In 1862 Bankim Chandra started writing his first novel, *Durgeshmandini*. It was published in book form in March, 1865, when he was twenty-seven years old. The history of modern Bengali fiction began with a work having the pattern of a romance. Perhaps the author was interested, at that stage of his life, in actions and incidents, rather than in emotional or thematic aspects.

The two parts into which the book is divided, are like two profiles that make up something like a complete picture. Each part is built up on a love episode round the hero, Jagat Singha. The book is named after Tilottama, the daughter of a Bengal chieftain, Birendra Singha; she is the heroine and the focus of interest. In the second part a co-heroine appears from the Pathan harem in the person of Ayesha. The tumult of Part I subsides gradually as incidents become less stirring. The last part of the story is full of the gentle aroma of this lady's personality. An attempt has been made in this his first novel to present a complicated type of triangular love episode.

The theme of the book is the recovery of Bengal by the Moghuls of Delhi from the Pathan usurpers. Breadth of canvas is implied by the very nature of the subject. This expansion
of geographical limits was fostered by Bankim's attitude of mind, which in its turn was greatly conditioned by the spirit of the age. He applied craft to extending the frontiers of Bengal. He thus broke the relative inertia of our character that stood in the way of forming a bigger texture for the novel. Madhusudan in his very conception, and Hem Chandra, Nabin Chandra, etc. in their themes, gave expression to the same urge for a wider perspective. Action in Durgesnandini is thus connected with vastness. The tendency attains culmination in "Raisingha" in which vastness reaches epic dimensions. It is not exactly overstretching imagination to say that Raisingha is Durgesnandini technically perfected in some fundamental points.

This impression of vastness created by the very first novel of Bankim Chandra is a common feature in most of his works. His hero Jagat Singha comes on horse-back from the imperial capital. He happens to meet a heroine of Bengal. At once the Bengal scene merges in the broader field of India. The plot, of course, does not extend beyond the borderland of Bengal, but the atmosphere of the novel breathes an air of vastness. Emphasis has been placed upon action and movement, and the story seems to be instinct with these forces. Fixed boundaries melt away, specially when the fort of Birendra Singha becomes the centre of action. It is caught in the maelstrom of Moghul-Pethan rivalries. The swiftly changing incidents carry the reader from the scene of occurrence into the boundless land of history. It seems craft in Durgesnandini has been primarily used towards this object.

The opening lines suggest the prevailing tone of the entire romance:
Action and incident seem to become the chief elements of the narrative. Indeed, they do predominate in the major portion of it. Movement that is set in motion here, is never suspended. The opening lines start the story which bounces with the first chapter. Incidents follow in a quick succession, the structure of a romance is formed by the force of events. There is at least some reflection of the personality of the author in the vigour and directness of his method. It seems he entered the field of Bengali fiction in the manner of the heroic horseman of his story; he found out his path by the light of his own genius. In the felicitous language of Dr. Banerjee, this was the highway of romance in Bengali fiction.
Rabindranath's appreciation of the movement of Raisingleha is symptomatic of the general trend of Bankim's romances:

Movement seems to be a dominant feature in Bankim's fiction. Even as a beginner, he had a grasp of the technique that generated life in the narrative. He maintained that art in all his later works.

The plot of Durgeshwarini is constructed for emphasising action and incident. A meeting between the hero and the heroine takes place in the first two chapters in the right romantic fashion. It is difficult to think of a more attractive method for starting a romance. As Jagat Singh and Tilottama are going towards the fort in that dark night, the reader is aware that it is going to be the mechanical centre of the action of the novel. The narrative is resumed after four chapters, during which the author turns by a naive twist to the historical background. From chaps. 8 to 15, some episodes have gained considerable prominence: the main action has suffered an imbalance as a consequence. Abhiram Swami, Bimala, Birendra, and Gajapati-Asmani are no better than, what Henry James calls, figures, but the indulgence given to them appears to be relatively great.

The character of a superman is almost an indispensable factor in the scheme of a Bankim novel.
Abhiram Swami of Durgeshundini is the first in the series. Perhaps he is a copy from life, but when he is introduced in fiction, he must become harmonised in the design. But it seems he is not made to move with the plot. He does not obey its logic; his appearance by fits and starts is prompted rather by his own idiosyncrasy. The novelist more properly exploits the character of a superman in the person of a Kapalik in Kapalāndalā, published next year. The most brilliant use of this type of personage occurs in Sitārām.

The sub-action of Gajapati-Asmani has a reverse process: it seems to shoot up above the normal line of development by virtue of its ill-acquired strength. There was much more crude drollery in the first edition version. The suspense awakened in the main story, diminishes when a stale and stock artifice is spread over several chapters. No development of plot occurs by this episode. Neither is the reader exactly prepared for a big dose of fiddling trick at that stage. When he reaches the temple of Sallēswar in the company of the half-witted Brahmin, his zest for what next centres round this crude subsidiary element. This is certainly not the plan of the novelist himself.

Perhaps the role assigned to Bimala is more open to question than the activities of Gajapati-Asmani. As a re-creation of the old Malini character on more dramatic and sober lines, she is, of course, a technical achievement of the author. Her part in the drama is great: it is she who brings about complication and resolution in the two successive parts of the novel. But very soon the growing tempo of her character goes out of the control of her character. From chaps. 10 to 15, she absorbs the plot just for contacting the hero in the temple. Her amours with Birendra who is in fact her husband, is an absolute display of fancy. The primary story is side-tracked for a pretty long time. She comes into the limelight by the force of her own
There is no other hurdle for the action to cross in Part I. The mechanical action is replaced by the dramatic from chap. 16; in the remaining five chapters of this part, the story is complicated by the addition of fresh incidents. A splendid series of them happens inside the fort (chap. 18-21). The mechanical centre of the story coincides with the dramatic centre when the fort is captured by the Pathans. The novel is to all intents and purposes a one-action narrative up to the end of part one. The richness and unity of the latter parts (chaps. 16-21) make up to a great extent the loss of focus of the preceding chapters. Part I ends in a colourful bustle of actions and incidents. The art that tackles the fighting scene within the fort, would be illustrated in many other forms in Bankim's fictional literature:
Dramatic turns, economy of movement, pause and paragraphing seem to be the cachet of a Bankim narrative. The common practice of naming Scott with him in one breath, is based on rather hasty assumptions. Some sort of likeness in the designs of Durrenmund and Ivanhoe has tended to confirm the notion. Really, the two novelists offer an interesting study in contrast: they have, in fact, used two different types of craft. Scott does not begin his Ivanhoe in the dramatic way of Bankim.
Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished for than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected to every species of subordinate oppression. The nobles, whose power have become exorbitant during the reign of Stephen; and whom the prudence of Henry the Second had scarce reduced to some degree of subjection to the crown, had now resumed their ancient license.

It seems he is on an ambling pad. The setting of the scene is his prime care; he lays it first of all with so many minute touches. He finds pleasure in spinning out the narrative to an unconscionable length. The reader is to trudge through about hundred pages of Ivanhoe before coming out into the open field of the theme proper. Again, when the novelist reaches the centre of action, the castle of Front-de-Boeuf, he sacrifices speed to his passion for "lingering" upon the art, history, and romantic incidents associated with the historical fort. Even when the action is freed from the antiquarian circuit, there is seldom any dynamics of story movement. A Scott novel perhaps better responds to slow, minute touches.

In the Dedicatory Epistle to Ivanhoe, Scott made his purpose clear: "the character and costume of the age must remain inviolate." The soft and delicate painter's brush was best suited for this objective, rather than the chisel of the architect. He explained his art in the Introduction to the same book: "To take an illustration from a sister art, the antiquarian details may be said to represent the peculiar features of a landscape under delineation of the pencil. His feudal towers, must arise in due majesty; the figures which he introduces must have the costume and character of their age; the piece must represent the peculiar features of the scene which he has chosen for his subject. His general
colouring, too, must be copied from Nature: the sky must be clouded or serene, according to the climate.

The hiatus with Bankim is apparent. He is not a painter, giving leisurely touches to a scene. He puts emphasis upon movement in a dramatic fashion; he begins and the narrative seems to trot and gallop all through. The fort of Birendra Singha is taken in four chapters, which amount to just one in Scott. Bankim uses short chapters, perhaps because he wants to move from incident to incident for dramatic effect. It is interesting to note that he has 43 chapters in about 95 thousand words against Scott’s 44 in about three times the length. Bankim would have condensed many of Scott’s initial chapters and cut short or rejected others within the body of the book. In Durāśamandini complication, crisis, and resolution follow in quick succession. That accounts for a difference in the tonal effect of the two books.

Part II opens with the wounded Jagat Singha under the care of the ministering angel, Ayesha, daughter to the Pathan leader, Katlu Khan. She supplies the third side of the triangle. The plot is complicated further by the introduction of Osman as a suitor to Ayesha. What happens is a triangle upon a triangle. If Jagat Singha and Ayesha form the common base, the vertical point of the first triangle is supplied by Tilottama, that of the second by Osman. Bankim’s first novel has a complex plot and that became the pattern for most of his subsequent ones.

It seems he was at home in more complicated forms, as in Vishavriksha, Chandrasakhar, Raisi, and Raisingha.

The technical content of Part II is different from that of Part I. The clash of dynasties and the din of steel almost fade away; craft is so managed as to rouse more of passion movement.
than action movement. The novelist has endured the co-heroine with proper charms to ensure dramatic intensity. She is brought on the stage in the full bloom of her youth and beauty, a matured lady yearning for love. A slip was made in the first edition version; Jagat Singha was depicted as cherishing brotherly sentiments for her. He addressed her as sister once in chap. 16 and again in chap. 19. Changes effected in the latter editions has strengthened emotional intensification. The sweet and sad episode of Ayesha-Jagat Singha has become an exquisite vignette in the story of Durgeshendini.

The second point to be noted in this sub-plot, is the treatment of the hero. History records Jagat Singha as a rot who died at an early age; but Bankim has resurrected him from the grave to make of him the epitome of heroism and chivalry. Ayesha is fashioned out of his dreams to adorn a tale of abiding pathos. History was to him, as it was not to Scott, a quarry of plastic materials. He drew from history men and incidents like a novelist. The most illuminating example in the line of re-creation is probably the Zabunnnesa-Moharak-Daria sub-plot in Rajasingha. Part II of Durgeshendini relates practically the story of Ayesha.

The impact of the sub-plot upon the structure requires some examination. This can be done from two points of view: its total weight and its emotional content. For a good length of Part II, the Ayesha episode dominates the story. She becomes the focus of interest, the fort becomes a mere background, the daughter of the chieftain fades away into the circumference. Balance and harmony are disturbed to a great extent. The emotional atmosphere caused by the subsidiary action, also seems to be not in conformity with the tonal effect of the story as a whole. A good admixture of the character novel with a novel of action, is a common factor in English fiction. But it should be an
admixture, not a medley. In Durgasundari, Part II seems to
decelerate the tempo of Part I to a leisurely walking pace. A
pale cast of thought settles upon a man of action. The last
traces of the pomp and circumstance of romance appear to fade
away. Critics of Bankim expect to have a more elaborate
development of the love affair of Ayesha and Jagat Singh. They
perhaps forget that the design of Durgasundari is that of a
romance. The mystery of the snow-dappled mountain cannot
possibly be balanced with the sombre grandeur of the foot-hill.
The fact is that Bankim has gone rather too far with the sub-plot.
In Mrinalini he has gone further still, and is almost lost.

It is doubtful if the two points of Durgasundari
are in harmony. The predominant element of the first strand is
action, that of the second is passion; they go ill together.
A mixture of vegetables and mutton broth in the same dish is not
a desirable thing. That seems to have occurred in this novel.

Bimala's epistolary device for self-revelation (Part II,
chapter 6-7) is just a ragged end. One or two dramatised scenes
could have better done the job. Scott does this in Ivanhoe,
chap. xxviii, with a skilful touch: "Our history must needs
retrograde for the space of a few pages, to inform the reader of
certain passages material to his understanding the rest of this
important narrative." There is perhaps more logic in the
technique. Sarat Chandra has a weaker instance of the letter
device in Srikanta, Part I; he has allowed the seasoned Annadadidi
to write out her history to the boy Srikanta in a long letter.
The fall of tone in the story of Durgasundari, so apparent in
chaps. 6-7, is regained in a marvellous foreshortening in the
next chapter:
Action, direct and in good volume, is in full form towards
the end of the novel. The fall of the fort at the end of Part I
marks the artistic resolution is attained in Part II, chap. 17,
when Katin Khan is murdered. The story continues thereafter
as if by its own inertia up to chap. 22. Katin Khan's dying
confession (chap. 17? though crudely managed, disposes of the
first triangle. There is the need for resolving the complicating
factors, direct and in good volume, is in full form towards

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second tangle of Jagat Singh, Osman, Ayesha. Bankim's treatment of this episode is highly artistic. Osman's defeat in combat and Ayesha's silent retirement are managed with skill and realism. Ramesh Chandra attempted similar delicate episodes. But the Julekha-Narendra incident in Mahabali-Kankar or the Bimala-Indrapath incident in Manca-Wijeta soon loses its course in a mist of romantic unreality. Bankim keeps his plot on the plane of probability up to the end.

Title is a part of the craft of fiction. In Durgesnandini, there is scope for doubt about the appropriateness of the title. Tilottama is expected to be the dramatic centre of the plot, but in the whole perspective she is evidently not in the middle. Only in Part I she maintains her position as the pivot of the mechanism, and that too not always with uniform brilliance. Other forces assert themselves in Part II specially; she is often out-centred, and sometimes eclipsed. In the contest of the novel, Durgesnandini, is not, to use an expression of Percy Lubbock, "a taking title." The focus of interest swerves, oscillates constantly as the incidents and episodes gather centrifugal force. It seems the title captured the imagination of the novelist before he gave shape to the details of its design. But his technique was inadequate for this special purpose. There is a similar situation in Chandrakshar, which will be noted in due course.

Mrinalini is Bankim's first venture at reconstructing the history of heroic Bengal through novels. In point of theme, it is allied to Chandrakshar, Ananda Math,
Devi Chaudhurani, and Sitaram. The attempt in all of them is to present Bengal in her real heroic self by saving her from the calumny and detraction of partisan historians. But there is a basic difference of approach between Mrinalini and Chandrasekhar, and between these two and the three others. Thus implies a difference in their designs, which would justify their treatment in separate groups. Balihsinha, too, has a like theme in a broader perspective, but its pattern is also different in its own way. Mrinalini stands apart from the rest. It has the pattern of a pure romance, the second and last among the novels of Bankim Chandra.

At a cursory reading, Mrinalini appears like a dazzling show-piece: it seems to be a richly ornamented fabric of love and adventure. Its lyric insets and intrigue character lend it an additional superstratum of romantic colouring. But a study of its mechanism leads to a different impression.

The actions and incidents are found to be hardly cooperating towards a balanced and concrete picture. Physical division of the plot into four parts plus an addendum offers a dramatic shape without the emotional uniformity of a drama. A curve follows a vertical course in Purgashandini. In Kapalmandala, the movement is in geometric straight line. But in Mrinalini, adjustment of events scarcely occurs for a specified image.

The outline for the design of a romance is drawn almost temptingly so as to negative any adverse surmise. We are introduced to the promising story of a hero and heroine, Hemchandra and Mrinalini, separated by cruel circumstances. A hard taskmaster and throbbing events stand waiting in the background for being utilised in the dynamics of action. Then comes into the plot the second story of Pasupati and Monorama: great expectations for craft are opened through the intrigue-schemes of Pasupati, the redoubtable personage of Gaur. The time is out of joint. History is evoked as a factor guiding the course of events. But the
different strands move in a nonchalant manner on near parallel lines. Or, more properly, the second strand gathers so much colour that the primary strand looks indistinct by its side. A note of discord appears in the tonal effect. The incongruity in the plot structure might have been greatly obviated if the historical element had had its full impact upon the main story as well, as in Chandrasekhar and Raisinha.

This blurred first impression is perhaps due to the author's vacillation about focus. Want of grip over it has led him to change the technical front. It seems the attention of the novelist has centred successively round the heroism of Hemchandra, the poetic love episode, and the treachery of Pasupati. The general pattern is difficult to visualise when the artist himself is wavering. If incision of chapters is any indication of that, the first version of the novel in comparison with later ones, testifies to indecision. Two chapters just at the beginning flashed forth Hemchandra as a dashing adventurer, pure and simple. Then we have a pot-pourri of lyrics and the atmosphere is suffused with lyrical fervour: the author became to some extent aware of the changing spirit of his narrative. These two chapters relating to the hero's 'elephantine' activity, were dropped in an endeavour to restore uniformity of tone. A ludicrous growth in the broader context of the novel was operated upon. But that was removing one of the ragged ends. Another of greater magnitude was hanging, the disproportionate importance of the second strand. The real seat of disease was still perhaps elsewhere. It remained untouched.

The spirit of heroic action of the two abandoned chapters should have formed the background of the primary action. But the opposite has happened: the subsidiary action of Pasupati has absorbed the major part of all the stirring incidents contained
in the novel. The thematic point has thus been least illustrated in the main plot. The alternative arrangement, as it obtains in the book, is against logic. Hemchandra, as the leader of that eventful period, has not been—as he should have been—the dominating figure. The plot does not veer round him. The supreme importance of the Hemchandra-Mrinalini episode has been impaired, the title has become materially meaningless. Consorting of events in the mechanical centre of the plot, occurs through the medium of Pasupati. The palm of glory, so far as the plotting is concerned, passes on to the hero of the sub-plot. His lawfully married but unrecognised wife moves alongside with ever-increasing weight and influence. The objective of the novelist is greatly neutralised by the contrary trend of events in the latter parts.

Violation of uniformity in technique is involved in the representation of the hero's character through the different parts. The promised Messiah of the first two chapters develops indifference to the rising actions of the story. He frowns and rattles his sword occasionally, but his vaunting is unsubstantiated in the frame of the novel. Like a lotos-eater, he becomes careless of his own surroundings. A gap in the pattern opens when the enveloping action of intrigue leading to an impending invasion, does not touch very much the focus of interest which is the hero. This is a strange spectacle in a clear hovel of action. The role assigned to him might as well have been performed by any second-rate character who could just fret and fume from time to time. An improvised addendum at the end of the story, resurrects to some extent the stature of the hero. But the move is not free from effort, the technique at that point appears to be laboured.

The impression of a jumble of episodes underlies the spasmodic nature of the plot. Mrinalini is a pastiche of two elements in which different tones are in conflict. The action of the novel ought to have followed systematically the line
wonderfully suggested in the abandoned first two chapters of the first edition. But instead of that, poetic matter is incorporated which weakens the pattern. The hero shows his clay feet, even at the initial stages of the present edition, by his zeal for lovesickness when the plan demands of him spirited work. A drama of action requires sustained unity of impression. The unity of impression of a romantic comedy and that of a serious romance, presuppose different structural equipment. A mixture of the two is like a blend of oil and water. The malaise in 

lies deeper: two contrary trends of fiction have been sought to be accommodated almost by force in the same design. The emphasis on two spirits has had its effect in crunching movement. Stress shifts to the wrong side in the long run. The feeder element of the second story comes to occupy a place of pride. Centre of gravity becomes a misnomer in relation to the thesis. The Ayesha episode in Purgesnadini is managed better; it is made comparatively more symmetrical with the main plot of Jagat Singha - Tilottama. The want of even this symmetry is palpable in Mrinalini.

A detailed scrutiny of its plot yields data about a fundamental incongruity. In the carefully wrought Part I, Bankim has unconsciously touched upon the namby-pamby Vidya-Sundar trash within the frame-work of a high-pitched romance. Rajendralal Mitra, the famous editor of the Rahasya Sandartha of Bankim's time, once welcomed the masculine tone which Purgesnadini introduced into Bengali fiction. But the spirit and pattern of the third novel in the series, seem to blemish the eulogy given to the first. A vigorous action movement is scotched by an anaemic, decadent technique. Incidents related to struggle and suffering in chaotic and adverse circumstances, are expected in such a novel.
But what happens instead is a surfeit of romantic situations in pseudo-comic style, with clues, searches, and emissaries.

Part II introduces the second action of the plot, featuring Pasupati-Monorama. There is no triangular character in Mrinalini; perhaps integration of strands might have been easier had there been one. As it stands, only some surface connexion exists between Hemchandra of the first tale and Monorama of the second. The two have scarcely any common ground for working in harmony. Madhabacharya, a variant of the Bankim superman, is reintroduced in this Part, but no toning up of spirit is observed. The two currents had some chance of getting fused at this stage by a skilful manipulation. A very splendid result is obtained by bringing back the Kapalik in Part IV of Kapalkundala after his absence in Parts II & III.

But in Mrinalini, romantic and sentimental elements outmanoeuvre the dramatic. The mechanics of plot has been laid in this part, perhaps for creating the basis of dramatic emotion. But the work is hampered as the focus oscillates between light and serious elements. Or, to look at the same thing from another angle, the focus of the narrative is not strengthened by careful plotting here. It is this weakness of the plot that becomes the chief source of strength to the secondary action. The underhand plotting of Pasupati-Santyasil against the effete monarchy of Gaur, would become a real dramatic turn but for the comparative slenderness of the more important part of the pattern. There is complication without a crescendo.

Plot and character can be considered in their separate elements, but movement is a continuous process. A study of the novel, part by part, from this angle, reveals its
inner weakness. Part I develops the intricacy of the first story in three stages: Hemchandra's meeting with his Acharya, Mrinalini's meeting with Girijaya leading to the Bomkesh imbroglio, the fleeing of the two girls towards Gaur. From Part II, this place becomes the centre of action. Speed of the novel increases in the changing course of incidents, indicating great possibilities for a novel of action. The sub-actions of Hemchandra-Monorama, Pasupati-Mohorima, and Pasupati-Santyasil add to the volume of that impression. But the side tracking of the primary story takes the wind out of the sail of the narrative. The prominence of Monorama, like that of Girijaya earlier, acts as a cutting cold breeze to the following warmth of the story. Her growing stature brings about a steady change in the very design of the novel. Hemchandra's periodic quixotries tend to make the technique more imbalanced.
It shows how certain rather sudden twists in the narrative affect the entire pattern. Jagat Singha’s conduct in his wounded condition is more consistent with the general art and design of Durgeshendini. Scott is more logical in his treatment of a similar situation in Ivanhoe: the demeanour of his wounded and imprisoned Knight, is in harmony with the spirit of the novel. Even if romantic heroes of those days of storm and stress are taken at a discount, Hemchandra’s movements reflect an awkward attempt of craft. He is at least not a conventional hero like Jagat Singha. The novelist has detailed him for a mighty job, although he perhaps does not mean to follow up the spirit of the first two chapters of the first edition. But the spirit of the initial chapters of the revised version also is not maintained in the portrait of the hero. His progressive passivity is against the sympathy of design. Elements that were to be kept subservient,
increasingly assert themselves, with the result stated above. If the hero had been made at least tolerably heroic and dominant, the sub-plot would remain in its proper position. The disease and the symptom are to a great extent interconnected.

The ramshackle nature of the plot is palpable in Part III. In a novel of four parts, this stage normally marks a turning point; gathering events either reach a crisis here, or there is a preparation for it. It seems neither of the two happens in Mrinalini at this point. The plot structure still trembles in the balance. No effort is perhaps made by the novelist to bring the two strands nearer; they rather drift apart in different physical forms. Similar results would have followed if Jagat Singh of Durgeshndini or Babukumar of Kapalkundal were made limping and fitful personages. The power that propelled the course of action up till Part II, fails to generate any more force in the mechanism; the curved path of Part IV is not much indebted to it for the flowering of incidents. Loss of tempo is incurred in this part (III). The Acharya now joins his disciple in weakening dramatic emotion further strand indiscernably. (Part II, Ch. 5) and, conversely, helping the opposite strand indiscernibly.

Such non-cooperative actions cannot naturally help passion movement. Part III is the weakest spot in the plot. A better alternative, of course, would have been first, to keep the two elements in their rightful positions, and secondly, to effect a synthesis of the dramatic personal with the historical concourse of events. Bankim does it delightfully in Chandrasekhar: Pratap and Saibalini float almost inseparably along with the mighty current of time set in motion by the novelist. There is action and reaction between the two stories of Pratap-Saibalini and Mirkasem-Dalani. The sub-action is never allowed to outshine.
the main action. History is more effectively exploited, it takes interest in all the characters according to their need and status. This balance of the various factors has helped create the excellent passion movement which is the soul of its plot. And this testifies to the author's grip over the mechanism of Chandrasekhar. Mrinalini is different.

Part IV has the tonal effect of Part II; in both there is good assemblage of factors necessary for a novel of action. But when the movements is unsymmetrical, natural potentialities lose intrinsic value. We are now treated to the fine spectacle of the Pasupati story in a kaleidoscope at the cost of the main strand. Sidetracking of it is not a lapse if this helps gaining added momentum. Bankim himself does it in Kanthkundala with admirable success (Parts III & IV). There is logic in it, the logic of organic development. But in Mrinalini, a gap seems to widen between this part and the proceeding one (Part III). The Pasupati-Monorama action acquires increasing strength and rides rough-shod over the logic of proportion. Its passion content surpasses that of the main narrative, the focus is dimmed in the process. The Hemachandra-Madhabacharya incident (ch. 12) serves as an anti-climax to the staggering first story.
Perhaps this is true to the facts of history. But the laws of technique demand dramatic verisimilitude, truthfulness to a uniformity of pattern. Preparing for a promising victory round a heroic man of action and then giving him complete failure and making him accept it meekly, are incongruous in the system of art. The main character of the sub-plot has won his way, in inverse ratio, to the position of a de facto hero. The first strand in Mrinālinī postulates for its hero relentless struggle that may raise him even to the height of tragic grandeur. In Chandrasekhar for example - the death of Pratap is an inevitable conclusion. Lyrical pull in Mrinālinī is too strong to allow the actionelement to come to a formal close in the normal course. The matter-of-fact, compromise formula arrived at the end, is against the natural development of art. An extreme case of this type of technical improbability occurs in the last stage of Ananda Math: the difference is one of degree, not of kind.
Quintessence of art is generally contained in the last part of plot management. Bankim is sometimes not with Shakespeare in this vitally important factor of technical consistency. In Ānanda Math and Dāvi Chandurāni, for example, the tempo has not been kept at an even pressure; in Krimālini, the case is worse. The novelist has assembled sixteen chapters - the greatest in any part in Krimālini - for resolving the Pasupati-Monorama tangle. This part alone has given to the novel a design other than that intended by the author: it is Pasupati and Monorama who have turned out to be the focus of interest. The hero and the heroine crop up at the end of the pattern, perhaps by the sufferance of the novelist, not by the right of art. They do not further the action for which they were created. Instead, this straw hero is again given some future responsibility, which is outside the compass of the plot under discussion. Economy of narrative in the sub-action could have been made in favour of the thematic episode. The splendid fourteenth chapter in which the traitor's punishment is described, loses its edge in this context. The reader mistfully remembers the grand panorama of affective scenes in the last part of Rāsīnchha for what impression logical uniformity of plot might realise.

Two general observations on the design of Krimālini are called for: (a) the appropriateness of craft in Part IV which relates to plot, and (b) the tendency of the whole work which relates to design.

(a) This point has already been touched upon. It has been pointed out that there is an inner conflict in the technique applied to delineate the character of Henchandra. The pattern of his behaviour is not in obedience to the logic of art.
Loyalty to history is no cause for disturbing symmetry; if the structure leans towards "truth of fact," without due preparation, art becomes a casualty. One example has been cited. Here is another pointing to the contradiction of his nature:
The man fulminates like a hero but behaves like a dilettante, as he is made to do by his creator. He has no knowledge at all of the developments in the city he is expected to save. The hero is known to his valet. Digbijoy cannot take his master too seriously at first: perhaps he looks at him in open-mouthed wonder. The reader is tempted to share the feelings of Digbijoy.

I have tried to show that the overgrowth of the sub-plot is a structural defect. The cause of it is the fumbling of the craftsman: Pasupati has thrived on the want of resolution of Hemchandra.

b) The second point is about the spirit of the novel. The main plot is in the form of a romantic comedy and it occasions a display of passion and sentiment. A part of its fabric is the lyrical wealth, which is in keeping with the tone and climate of a romantic comedy. The popular conception of Kanalkundalā, as a poetic romance, refers to its substance only; its form is
rigorously prosaic and intellectual. Technically considered, Kanalkundali is an antithesis to Mrinalini, which is poetic both in form and substance.

In Mrinalini Bankim has tried to dovetail a romantic comedy into a romance of action of a serious pattern. A formal geometric line is difficult to materialise in such a mixed type. It is like placing a romantic hero on the airy background of a Rosalind-Orlando story, and then putting upon him the duty of a deliverer of a benighted nation. Othello would cease to be his noble self if he was to play the part of a love-sick Romeo and a heroic man of action rolled into one. A poetic element in an action novel should be measured and made respondent to the general accent, as in Ananda Math. In Mrinalini, the old Vidya-Sundar spirit is obtrusive, usurping more than its share of plot. The villain of the pattern is the Malini character typified in Girijaya.

Bengali fiction offers an interesting parallel of mixed techniques in Rabindranath's Char Adhvay. There is in it the same unsuccessful blend of the incongruous elements of poetry and action. Atin and Ela are the eternal lovers; lyrical effusions come out of their delicate lips, but they are rigidly placed in a setting of terrorism. Char Adhvay is to be a novel of passion and sentiment, as Mrinalini is to be one of action and movement; the theme of the former is a picture and requires pure picture treatment; it is futile to represent Atin and Ela as action-conscious by giving the book the look of a drama. The atmosphere of sensationalism, of hair-breath escapes and anything-might-happen probabilities are anachronisms in the odorous background created by the sweet-tongued lovers. Gravitation of
The story is towards outpouring of emotions: a tea-shop or a ruined building becomes a convenient rendezvous for a mouthful of billing and cooing of the winged pair. Sarat Chandra's approach to a like subject has not been just as much a failure on account of his sense of methodology; the defects in Pathe Dabi are to be traced to the author's latitude to some incidents, and not to the use of the general technique.

The wrong trend of craft in Chār Māhāyā could perhaps have been obviated by replacing the dramatic pattern with an overall pictorial method, as in Pathe Dabi. Rabindranath's is to be pre-eminently a novel of passion, not of action like Bankim's. A similar overhauling in another direction is needed in the case of Kriṣṇālīna as well. The romantic comedy element of the first story cannot fit in, by any amount of dexterous hammer-stroke, into the action narrative of the second.

The Addendum gives a post-dated credit certificate to the unheroic hero. Long before this Addendum the plot should have closed, the story come to an end. This lingering on, after the technical close, is a feature in Bankim in Kriṣṇakānter Will and Sītārām. In Rabindra, there is an explanation at the end in the form of an epilogue. This method, a part of Bankim's direct utterances, will be taken up for discussion in the Appendices.

Notes and References

1. Ray, Dr Nihar Ranjan, Bāṅgālīr Itihās, Book Emporium.
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The quotations from the novels of Bankim Chandra have been taken from the Sahitya Parisad edition.