practitioners of the traditional detective story” (146). Clifton Fadiman considers James, Francis, and John Le Carre, “three English masters of the thrilling who have broken through. They write fiction good enough on other counts to attract a general novel regarding public” (2).

One of the scholars Michael Clay Smith in his review, critically comments on P. D. James’s work of art and he has called her “the new Agatha Christie.” He further states about her surprising and refreshing method of writing:

James, arguably the greatest living British mystery writer, has been called “the new Agatha Christie”. But she more than that; her mysteries are not solved by a super sleuth who detects arcane clues overlooked by the stolid police. Rather, James’s work reflects her own background in medicine and
the criminal justice system. Her characters are psychologically complex, and their decision making is best by subtle, seductive moral ambiguities-believable ambiguities like those faced by us all in our individual and communal lives. (1106)

Richard B. Gidez shows how James carries on the tradition of the classic mystery in the vein of Agatha Christie, Marsh and Sayers and demonstrates how she has revitalized the genre, creating fiction that reads as much like a contemporary novel as it does a mystery classic. He further says, “James however sees her work as being no different from that of any other novelist, except that she is working within the genre of the formal detective story. She puts her emphasis not on the puzzle but on her characters, real men and women, and the problem they face: making a living, maintaining a relationship and dealing with the crises of everyday life, as well as being suspects and witnesses in a murder investigation. The world James’s characters inhabit is far more recognizable than that of Christie’s characters” (ii). He further appreciates James in the context of her make use of characters under the pressures of daily professional life:

James lets us see her characters operating under pressure – not only the pressure of a murderer in their midst, but also the daily pressures of their professional and personal lives. We watch the jockeying for position up the bureaucratic ladder, the internal rivalries, and the unhappy home lives of men and women dedicated to the service of the mentally ill. In such a society weakened by jealousies and strife and personal problems, the way is clear for a conscienceless man to blackmail and for an abject woman to murder. (34)
Robert Bernard in his article, “A Talent to Disturb: An Appreciation of Ruth Rendell” compare both mystery writers of an earlier generation by making comparison between Rendell and James, “bring to popular crime fiction minds that are nourished and motivated by the social realities of Britain today”(2). According to, The New York Times Book Review, “James is basically a novelist who happens to put her characters into mystery stories” (67). The New York Time’s Newgate Callendar, who praised James’s literary combination of “terribly civilized writing with impeccable plotting and naturalistic characters. She knows people and apparently she likes people” (Robertson 1).

Regarding James’s civilized and complex writing Robin W. Winks of the New Republic comments his judgement. He says that:

P. D. James shows far more awareness of the complex nature of human beings than Dorothy Sayers did, writes with a more civilized style than Margery Allingham did, and provides plots with more realistic and puzzling than dame Ngaio Marsh has done in recent. (Winks 3)

Susan Rowland in her critical book titled From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell rightly comments that, “the work of P. D. James has always perceived social and moral tensions between professional women, eroticism, and mothers” (160).

HRF Keating in his book Writing Crime Fiction (1994) praises P. D. James and comments on her literary craft:

P. D. James, one of the best writers who out of love for the old detective story has taken it and made something more for it, once summed it up very neatly. There is, she says, always a mysterious death at its heart. There is always closed circle
of suspects (so there can be no question of someone unconnected with the setting coming in from outside and doing the deed, as might well happen in ‘real life’) and each of these suspects has to have a credible motive as well as reasonable opportunity of committing the crime and reasonable access to the means with the detective with which it was committed. Then the central character has to be the detective who eventually must solve the mystery. And finally the detective must uncover the murder by logical deduction from facts fairly put before the reader. (4)

Ralph C. Wood, in his article “A Case for P.D. James as a Christian Novelist” recommends that, “Her novels keep us at the edge of our chairs because she makes us want to know not only who “done” it but also why? That plot and character are so deeply intertwined makes James’s novels bear repeated readings, as most crime fiction does not.”(587)

Here, as far as the review of literature is concerned, it is not possible to elaborate each and every critical perception about James literary world. Hence, at last it is appropriate to say about her that she is surely the literary heir of Christie, Sayers and Allingham.