CHAPTER IV
NOVELS OF BANKIM CHANDRA

Kapālkundalā (1866)
Vishavriksha (1873)
Chandraśekhar (1875)
Krishnakānter Will (1878)

All the four novels included in this chapter have, what I have called, an emotion-intensive pattern. The motif in all of them is passion content. In Kapālkundalā, that is represented through the medium of a rather simple plot; in Vishavriksha and in Chandraśekhar, the medium is highly complex. Krishnakānter Will harks back to the pattern of the first. There is difference in setting due to the difference in matter. Kapālkundalā begins with romance, whereas the other three have the background of stark realism from the start. But this comparative difference in matter makes no change in their general design and technique. Emphasis has been placed in these four books on the human, and not on the external, factors of action and spatial dimension. It seems the objective of the novelist in all of them is to realise emotional refinement.

Bankim's second novel Kapālkundalā has the mark of a confident professional. It is apparent he has turned the corner and reached the highway of his own making. He has woven into it a delicate fabric of light and shade in which
not a thread is too few or too many. The plot is based on a simple triangular pattern of love and jealousy leading to catastrophe. This structure seems to be the expression of a central problem: the reaction of a woman of Nature to the social way of life. That is the focus of the novelist. His procedural technique in illustration of the thesis, has been extremely simple. The story follows almost a geometric line of development with a faint touch of curve. Tragic intensity gathers within a small compass. If Purgesñandini is taken as the norm of a Bankim novel, Kapālkundalā is less by one third and is one of the shortest of his major novels. But perhaps it is second to none in point of compactness and emotional intensification.

Inspiration to the basic element in the story might have been furnished by the widespread romantic spirit of the age. The character of the heroine after whom the book is named, seems to be a concrete embodiment of that spirit. She is a foundling, brought up from her infancy by a Kapalik for the carnal requirements of his religion. His habitation is the mystery region of a dense forest near the sea. Deserted by his companions, Nabakumar, the hero, strays into his clutches; he is taken as a godsend for his requisite number of sacrifices. The girl delivers him from the Tantric axe but is herself entangled in a marriage bond. From this queer situation springs the action of the novel. There is no doubt the genesis of the story is laid in one of the most romantic of scenes imaginable. It requires no small ability to bring over the theme within the pale of society and give dramatic verisimilitude to it.

Kapālkundalā has some semblance to the structure of Purgesñandini. There is the same bouncing of the story, the
triangular love episode in the plot round a hero. But in the juxtaposition of different elements and in the balancing of them into a composite unit, it is fundamentally different. Stress has been shifted from action to emotion. In the evolution of plot, *Kanâlkundâla* seems to be one of the most effortless novels in any literature. Crisis is involved at the very beginning of the narrative: a man with a social psychosis behind him, marries a woman who is absolutely uninhibited. They form an unstable match and passion movement is inherent in such a union. In the course of the journey home, the hero's long-lost first wife, wandering as Moti Bibi, joins them. The triangle is complete. The story develops almost by its own nature. We wait in suspense not for action but for the exposition of conflicting passions. An emotion-intensive pattern comes into being from these factors.

The narrative has followed a simple geometric line. *Kanâlkundâla* is not so much a study of strands as of a clear, pointed concept. The second strand of Moti Bibi mixes imperceptibly with the first and becomes a part of the general structure. Thenceforth, the story develops in an organic, symmetrical form, as if there is only one action in the plot. It seems the novelist has been possessed by, what Henry James calls, "a compositional centre, a presiding intelligence," and he seeks to illustrate this centre or intelligence through a concrete design. Once the clue was ready, the plot formed by itself. It is a miracle how Bankim made the attempt and accomplished the deed. But he did it, not by a series of extraordinary tours de force as Joyce in *Ulysses*. He did it with so much facility and naturalness.

At first Bankim just imports a heroine from a mystery land and sets his hero before her. The first two chapters that describe how the hero is stranded in that god-forsaken land, serve the
purpose of a prologue. They are not connected with the main story, but they serve the important function of starting dramatic action. A very telling start is made in relation to the character of the next strip of the narrative. The switch on to action is done by Bankim after a good deal of preparation. Tolstoy in Anna Karenina jumps off into action without any preliminary work. The loss in dramatic effect is evident in such a method. Lubbock may not be altogether right in suggesting some fictional description to set off Anna's reaction to her immediate environment. This could have been done, as in Kāpālkundalā, by some scenic chapters as by pictures; the need was not for a particular kind of art, but for some factual material. That would best explain her conduct in relation to a particular situation. The emphasis on "picture" as opposed to "action" appears to be untenable, for a picture developed, creates action. Bankim makes the object of his vision clear by a balance of scenes and pictures according to circumstances.

The rough outline of the prologue serves as a foil to the romantic scene that follows presently:

Anna Karenina

...
The racy vernacular language of the pilgrims, their narrow attitude towards life, are a contrast to the breadth and profundity of the main action to follow. The hero has a streak of poetry in him. His words of appreciation of the beauty of Tāl and Tamil trees and of the dark foamy endless waters, are unwelcome Farrago to the home-sick, uncharitable brother pilgrims. The fairy woman is placed in the midst of society formed by these people. A note of discord is thus wonderfully struck at the outset, as in Chandrāssékhar, Sīrām, and Rālsincha.

Kapālkundalā has a dramatic structure. It is divided into four parts which might be taken as Acts in a drama. A quotation
from Macbeth occurs in Part III (ch. 7); the novelist specially refers to this play in some other connection in a chapter in the first edition, dropped later on. The rapidly moving speed of Macbeth seems to be the characteristic feature of the story of Kapalkundala as well. Its narrative proceeds towards a pointed dramatic impression, in the course of which action is sublimated to the level of pure artistic sentiment.

Action proper begins from Part II. Part I is preparatory in character, but its little incidents have a telling effect upon the plot. Kapalkundala comes trailing clouds of poetry. Nabakumar looks at her spell-bound. The vast sea-shore, the angelic form, the trilling question in twilight, create a unique piece of poetic picture. We look at it through the wondering eyes of Nabakumar. It is passing fair, sufficient to throw into relief the pathos of the last scene by the cremation grounds. The story gains dramatic force. The tone of the narrative and the value of the lines that we watch, are enhanced. A problem is set, hinted, suggested. We wait for the shape of things to come from this picture gathered from the dreamland of the artist.

After this incident, the story moves in a dramatic way. Part I reaches the heroine to the threshold of a new career. She is married and enters social life with a passive resignation. All the events happen to the complete satisfaction of art and yet with an economy that is rare in fictional technique. Compression of the story element has not in any way marred its emotional quality. Rather the plot has been balanced with that objective.
fully realised. The Kapalik is accounted for in one chapter (chap. 7) of half a page. Only about one hundred and twenty-five words are used to describe his mad search for the victims and his dangerous fall from the dunes. By any standard, this chapter is a marvel of craftsmanship. It is interesting to note that most of the chapters in Kapalkundala are rather short, and yet proportioned and symmetrical. They invest the novel with the shape and tone of a drama.

Part I has three stages: Nabakumar left ashore, his encounter with the Kapalik, his marriage with Kapalkundala. In Part II, again, there is a three-stage action: Nabakumar chancing upon Moti Bibi, Kapalkundala's meeting with the latter, and the Kapalkundala-Shyama episode. The plot becomes complicated in the second strip. Marriage is solemnised because the "presiding intelligence" demands it of the plot. The design of the novel is to be formed of the growing and deepening difficulties that would be in evidence in the life of the heroine after marriage. Bankim's purpose is not to create poetry out of life in the way of Rabindranath of Seshar Kavita. Kapalkundala rapidly moves from poetry and romance into the opposite direction of realism and the prose of existence. Moti Bibi's entry into the plot gives that turn to the story. The scope of the novel is widened and its emotional appeal increases in volume.

The heroine is evidently to become a tragic character. As the plot is to centre round her by the force of the title which is so very apt, the reader is now offered an idea about her movement in the society of man. Four of the six chapters (chaps. 3-6) in Part II describe the static conduct of the unsophisticated woman. The novelist has to make her different from Miranda who
enthusiastically welcomes a brave new world. Kapalkundala is perhaps cast in the mould of Deadmuna. It is good that she is made a flat character, indifferent to everything. A very revealing incident is the one in which she makes a gift of the ornaments presented to her by her disguised co-wife.

Chapter 6 elaborates this sentiment through the medium of, what is called in dramatic literature, the "mechanical personage,"
Shyasia. She coaxes and cajoles Kapalkundala with exotic words and tempting songs, but fails. It is the reader who observes through Shyama the gradual development of the story round the focal point. Her view of Kapalkundala is part of the reader's view of her. Only in a few scenes in which she has the need to appear, she does her duty well. She helps deepen dramatic intensity by showing the heroine's insensitivity and by acting as the ready-at-hand agent for the tragic turn of the narrative. Shyama is one of the first specimens of the mechanical character of which Bankim chandra makes a very liberal and dramatic use in his later novels. Rabindranath makes a very happy use of this character in the Dehri episode of Nauka Dubi. Saratchandra's treatment of such a character in the Dehri scene of Grihadāha is not quite as good.

Part III is a link connecting the preceding and the succeeding ones. This part might be described as a dramatic centrepiece. The steadily rising current of emotion comes up almost to the brim by the full impact of a second inflow. Moti Bibi alias Padmabati joined the narrative in Part II from which point she became a part of the plot. Now she makes her existence felt by increasing passion content of the story. The design of Kapalkundala is surcharged with it from Part II; only the introductory part is, as it must be, comparatively static, although stirring with potential energy. Bankim's sense of craft is astonishing. His eyes are fixed upon the compositional centre and he boldly prepares Padmabati as the agent of destruction. The main story is sidetracked and all the seven chapters are devoted to narrating her volte-face.

The emotion content of the novel is enhanced not to any
small measure by the enveloping action of history in the second
action. Bankim brings Padma Bati from a place which is
diametrically opposite to that of Kapalkundala. She comes,
mature in age and experience, from the sordid atmosphere of the
imperial capital. The density and dimension of her personality
are directly reflected on the narrative. If like a modern
novelist, Bankim had discovered her from a dirty corner of our
society, the structure would have lost much of its massiveness.
He had a trained faculty for making successful use of the
enveloping action of history; perhaps his time cast a very agreeable-
influence on his plan and purpose. He hit upon the same technique
in his very first novel: Birendra Singha and Bimala were introduced
into the plot surrounded with the halo of romance of the historical
capital of Delhi.

The swelling tragic passion attains
consummation in the most vehemently drawn Part IV. A very skilful
plan is made for effecting the final catastrophe. All the
characters have been sufficiently rendered and they are now deployed
in their proper positions. By a very clever use of craft, the
novelist brings over the Kapalik in the last scene of Part III.
He must play a full part in the evolution of the plot. Similarly,
the heroine who was made to disappear dramatically in the whole of
Part III, is brought over and placed squarely before the combined
might of her opponents. The Kapalik is guided by crude revenge,
Padma Bati by jealousy in the literal sense, and Nabakumar by
jealousy in the technical sense. Desdemona becomes the victim
of the intrigue only of Iago. Three intrigues confront the
much more "never bold" Kapalkundala and make the passion movement
of the novel denser, intenser.
There are apparently occasions when the craft of fiction has got to proximate to that of the drama. Curiously enough, Kanalkundalā resembles Othello in a substantial measure in point of technique. Two authors in different branches of literature had to adopt the same method in tackling a similar situation. In both the works, the motive force is jealousy or suspicion, a concomitant in both of unequal partnership. Shakespeare's treatment of jealousy is more comprehensive and it extends over the last three Acts of the play. Bankim has to contract the scope of jealousy within Part IV as the design of his novel is different. But he obtains no less tragic grandeur by dramatically heightening, like Shakespeare, the entire situation.

A rough factual survey is sometimes revealing. Of the thirty-one chapters in Kanalkundalā, as many as thirteen have headlines from English texts, and six of them from Shakespeare. Incidentally, there is no such text in any other novel of Bankim Chandra. Extracts have been borrowed, among others, from Othello and Macbeth, and Kanalkundalā seems to possess something of the movement of Macbeth and the structure of Othello. The likeness is perhaps trifling, greatly superficial, but it exists. Bankim's study of Shakespeare is not exactly a matter of conjecture. It is significant he wrote a fine comparative essay in Bengali on the three kindred characters, Desdemona, Miranda, and Sakuntala.

The compulsive course of the action in Kanalkundalā is towards tragedy. Any other ending is not consistent with the logic of its facts. The fictional design of the book is in the form of a tragic drama and both Nabakumar and Kapalkundala have tragic traits ingrained in them. There was want of a symmetry in the first edition version of the book. A sense of poetic
justice prevailed upon the author; he rescued the hero with the help of the Kapalik: 4

This reading is, first, physically absurd, and, secondly, technically illogical.

In Part IV (chap. 6), the novelist presented the Kapalik with broken hands after the fall from the sand-hill in Part I:

One thus physically incapacitated in the hands, can scarcely swim. It is difficult to imagine such a man recovering another
from the surging wares. The novelist seems to have forgotten his earlier commitments about the power of his characters.

The second point that relates to craft, is stronger and more cogent.

The predetermined nature of the pattern was indicated by the novelist himself at the beginning of Part IV of the first edition: it was a pure author-comment chapter, omitted later on, about fate and destiny. It seems he hinted at the a type of modified fatalism as opposed to "pure or Asiatic Fatalism" as the moving spirit of the course of events in Kafis Kandala:

And this chapter closed with:

But the novelist of the first edition wavered when the denouement drew near. If the plot had been handled objectively, the conclusion would have been as subsequently amended. The hero and the heroine are such stuff as tragic characters are made on; to follow any other course is to go against the fine touches of
preparation. Oracular foreshadowing just after their marriage (Part I, chapter 9) and Kapalkundala’s reference to it to Shyama (Part II, chap. 6) keep up and strengthen that idea. The jealous hero is tied to the same wheel. There is no way back for either of them.

Bankim’s tumbling art as observed in the first edition of Kapalkundala, has some similarity with Thomas Hardy’s occasional winding up of episodes under suspicion. In The Return of the Native, for example, snakes bite old women and despairing wives drown themselves in handy pools to save the novelist from trying situations. Application of Deus ex machina is not a sound technique, but a compromise with it. The saving of Nabakumar involves providential interposition in another form. But Bankim always obtained spectacular success in revision. The sentimental end of the first edition of Kapalkundala and its masterly emendation thereafter, stand in antithesis:

Damodar Mukherjee’s attempt at reconstructing the story of Kapalkundala in the form of a comedy, is ill-conceived. The
The writer's pen is not the magician's wand; characters do not change for the pleasure of the novelist. Nabakumar and Kapalkundalā are foredoomed to tragic death on account of their inherent weakness. To try to rehabilitate such people in a happy and peaceful domestic life "ever after," is to play the conjurer. It is like thinking of Othello and Desdemona somehow avoiding the catastrophe and enjoying themselves sometime after in a cocktail party. Wishful thinking is one and logic of craft is another. There is something which is called the propulsion capacity of technique. The final version of Kapalkundalā is in response to it.

Vishavriksha is the second novel of the emotion-intensive type. Its emotion is one of the most intense as its pattern is one of the most complex of Bankim's works in this line. Equally peculiar is the nature of its structural arrangement. It is the only full-fledged novel in which the chapters—there are fifty of them in it—are not divided into parts. In Vishavriksha, the lineal geometric movement of Kapalkundalā seems to have come back in a realistic setting; the novelist has been captured by the story which carries him along to a finite end. One incident catches up another in a natural sequence all along in the body of the plot. There is no faltering, no stiff ragged end, no crossing the stile in the course of narration; neither is there any visible tangible mark of joining the different strata of such a complex pattern. Cross-currents form whirls and eddies, but these are deep below in the subterranean region of the current. Up on the surface there is brimful but noiseless autumnal flow, extensive, voluminous, but smooth and placid. The reader can sail on its silken surface without hearing a disturbing moan or murmur.
The perspective of the book is an exact antithesis to that of Mārīnālīni. A start is made in the usual way of Bankim; in a lone journey, the hero Nagendra picks up a helpless girl, Kundanandini, who forms the base of the first triangle. Deeper significance is lent to the design of the novel by its allegorical title. It is this character that develops into a veritable bane of life. Nagendra—Suryamukhi’s peaceful home is poisoned by her very naiveté and her seductive charms create complications that spread into a second story. This common character draws in Deendra and Hira. If there is a basic piece of two triangles, it is Kundanandini; or, to change the metaphor, she is the keystone in an arch. A tangled fabric springs up on it, a fabric which exhibits as much physical workmanship as it excites emotional sensibility. The two actions meet and mingle in the form of an organism. Dramatic intensification of feelings occurs through the interplay of all these characters set like distinct identities in one concrete pattern. The novelist’s focus is this woman. The predominating tone of the pattern is what she develops into, by the interaction of divergent forces. She develops into an emotional being, which is reflected on the pattern.

Harmonious blending of strands has given to Kanālkundālā a dignity of tone and a mass of impression. But a single lineal action, however forceful in its representation, has a limit in its effect. Durgesrāndini has not completely succeeded in that essential attribute of creating dramatic emotion for want of cooperation in the plot constituents. The loss is more than made up in Vishavriksha; its two different stories bifurcate the structure and yet they imperceptibly coalesce in a homogenous form. There is life in it, it has
volume and momentum. In the process of movement, characters unfold themselves. They bring about complication, reach a climacteric of emotion. Resolution follows as if by the laws of nature in a sustained note of emotion. Its design is dominated by this note.

An analysis of this craft centres round the question: how has the novelist marshalled incidents and episodes to produce this interesting phenomenon? Broadly speaking, the art of Vishavriksha is the art of Kapalkundala strengthened and intensified. In other words, progress seems to be marked both in point of quantity and quality. In comparison with Kapalkundala, formal appreciation of Vishavriksha is better because of its complete realistic setting and broader structure. The next title to be discussed, Chandrasekhar, perhaps goes a step further in the same direction.

In Vishavriksha, romance as such is buried deep, a sordid aspect of life is dissected and then the parts assembled with nostalgic realism. A superstructure rises steadily, or rather quickly, on the intellectual plane. The problem of the widow moulds the pattern. Rabindranath referred in gratefulness to the grandeur of its emotional content, as he felt its spell in an attempt of the theme in his own way. The centralising picture of Bankim is definite, the movement is unimpeded. There are three distinct stages in the run-on nature of the story. The texture has the look of a modern free-verse poem, like Stephen Spender's, for example. The movement is worked up step by step in a dramatic fashion as in such a poem. Chapters 1 to 8 constitute a genesis. From chapter 9 to 28, action rises and passion to the maximum point of height, and the rest of the plot (chaps. 29-50) is devoted to softening them down.

Kira serves as a foil to Kundanandini who is
the focus. The wistful passivity of the one is set against the undisguised aggressiveness of the other. Deshendra and Hira are mechanical characters; Shyama in Kanalkundal is one such, and a good one. They help mould the pattern when they are gently incorporated in the texture. The high life of Nagendra-Suryamdi is supplemented by the blatant crudeness of the auxiliary tale in the second strand. Movement is secured by a balance of the two. A complete picture comes out, the development of action is in stages leading towards an ultimate vision. Chapter 8 finishes Part I. Kundemandini is orphaned widowed. This is a logical step when the objective is to show the problem of a widow under certain circumstances.

The strength of the artist is evident in his daring procedure. In many of his works he obtrusively steps in to state something in a direct way about the appropriateness of certain turns or touches in the narrative:

As if he wants to say, this has been ordained by him and needs must be. Only a novelist with an absolute sureness about his craft, could make such a categorical statement. The weight and sweep of his structural design justify his pride, his arrogance in the field of craft, the projecting of his personality in the handling of materials in fiction. If we digress into his life, the same rigid and dignified conduct in official
and private dealings, will be noticed. Style is the man, so runs an adage; even the temper of Bankim is reflected in his literary technique as well. The time has come for us to remember this fundamental characteristic of the man.

A solid groundwork has been laid within the eight chapters that comprise the first part. Kundanandini is presented in chaps. 1-2; a very simple journey by boat becomes the nucleus of a plot. Chap. 3 is a unique example of what is called dramatic foreshadowing. The dream picture contained in it, is not a mere conventional allegory furnished in some of his novels; it forms the basis of the whole design of Vishavriksha. Nagendra and Hira, the main characters of the two actions, are pointed as instruments of her destruction. The dramatic content of the whole story is placed before the reader. Beyond the imminent line of fortune, her dismal future is hinted, indicated. This has a haunting emotional suggestion in the content of the whole plot. Kapalkundala’s reading of an omen at the initial stage of the novel, relates to the tragic catastrophe of an individual, although another is dragged by it. The colouring of chapter 3 of Vishavriksha is wider; it covers the whole design of the book.

The patently simple preliminary part testifies to Bankim’s courage of conviction. He has created and dismissed for ever here two characters in response to the demand of plot. Champa in chap. 4 shows her momentary existence in offering help to Kundanandini; she has neutralised a chapter of author narration. The case of Taracharan is a better example of the author’s craft-mindedness. His function is just to marry the problem character and leave her a youthful widow. And hence he lives for a spell in the text of the book. The writer seems to be carried along by the force of the story; he deals with situations as they appear by the impact of the theme. Rise and fall of men and women are decided by that urge. It is this
urge, again, that spreds out the plot at this stage towards Suryamukhi and Haradeva Ghosal. This is in preparation for their more important role in the plot hereafter.

The mechanical centre seems to occur at the end of Part I when Kundanandini is left a widow in the house of Nagendra. The next part which extends from chap. 9 to 28, contains the dramatic centre of the story. An emotional-intensive pattern develops with the full amalgamation of the second action which already penetrated into the previous part. Debendra and Hira are drawn into the pit, Kunda becomes the pivotal side on which another triangle is built up. A combined triangle seems to be an extreme form of a complex novel.

Difficulties about a sympathetic understanding of the hapless woman, radiating so much influence on either side, are countered by placing her in the texture of the plot on rigid lines : she is represented as more sinned against than sinning. Nagendra is drawn towards her by an emotional upsurge, Debendra by crude passion. Hira helps linking up the two strands by her headless, motivated adventurism. Technically it is a role betwixt and between. The interaction of desire of these curious specimens of human beings gives the novel a unified pattern. A spiral line passes into a curve. Both the subdued first episode and the bold second one give rise to dramatic emotion.

The dramatic personalities seem to be forced into movement by the swift concurrence of events. Kunda is turned over several years so that she might possess the value of a central character; she is brought near the end of her teens, powerful enough to startle and waylay all. As it is not to be the lean experience of a monolithic structure, the fabric of the second tale is prepared alongside. It is not a question of dovetailing of
two elements, it is rather taking up an element of the plot that is the flesh of its flesh. Debendra enters the structure through a lyrical door, in the clever guise of a Vaishnavi. This is perhaps a relic of the Vidya-Sundar fabric again, but utilised with superb art. The attempt in Vishavriksha is towards passion movement; the poetical colouring of this episode fits in with the texture of the plot. The mixing of it with action has led to an anomaly in Mrinalini.

The planning of Vishavriksha is symmetrical. Its threads do not follow the method of touch and go; they work in the form of crossing and interweaving. Real art is to interrelate, to counterpoise, to keep all the elements in harmony with the pattern. Hira who is the obverse of Debendra, wanders like an enchanted fly; in this process she brings the two actions nearer. The problem is to describe the development of Nagendra's infatuation. A very intelligent device is used by Bankim to unfold the first changes that take place in the apparently good man. Suryamukhi is the fittest person to discover his downfall. She dramatises the situation through letters written to her husband's sister Kamalmoni (chap. 11).

The novelist's handling of this second part is done with dramatic insight. It rolls into its coils the first faint growth of the subsidiary tale and then moves to and fro towards a climax. There is a constant, ceaseless intellectual activity in cross-currents revolving round Kundanandini. She is entangled, struggles inwardly (ch. 16) while a mighty array of circumstances charge against her. She feels fascinated like innocent Eve and yet resists temptation as best as she can. A frail effort at withdrawal from the scene is made but circumstances hurl her back into the pit of the plot (ch. 25). She confesses her weakness to Kamal and submits to fate. The objective of the artist in all this physical juxtaposition of incidents is to heighten
dramatic emotion that gives rise to passion movement. This
is splendidly realised by the narration of incidents which connect
the different strands of the plot at the same time. The tempo
flags when the complication draws nearer ( chap. 25-27 ). It is
desirable that there should be less movement when the narrative
has come to a head. Kundan's marriage marks the end of the part.
Complication is hinted by Suryamukhi's letter ( chap. 11-12 ) ; it ma-
matures through the same technique ( chap. 28 ). Suryamukhi leaves
the house. The plot reaches the climax.

With chapter 30, the end piece starts and resolution
follows. After the sensational development of actions, culminating
in chap. 28, the author appears on the scene to point a moral
( chap. 29 ). It is a pure author comment chapter touching upon
the harmful effect of unrestrained passion. There is scope, in
the interval of two stages of the narrative, for such a performance.
A case can easily be made out in favour of this technique. The
matter of these pages relates to a commentary upon the course of
events in their bearing upon the title. It has a massiveness
peculiar to a Bankim novel, and the general pattern of the whole
structure seems to absorb it quite in its body. A modern novel
which is generally built of earth on quick-sand, can scarce pretend
to any weight in design, and consequently such an overload of
ethical annotation would be deadening to it as a physical element and
unsymmetrical as an aesthetic one. Chapter 29 seems to flow
from the process of logic.
This has the touch of dramatic foreshadowing adumbrated in chapter 3. Bankim points attention to the main story of Nagendra-Kundanandini, in which Suryamukhi now takes an active part; he leaves out of the picture the second one that supports it and is inseparably associated with it. Pure technical approach compelled him not to refer to the feeder element. But it exists, and develops hereafter in gathering intensity and volume. The chief characteristic of the third round of the narrative is the balanced development of the two actions. On the emotional plane the canvas widens. This is effected not by emphasising physical activity which is the hallmark of romances. In Vishavriksha, Bankim has turned attention from the physical world into the domain of the human mind. He has employed a different type of craft for creating a feeling of emotion, which is his purpose in this novel.

It is a treat to have to elucidate the technical beauty of the closing part of Vishavriksha. Satiety starts with a vengeance too soon, Nagendra's reaction is captured
in one small chapter (ch. 31). Some time is to be indicated as having passed before the momentum could be restored and raised up; again the epistolary technique is harnessed to advantage (Chap. 32).

This dramatising a difficult situation through the new medium of letters, is an improvement upon the usual author narrative method of Bankim. A biographer has stated that there is some reflection of real life in this chapter, perhaps that accounts for its impressiveness all the more.

It is also to be noted in this connexion that in Vishayriksha many cramped ends have been similarly smoothed out.
by the indirect dramatic technique. A rather sudden sudden letter becomes a handy medium to reveal Nagendra's subconscious fascination for the girl Kunda (ch. 5); in presenting a picture of Nagendra's palatial residence, Kunda is made the focus (ch. 7). These are just stray examples from Part I only.

A curious feature of the last strip is the amount of attention paid to the different characters. Kundanandini has been made to move a full circle. A rounded character loses its utility to the structure; she is put into the background. She finishes her role for the time being as soon as she has been effective as the bane of life in chapter 31; she is made to reappear after a pretty long period in chapter 47 to finish her career in the novel. The artist turns to the second action in its relation to the first. The story rotates between Suryamukhi-Nagendra and Debendra-Hira, backwards and forwards. This type of development is maintained up to the end, the pattern of the novel becomes symmetrical all through. The action of the first tale is now generally outside the perimeter of the plot and that of the second within it. Summary style alternates with the scenic. Our sense of dramatic presentness is strengthened by the naturalness and the pictorial quality of the rendering:

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It is in this context that the grandeur of the picture gallery of chapter 44 is to be appreciated. To think of it as a mere show-piece, is to misunderstand the whole design of Vishavriksha. Bankim has endeavoured to crystallise in this one scene the entire dramatic emotion created by the seesaw of incidents in the narrative. They converge upon the mind of the hero Hagendra who is torn by a hundred pulls. A descriptive patch is wrung out of his heart as an objective representation of his subjective emotions. His rumination in the dreary background of a ruined home, assumes, in fact, the form of a picturesque survey of his life, past and present: it is a chapter of summing up of the whole story. Emotional intensification is at the height. The first strand terminates with this scene.

But the end of the plot at this point would turn Vishavriksha into a facile romantic comedy. It must move on, with the momentum it has gathered, to cover within its fold the catastrophic episodes of Kundanandini and Debendra-Bira. The former woman is the focal point of interest; the last of her life is to decide the pattern of the book. The sub-plot
originates from her. In return, this sub-plot enhances her stature by giving her vicissitudes of fortune. There is a link from one end of the book to the other. Artistic finish extends beyond the apparently formal close and is reached only when aesthetic pleasure is secured within the design.

The second story is standing ripe and mature, ready to drop. Although this is a sub-plot to serve as a foil to the primary object of vision, it acquires might by the frequency of interest devoted to it. A subsidiary action serves a dramatic purpose when it lends colour to the theme. It is Hira who is the architect of the mechanics of plot at this crucial stage of the story. She runs headlong into perdition herself and helps finish one action by holding the poisoned chalice to the lips of Kundanandini. Tragic gloom envelops the atmosphere. In the course of events the title gains an actual and widespread significance. The complication is resolved in the death of the complicating agency. Complete desolation settles upon the last part of the novel as lunacy overtakes Hira and approaching death darkens Debendra's lingering days.

Vishavriksha has a tragic pattern. Death august and royal, is a symbolic end of such a set-up. A draft outline of this novel seems to close with the removal of Kunda, the cathartic objective is perhaps fulfilled with that incident. But dramatic emotion of this realistic tragedy is incomplete without the far-reaching consequences of the same poison illustrated in a different scale in the supplementary anecdote of Hira-Debendra. The importance of the last chapter (30) cannot be overestimated in this respect. The courage of conviction of the novelist is again evident. He jumps over a year after the Kunda episode is cremated and reduced to ashes. Chapter 49 closes:
A victim of Nemesis, deranged, unbalanced, and yet possessing sanity enough to utter curses loud and deep, appears in the role of Nemesis. The lines and colours of the whole design now stand out sharp and clear. It is saturated with intense emotion. Our feeling is that chap. 50 shoots up from the velocity of the original story. Some such overflowing energy seems to be created by the last title under discussion in this chapter, Krishnakanta's Will. Conversely, in Karalkumāśā or Chandrasekhar, tragic intensity is contained within the framework of the plot.

Only one step in the plot development seems to be of doubtful validity. Suryamukhi flees the house.
after Nagendra's second marriage, but she is made to stage a come-back at a very dramatic point of time. This is poetic justice, a got-up romantic coincidence, and not a logically inevitable course. A faint streak of positivism, perhaps ingrained in the author might have led him to make the couple pass through a period of self-purification. That over, he brought about their reunion. The trouble is not with the two old persons again getting united after such a painful separation. But this accidental honeymoon affair so late in the day, seems to be not in harmony with the realistic climate of Vishavriksha. Its note of concord preserved so carefully, is to some extent disturbed. Justice to the good is a temptation, and temptation is a mark of weakness in craft. An objective attitude is more conducive to balance, uniformity, and symmetry. But Bankim put no liberal premium on positivism. Vishavriksha has, on the whole, a very neat pattern, finished with art and surcharged with emotion.

The mere physical paraphernalia of this marvel of a novel, Chandrasekhar, is stupendous. Its array of character and incidents seems to be bewildering. Their scope and extent cover varied spectacles of life. And the conflict and interaction produced by them, are to be apprehended by stretching our imaginative faculty gradually to the farthest limit.

It seems the impact of the intense period of the Vangadārāgān had had its best effect upon this one book of the novelist. In point of composition, it is contemporaneous with Vishavriksha, published a year ago (1279 B.S.), Viśākha Bahasyā (1279-30 B.S.), Kamalākāntar Dantār (1281-2 B.S.), Raśānī (1281-2 B.S.), Kṛishṇākāntar Will (1282 B.S.), and Sāṃvā (1280 & 1282 B.S.). Precision and intellectualism are marked
features in many of them; the entire circle is suggestive of breadth and extent, enhanced greatly by the introduction of the enveloping action of history.

It seems Bankim Chandra has turned history into a very potent instrument for increasing the emotional content of the whole novel. Human beings are set in the context of a fateful time, their interaction gives rise to passion in the narrative and grandeur in the design. Difficult indeed it is to name another among our novels in which there is such a waveline of emotional distribution extending so very intensively over the whole pattern. In the last analysis, the wide and intricate backdrop in Chandrashekhar appears to be almost unparalleled.

Even as one of the most complex of the author’s novels, this one has some peculiarity. The plot of Vishavriksha and Rajani is complex, but the structure is rather compact and close-knit. Nagendra, Kundanandini, Debendra, and Hira of Vishavriksha stand connected in a group like Sachindra, Rajani, Amarnath, and Labanga of Rajani. There is no thread that seems to come out of the tangled web. But a different pattern is observed in Chandrashekhar and Raisingha. From the main plot of Pratap-Saibalini-Foster-Chandrashekhar of the former, and Raisingha-Chanchal Kumar-Aurangzeb-Nirmala of the latter, there hangs in each like a pendant a protruding sub-plot: Dalani-Qutb-Mir Kasem in the first, and Zebunnesa-Moharak-Daria in the second shine with the brilliance of separate plots. This most perplexing type of structure has been formed by placing a plot within a plot, in addition to the double triangular complication in the primary strands. In English fiction, only in Hardy’s peasant personae there seems to occur some form of a straggling, pendant sub-plot.
Chandrasekhar is conceived on a massive scale but a balance has been forged between the plot and the sub-plot, as between the plot and the characters. Some ditherings appear towards the end due to the author's leanings to patriotic and religious principles. The story suffers just a slight jerk, but the vigour of progress is almost unimpaired. This integration of plot and character, the maintaining of a continuous tension through the conflict of characters, give Chandrasekhar the stamp of a dramatic novel. Apparently, here is the art of Kapalkundala elevated to more emotional altitudes. There is an element of Fate which is generally a common factor in a dramatic novel. In Chandrasekhar, as in Kapalkundala, Fate seems to work behind the scene and thus intensify the emotional side of the picture. Pratap and Saibalini are entwined in a net from the childhood when they happened to be playmates. Thenceforth they are inexorably drawn along a path trekked as if by time. Events of the larger world outside their control, guide their course of life and generate passion movement. As the story proceeds from one stage to another, the design of tragic failure and waste assumes a concrete shape. The sub-plot is not a mere decorative frill; it serves to give an additional emphasis of emotion to the action. Thomas Hardy uses his peasants essentially for the same purpose.

The story of Chandrasekhar seems to be managed with the object of creating a feeling of tension in the literary sense. This element common to all the novels of this category, gathers volume in different proportions. A very striking commencement is made by Kapalkundala, in which emotion is exhibited in subdued tones. It becomes intense and almost tangible in Vishavrksha, and consequently there is a change in its art, texture, and background. Chandrasekhar marks a sort of dramatic climax in the development of the emotional factor, which
takes the form of tension. The novelist had to take the help of the historical action in response to the rising tempo of sentiments. He had to extend at the same time, its canvas and spread out its narrative over six parts. Only Raisincha, which has as many as eight parts, seems to surpass it in point of breadth and extent. Krishnakanta Hill registers a fall from the height of profundity of Chandrasekhar, and the dramatic line of development is neatly concluded by this last of series.

The plot of Chandrasekhar issues out of three little intensive chapters that are introductory in character. A part is formed by them, thus increasing the number of parts to seven. It is difficult to think of any other method that could start, in a more impressive way, a novel with an emotion-intensive pattern. If Bankim had lived to witness the decay of his own powers like Swift, he would have pointed to this part of Chandrasekhar and said, "what a genius I had!" The language is simply plastic, liquid, the story evolves by the pressure of time.

The extreme directness of the narrative, its very naivety, are followed up in the other two chapters. Structurally, this part corresponds to the precede in summary form attached to
Rabindranath's *Balia*, which is referred to in the next chapter of this treatise. Ramesh Chandra begins *Madhavi Kankan* (1876) in the manner of *Chandrasekhar*, by putting a girl, Hemalata, against two boys, Srischandra and Narendranath. The dynamism of Bankim's narrative is a clear contrast to the lifeless, unimaginative pattern of the other.

Saibalini, a girl of twelve, is married to a bookworm, Chandrasekhar Sharma, twenty years her older. Pratap's destiny fixes him elsewhere. The story proper begins in Part I eight years after. This direct method of setting forth antecedents in the earlier chapters, is better than some modern novelists' cinematographic flash-back trick. Bankim jumps over time to make the most active character, Saibalini, dramatically fit for an imperial role in the body of the plot. She is at the prime of her youth at twenty, restless, ravenous, and her husband petrified, all passions spent at forty. The same craft went into the making of Kundanandini in *Vishvabriksha*; a surprising similarity exists in the tonal qualities of these two novels. It may be noted that timid calf-love, outside *Durgaspadini*, seems to be not a common feature in the Bankim novel. Even the romantic heroine, Indira, is made alive, seven years after marriage, at the age of nineteen. And so is Radharani. It was left to his successor Rabindranath to portray the delicate beauty of maidenly love.

Part I at once catches up the second strand of Mir Kassem and Dalani Begum. Saibalini's story covers four of the other five chapters of this part. The sentimental, playful children who once took a suicide dive into the river, now evolve themselves in newer forms under the sway of
Bronte and Thomas Hardy seem to resemble Bankim in his art of securing the dynamics of passion by a dramatic method. In each of them the tendency appears themselves in process of time. Bankim's level of attainment may be found to be more refined. He soars on a higher plane: his plot and characters work together to produce intense action - movement and yet they remain in a state of equipoise up to a fair length of the novel. Action which is generally pre-eminent in a romance, is a lively affair in Chandrasekhar which is a dramatic novel. The plot is not made stronger thereby; the emotional quality of the novel always predominates over the element of action. The pure dramatic tension which characterises it, is indeed a rare event even in Bronte and Hardy. The use of craft is ingenious specially in this work, and substantially also in Vishvriksha. Perhaps with that definite end in view, he assembled in the course of five chapters in Part I of Chandrasekhar such a kaleidoscopic group of incidents, galloping, cutting across boundaries, and producing the densest form of human passions.

With the beginning of chap. I in Part I, the novelist introduces the heroine of the subsidiary plot, and the enveloping action of history along with her:
Then we are tossed back to the main plot in the next chapter:

Part I methodically closes an episode:

Saibalini is abducted by Lawrence Foster and Chandrasekhar's home becomes an immediate casualty. The seed of Part I becomes fruitful in the next, in which chapters increase from five to eight in keeping with the growth of momentum. The Dalani story, touched upon in Chapter 1 of Part I, is related in detail in the first three chapters of Part II, and then the plot veers round Pratap and the historical framework. All the dramatis personae are now drawn up in one common progression. Saibalini is evidently the focal point, and notwithstanding a different title, Pratap is her de facto counterpart. The two together seem to churn the tempestuous current of the time by their physical and emotional connexion with it. Chap. 6 contains a heightened phase of emotional encounter to be followed in Krishnakant Will. Chap. 8 is a commentary upon the entire course of events, expressed through the medium of Saibalini.

Tension rises to a pitch in Part III in which the dramatic centre of the plot coincides with the mechanical. The similarity of the technique of Bankim Chandra with that of Shakspere...
has been noted in the chapter on Kanālkundalā. Part III of Chandrasekhar seems to echo the vehemence and the impetuosity of emotion of King Lear. There is a maddening rush of events, the placing of human hearts in conflict side by side, the impassioned outburst of feelings resulting from the constant clashing of principles and personalities. The framework of the plot seems to reel and sway by the force of the passions of the men and women who are themselves moved by the chaotic circumstances of the time. As the sweep of the narrative comes towards a climax, the author's grip over the subject seems to tighten. It seems a tempest is blowing over a vast tract of land which is like a microcosm of the world. The home and the harem, persons great and small from different walks of life, are rocked and swayed by it. Predatory Englishmen masquerading as merchants, timely slip into the troubled scene. A critical period of history seems to be alive, astir, moving towards a change. The cumulative effect produced by all these diverse factors, is a colourful spectacle of life. This, it seems, enthralled Bankim Chandra, and that is the secret of the technique used in Chandrasekhar.

After the Aristotelian middle in chap.6 (part III), there is, to use a happy expression of Edwin Muir,11 "a false exit" in the narrative. Săibalini is practically sterilised, spirited away from the physical boundary of the plot into the mystic altitudes of hill tops or dreary caves. As the positive side of a vital character is neutralised, proportional energy is pumped out of the passion movement of the story. The significance of the gathering historical action loses much of its value in her absence from the scene. The author does not exactly fulfil the logical expectation of the reader when the occasion is ripe for a fuller display of dramatic development through a balance of plot and character.

Perhaps something was up his sleeve. He turned
inside out in the revised edition of Chandrasekhar by appending significant sub-titles to all the six parts: Papiyasi, Pope, Punyar Sparas, Prayaschitta, Prachhadan, Siddhi. They read like theological commentaries upon the text, and in this adjustment of conflicting trends, the spirit of the age is reflected. When scientific detachment governed the attitude towards life, deep below the roots of traditionalism were lying unshaken. Puritanic obscurantism co-existed with a progressive fervour in the character of Vidyasagar. An all-out revolutionary in form and ideals, Madhusudan was after all a recalcitrant Hindu in his choice of themes. The list could be extended to include practically all the leading personalities of the mid-nineeteenth century. In this enigmatic position of being drawn by two equally powerful forces, Bankim Chandra was a man of the age in which he was nurtured.

The resultant of these opposed forces has been twofold in Chandrasekhar. It is a dramatic novel. One constructed ought to be gradually more intensive, a circumference. But from the point of the false exit to Part V, its story seems to move into an opposite direction. The plot has tended to become rather expansive and to some extent discursive. During this stage, the incidents occur comparatively loosely in detached scenes: they seem often to float towards the far circumference. The diversion of focus has naturally led to some loss of tempo. Rajsingha illustrates the use of a correct technique: its incidents that start afar, are assembled and resolved in the central episode of the marriage of Rajsingha and Chanchal Kumari. But it will be shown presently that the extent of this structural unsteadiness in Chandrasekhar is not of material consequence to the design as a whole. The novelist seems to cover up any such technical gap by the rich profusion of his ideas and some special formal accomplishments.

The second aspect of the false exit refers
to the handling of the character of Saibalini. Application of positivist principles to a purely sensuous article (Parts I-III) like Saibalini, is not made in a coherent manner. George Eliot has followed up the Hetty strand more consistently in *Adam Bede*, and has elevated it to the spiritual level more logically and harmoniously. It is not suggested that intensely realistic characters cannot take a turn for a better course of life, and that the lines of *Chokher Bali* of Rabindranath or of *Charitrahin* of Sarat Chandra are invariable. The basic point is that any change in either direction should be carefully prepared in consonance with the laws of probability. Otherwise, there occurs, that has been called in this section, loss of tension.

Chapter 6 (part III) records perhaps the highest point of this tension:

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But this tension breaks out through a false exit. In chapter 8, the plot weakens and the story drifts towards the circumference.

The dramatic set-up is disturbed, the plot squeezes the characters into it by its superior power, the reader finds himself in a romantic atmosphere. Part IV is directly unbalanced by the impact of Part III. It (Part IV) deals with the purgation of the heroine who is made inert and dead to the plot for some time. This part and the next (Part V) have each only four chapters. The conjecture that the momentum has lost driving force, is not altogether unfounded.

But in spite of all these, Bankim Chandra has a wonderful knack of recouping tempo in a different direction. The broad outline might waver but he seems to make up the loss by wonderful internal decoration. There are perhaps occasions when a work of fiction defies rigid laws of technique and yet succeeds by the vigour that inheres in its body. The straggling episode of Saibalini that escapes through a ragged end, acquires grandeur
and radiance; there is a massiveness in it that counterbalances the lost weight in another way. Even the technically weak Part IV is used with advantage to revive, to some extent, the emotional atmosphere that was growing pale in the preceding part. He now manages the situation in a way which is his own; he follows in Part IV mainly, and in the other two parts generally, the most skilful art of a two-pronged narrative. Down below the hill, the other characters struggle desperately against the forces of history. At intervals, the reader is led up to the solitary hills where the repentant woman is passing through a period of catharsis. In the Carlylean sweep of description of the burning, reeking world of corpses and blood, of waves of filth and stench which Saibalini is made to witness, aesthetic sentiments seem to replace imperceptibly the ethical temper the author might have had.

"..."
Part IV details Saibalini's story of its four chapters, only the first is concerned with another character, namely, Pratap Roy. The weakness of the plot seems to be lost in the vigorous stretch of the narrative that follows the jagged end of the plot. The picture of the ironing of the sinner, the power and passion suggested by the scene, elicit admiration. If only the undertone of miracle in the coincidental presence of the mystery man, Chandrasekhar, could have been forgotten, the conflict of emotion of this stage would have the dramatic force of the whole book. Theological colour fades away from the scenic chapters in which the punishment of the unchaste is narrated. The story attains dynamism by the interaction of the characters.

The intensity of penance causes derangement of brain to the woman, and chap. 4 excellently reflects the suffering of a dead soul. Religious purpose, if any, behind the novel is established, but that is not by sacrificing art. What does it matter if the story diverts, for the time being, from the centre? There is ample recompense in:

"What? What? What? What?"
This is the technique applied with success to the Hira episode in *Vishvriksha*. The miracle man is now absorbed as a natural figure in the body politic. Draft, it seems, has again come under the full grip of the novelist.

Part V appears to be thinner in point of intensity, but stronger in its relevancy to the structure. It prepares for the climaxing of the straggling, pendant-like Dalani action. An integration of the different elements takes place by the invisible action of history. Dalani occupies three of the four chapters of this part. The first strand takes the form of a silver lining, although Lawrence Poster has lost his earlier power and Chandrasekhar has been reduced to a mystery man. Then comes the sparkling, startling scene of scheming and plotting in chap. 3. The entire story is drawn to the centre again; it is given a vertical movement so much wanted so long. Part V thus gives fresh infusion of energy to the weakening flow of the narrative.

A work of art might attain greatness in spite of
the casual looseness of its pattern. Percy Lubbock's estimate of *War and Peace* from the standpoint of craft, is an example in point.\textsuperscript{12} What I have called the stupendous nature of the structural equipment of Chandrasekhar, is seen re-established in Part VI. All the loopholes are covered, the story is set in its pristine glory, the plot generates the usual tension once again. The swiftly moving historical events are brought under the control of the plot, so as to put the dramatic pattern of the novel in its real form. A complete harmony is forged between the two strands. From Part V, the tragic episode of Dalani Begum comes down to three chapters of Part VI. It is good that the curtain is drawn over the sub-plot. The Shakespearean trick of a Bianca agent to establish the faithfulness of a dead mistress, is observed in chap. 3; Mir Kasem's discovery of Dalani true character, is technically better done than the artificial method followed in a similar case in *Dumgandini* and *Krinalini*.

The beauty of part VI is apparent in the consummation of the tension created by the dramatic personali\textsuperscript{2}, who are perpetually tossed by the forces of time. When the volume of feeling is expanding, the number of chapters increases to eight. After the pathetic Dalani episode, the primary action naturally takes possession of the rest of the plot. No one is missing from the comprehensive vision of the craftsman; even Lawrence Foster, as the instrument of the chief complication, is brought back in Chap. 4 for a fuller treatment. Saibalini re-enters the stage in Part VI after her false exit in Part IV. Her passive condition gradually disappears. Her public trial (ch. 7) is a necessary decoration for three things: to clear the Dalani tangle, to put Saibalini on her legs again, and to integrate the far-flung elements of the story. The physical paraphernalia of the plot has considerably increased in the meantime. Chap. 8 tips the rising
thickening tempo by transferring the scene of action to the field of battle.

The contour of the design is given a finishing touch by the last meeting of Pratap with Saibalini. His career of heroism and chivalry is concluded in that glorious final engagement.

The book comes to an end with a declamatory panegyric by the superman, Ramananda Swami, on the greatness of Pratap's soul. In the first edition, the author was carried still further, and gave an account of the full story of all the characters. The clipping of that portion in later editions, was dictated by a sense of proportion. Although a bit laboured, the oration seems to be restrained in comparison with a similar, performance in Charles Dickens. Sidney Carton offers his neck to the guillotine for the happiness of the lady he loved. His secret self-immolation is drowned in the unceasing clatter of the
execution wheel. But the novelist is there standing by; he draws a dream picture of the hero's happiness through the medium of a woman victim who died on the same scaffold. It is a fairly long lecture, from the author's angle, full of evangelical fervour. Bankim is evidently less impassioned, less elaborative, more chastened and subdued even at the height of emotion.

Two points require special notice. Chapter 6, entitled "Psychic Force?" is likely to be looked upon as a volte-face in technique. Some such thing happens in the tortuous penance of Saibalini in the desolate mountain region. But magic and mesmerism are not exactly understandable features in intensely realistic and emotional situations:

And so it goes on. In Chap. 8, lunatic is blessed with a complete possession of her senses. There are parallels in Rajani with results not very agreeable to the total impression.

The second point is about the title of the book. Chandrasekhar is really seen through rare glimpses and is practically reduced to the position of a minor character in the plot. His contribution to its development is not very great; he even does not act as, hyphen between the two actions, like Nirmala of Baisingha. The reader's expectation of a de jure hero is belied
by his actual performances. Pratap seems to be more active, a more positive figure in the entire story. He fills up the vacuum created by the hero's absence from the field of action, his shadow spreads from one end of Chandrasekhar to another. Interest hinges on him unabated from the time he first appears in the company of his boyhood playmate. It is difficult to explain what led Bankim to deny a de facto hero his right to the title. The plot-structure would become more consistent if the book has been named after Pratap Roy.

In the last novel of this category, Krishnakanta Will, Bankim Chandra seems to tell a plain unvarnished tale with an unpremeditated art. Even the one romantic coincidence of Vishwavriksha and the allegorical savour of its title, are absent; attention is directed on the rigorous flow of a logical narrative. Next to Kapilkundal, it is the shortest of the normal Bankim novels. The forty-six chapters of its two parts and an appendix make up one complete and perfect structure. No break in its composite character is indicated by its division into two separate sections. The reader is tempted to finish the entire narrative in one hectic spurt of several hours.

It seems the intellectual side of the Vanzadarpan has had its greatest influence upon the making of Krishnakanta Will. A ratiocinative mind has demanded all exuberance from the plot; there is almost a bare, spare structure with just the minimum of flesh and blood. This austere look becomes more marked in the second part. Mere factual statement of the story in fiction is rather a paradox, as aesthetic satisfaction is to some extent lost in such a book, specially at some of its lean points. The story of Krishnakanta Will seems to be almost tortured with precision. Carried to an
extreme, this technique becomes detrimental to the symmetry of
the pattern. At the end of this section, this point will be
taken up. Rabindranath dealt with a similar theme in
Chekker Bāli and carried it into the opposite direction of
passion and sentiment. As a consequence, its structure
has been rather loose and unbalanced, to a great extent anti-
thetical to that of Krishnakānter Will. Sarat Chandra made a
measured use of the technique in Grihadāha. Symmetry is a
quality that is found only in a serious and conscious artist
who can make a balance of reason and sentiment.

The title of a novel of character is made to
be reckoned with than that of an action novel. The title of
the work under discussion, sets the story moving; the treatment
of the plot is marked by sobriety, balance, and accuracy. The
author seems to be relentless in his grip of the subject-matter,
which is illicit love among the grown-ups. For a pretty
long time, this affair tickled his imagination. It began with
Krīnālinī in a sub-plot, the structure of which ended in an
amalgam. It found an impassioned but restrained outlet in
the story of Vishavrāksha. Chandrasekhar continued the theme
and illustrated it in a design of gorgeous colours. But it
is perhaps in Krishnakānter Will that the author gives the
most simple, subdued, and straightforward narrative round the
same theme.

The story is suggested by the title; its
tone pervades the whole design and gives harmony to it. Perhaps
this is the only novel of Bankim Chandra in which materials are
drawn from the human elements alone. He seems to be concerned
all through with the emotional conflicts, the intricacy and
the subtlety within the mind of man and women of our society.
Romantic and allegorical tendencies of earlier titles are
conspicuous by their absence. Even Vishavriksha carried some of the remnants of the old form: it is tied to allegory in its title, and it begins with a single character on the stage in the romantic tradition. Chandrasekhar apparently introduces realistic and psychological factors for the first time, perhaps in Bengali fiction. Krishnakanta Will is an improvement upon the technique of the former in one respect: it is freed from the enveloping action of history as well.

In treatment and pattern, Krishnakanta Will is dramatic like Kanalkundalā and Vishavriksha. Five stages corresponding to five Acts, are clearly discernible in its movement. The most intensive form of artistic activity is observed in Part I; it constitutes two-thirds of the whole plot and contains three stages. Act I is reached with chap. 5 when the story turns a corner. The problem character, Rohini, a luscious widow, more tempting than Kundanandini of Vishavriksha, is stirred up to her full stature in this Act by the 'Will' incident. Act II extends to chap. 13: Rohini's contact with Gobindalal is complete. Climax comes in the third Act (chaps. 14-31). At the end of Part I, the dramatic centre of the plot coincides with the mechanical. The interaction of diverse forces occurs through situations that lead towards the climax. The gentle niceties of a perfect drama are thus marked in a clear outline in the structure of Krishnakanta Will.

Part II relates to downward trend. The earlier triangular form is revived; after a spiral course, a curve is formed. The main action of Gobindalal and Vremer, after being brought to some sort of maturity, is laid aside for the time being. An unerring sense of craft makes the novelist remove the physical existence of the architect of the drama; Krishnakanta takes eternal rest to allow the little
actors to play out their parts. The lineal development of Kagalikundala is heightened in intensity and volume by the substitution of an arch. There has been a corresponding increase in the emotional force. The tempo comes down in two strips in Part II. The complicating character is finished with a bullet in chap. 10. That is the limit of Act IV, and the next Act reaches up to the end (chap. 15). The addendum is a variant of the last chapter technique of Vishavriksha.

In detailed discussion, I shall follow the division of the book into five Acts.

Act I is a pure link act. In this respect it is similar to the initial chapters of Vishavriksha. A bold and original Bankim method is illustrated with some difference, in both the cases; to start on the action of the novel with some mechanical personages. The importance of Taracharan, Kunda's short-lived husband, is just dramatic. Haralal in Krishnakanta will performs a like function, although there is more dynamism in his character. The focus of interest is to be the widow, Rohini, and she is to be placed in the proper setting of the plot. She must also come fully prepared, possessing the value of the role assigned to her: to decide the course of all the events in the story. This is admirably done by the Haralal episode in Act I.

As the narrative commences, the two factors of the title become the main things of interest: the man and his will. Krishnakanta is alive, very much alive, with his last testament which is in process of change. This embroils his son Haralal. He wants to spite his cousin brother Gobindalal, and seeks the help of Rohini for altering the document. His treachery towards his father ends in a fiasco, but the dramatic purpose is realised. His promise of marriage kindles Rohini's
sleeping desires, and makes her active, even aggressive. Haralal has done his duty and hereafter he is lost to the plot. Exit Haralal. Enter Rohini.

The title justifies itself by working as a motion and a spirit in the whole system of the novel. Thenceforth the centre of gravity gathers round Rohini who is to become the dominating character. Activity on the emotional plane is as sharp to a good length of the novel as in Vishavriksha. The very first chapter is an epitome. It has a twirling series of incidents; Krishnakanta’s Will is made and remade after an encounter with his intransigent son. Haralal is given strength enough to scatter dark clouds in the atmosphere of the plot. He does accurately what he is fit for and meant for; he awakens passion in Rohini, and, infuses emotion into the pattern. Rohini is ready, on her legs, to conquer new countries.
This is an improvement upon the comparatively passive role of Taracharan in Vishvapriksha. Bankim gives Harinal more life, and hence more dramatic verisimilitude to the story. The function of Act I in preparing the main narrative, is admirably done.

Act II opens with the subtle cuckoo scene. Some direct utterances of Bankim Chandra in his novels have a special weight of their own; they not only justify their existence but elevate the standard of the books by their existence. Rohini's awakened youth feels the charm of the vernal atmosphere. The song of the cuckoo is symbolical of the beauty and romance of a new world which now lies temptingly open before Rohini's wondering eyes. The noteworthy point is that the entire picture has a visual effect and serves to indicate, at the same time, the turn of events in the plot. It is also to be noted that such passages help toning up the literary aspect of the design itself.

With the cuckoo scene, the emotional atmosphere of the novel condenses, it seems, at one stride. We watch the situation change from Rohini standing as in a penumbra to Rohini moving into clear daylight.
This Act points direct towards complication. It should be noted that, as in a Shakespearean drama, there is in Bankim Chandra, no question of an effort at mixing strands. In these four novels with an emotion-intensive pattern, this mark of distinction is evident. Complexity appears in Kanalkundala just in the process of movement of the story. There is a second action in Vishavriksha, which joins the main thread imperceptibly again. It has been shown how even the most complicated plot of Chandramukh evolves almost as naturally. And the third side in Krishnakanta Will seems to be like an element to be accepted as a matter of course when the plot begins to develop. Rohini enters into its orbit by her second adventure to steal the false will for the good of Gobindalal. Krishnakanta now detects her and Gobindalal enters the fold by his chivalrous attempt at saving her from dishonour. All the different elements are a harmonious whole in this natural evolution of plot. Gobindalal confesses to a sense of weakness in his heart of hearts. A chapter of passion movement is not far behind. The preponderating physical action of this portion is in fact the expression of the accumulation of emotion in so many ways.
Act III (chaps. 14-31) constitutes the centre of the plot in the widest sense. The agonising process of downfall of Gobindalal and Rohini as set forth here, is an analytical miracle in fictional literature. All the characters feel the vibration of an impending change. There is a constant movement of them, and the spatial content of the novel is extended by the tempo thus created. Gobindalal withdraws from the scene to avoid the catastrophe. As in the other novels of this series, action and conflict evolve simultaneously. From chapter 14, the cumulative force of the actions generates passion movement. Circumstances press upon the characters relentlessly. They have to compose their struggling wings for a showdown. All are entangled in the same net.

But this happens not in the lineal geometric line of Kanalkundali. A literal spiral movement settles into curve in Krishnakantary Hill. Refuelling is given to the narrative, after Act I, in chap. 14. Rhinini has become sanchari, her negative indifference has turned into positive hopefulness:

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(p. 108)
Bankim takes three chapters (chapters 15-17) to give the plot the second and more important turn. The current forms an eddy in the Baruni tank drowning incident, gains more energy, and then moves on more powerfully. Chapter 17 completes the contact of the two hapless persons. It records Gobindalal's final fall and, conversely, Rohini's ascendency. The portrait of Rohini in tears in an earlier chapter, is now balanced by a similar portrait of Gobindalal:

The highlight of Act III of Krishnakumar is passion movement. Perhaps it is better to call it emotional density, an extreme form of emotional intensity, which is observed in the other acts of this work. The whole design of Chandrasekhar is perhaps more saturated with this type of emotion.

From Chap. 19 to the end of Part I, incidents come in ordered succession and create a feeling of rising sentiment. They are often in a dramatic criss-cross style; Rohini, Gobindalal, and Vramar are sometimes paired, sometimes transferred from the seething centre of action. The architect of this part had had to stretch his powers to maintain the balance and beauty of the whole picture. He had had to give to this picture careful touches, at once fine and broad,
some subdued, some in hold outline. The oscillating movement of Vramar and Gobindalal steadies down (chap. 25). Krishnakanta makes a final change in the Will and is fully sketched in the pattern. His last rites indicate the end of an age and prepare us for the next.

The falling action (Part II) flags after this rush of events; it is condensed almost to a factual statement of "the wages of sin is death." After dramatising the downfall of the two, the novelist might have felt he had nothing substantial to offer any more. Ethical consideration, he admits, are uppermost in his mind:

He prefers sticking only to the grass roots of the plot. This accounts for the statical, skeleton nature of Part II. The unity of the design would have been established if the passion movement of Act III had been continued unabated. Detailed discussion relating to this point is necessary, and it would follow presently.

Act IV seems to shiver under the preserve of economy. Chapter I covers a year and Rohini's disappearance is followed by Vramar's break-down. Then crops up the mechanical personages, Vramar's father and his friend, (chaps. 2-4), as agents of nemesis. We are hurried back to the story of Rohini and Gobindalal (chaps. 5-9). The calamitous character is finished off, a bit too soon rather; the artist has said he has no inclination to elucidate the colourful, scintillating mechanics of passion that made the fatal shot inevitable. He
prefers instead, skipping over from year to year in the narrative of Act V. The dry and sere curve is redeemed to some extent by the dramatised rendering of the story in the last three chapters. Gobindalal's expurgation is presented in letters (chaps. 13-14). The last chapter (15) concentrates within it the tonal quality of Act III. In point of technique, it has great significances like that of the picture-gallery scene in Vishavriksha; remarks made thereunder, apply substantially to this case also.

The statics of plot has been changed with some passion and movement by the art of extending the story across time (Act V). Years are indicated at the head of chapters (10-14), each has the look of a separate act that seems to record the events of many periods. Chap. 14 marks the seventh year: Vraman's dead and her story covers a circle. The addendum opens twelve years after. It is a logical chapter in keeping with the requirements of the plot and thrown up by its velocity. To momentum is now added dramatic emotion. This last stage of Krishnakant Will is again allied to the last stage of Vishavriksha in point of technique, but it is doubtful if it is done better.

Three broad technical points need some attention:
(a) the sketchy nature of Part II (b) the shooting of Rohini and (c) the Gobindalal episode. All of them refer to Part II (i.e. Acts IV & V).

(a) A balance of actions brings symmetry and this seems to have been disturbed by the swift turn of incidents in the whole of Part II. The structure of a novel has the tension of building construction. In a complex design, the question of harmony arises. The intensity of passion in Acts I & II is
of harmony arises. The intensity of passion in Acts I & II is followed by its density in Act III; then the scale tilts, too much condensation of the emotional factor has also cut out many of the decorative frills essential for uniformity of pattern. The writer's confession in this context has been referred to. When alternative courses are thought of, Saratchandra's psychological treatment, on a more comprehensive scale, of abducted or runaway women comes into our mind. He was more careful about fine endings. It seems Bankimchandra sometimes gave way to other considerations at some crucial stages of the story. The streamline shape of the denouement ill suits the relatively developed other parts of the whole structure.

(b) The shooting of Rohini creates a feeling that the novelist has given a short shrift to the villain of the piece, under an emotional apprehension of social values. There ought to have been a scientific development leading to that extreme step. The shooting is not the absurdity; it is the acceptance of it in a swift twist of events. The scheme of the plot demands certain chapters in support of that tragic ending. It seems an "dramatic hedging" that would fill up the gap, has been skipped over. Shakespeare with his innate sense of dramatic art, neutralises Shylock's strong case for revenge by making him appear with a sharp knife in the Trial Scene of The Merchant of Venice. Satan of Milton breathes democratic fire in the earlier parts of Paradise Lost; his sneaking treachery later on makes him a just victim of God's stern judgement. This hedging device, it seems, is absent in the scheme of punishment of Rohini. The pattern has become defective in a proportional measure.

In the original Kusumabai, Rohini was just a mean, greedy, and sensual woman; a near replica of Hira of Vishavriksha. But she has improved in the book form; she is
still ambitious, but has a conscience to save. She refuses to play the traitor for mere money. Her character is yet represented as undesirable, but Gobindalal's violent reaction needs a more solid cause than what looks like a mere got-up case. Kunda's death from poison is nicely arranged by circumstances. This sense of natural confluence of incidents is wanting in the case of Rohini. When the hero himself takes up the pistol, inevitable forces are not behind him. Possibilities of a sustained psychological treatment of the entire second part, have been quashed. It seems at this point of the story, revivalism and positivism have been more influential factors than Bankim's intellectualism.

Close upon the rush of events in chap.1 (Part II), Vrasar's father, Madhabi Nath, is introduced in chap.2. Chaps. 2-4 are devoted to the investigation of the whereabouts of Gobindalal and Rohini; at the end of chap. 4 is tagged on a literal mechanical personage, Nishakar Das, a relation of Madhabinath. His subsequent active role in the body of the plot makes him different from other mechanical characters like Haralal or Tarasharan. Nishakar serves as a Deus ex machina, a handy agent of Nemesis. He puts his tongue in his cheek, perhaps to humour his hearers:

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This is uneasy conscience garbled out in a religious philosophy so natural to the Hindu mind. The touch sounds discordant in the context of the dry realism of *Krishnakanter Will*. To justify Bankimchandra as a devout Hindu who wrote novels from his own angle, is rather a lame argument. Art admits of no crunching for religious considerations. There must be unity of pattern and uniformity of tone. Sudden dilution of an ethical dose is doing violence to aesthetic sensibility. The prison scene in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* is in harmony with the character of the pattern. Hetty is condemned to death for the murder of her illegitimate child. Dinah, the Methodist preacher, visits her in the prison:

Dinah held the clinging hand, and all her soul went forth in her voice: "Come, mighty Saviour! let the dead hear Thy voice; let the eyes of the blind be opened; let her see that God encompasses her; let her tremble at nothing but the sin that cuts her off from Him, Melt the hard heart; unseal the closed lips; make her cry with her whole soul, 'Father, I have sinned.'"

Hetty was silent, but she shuddered again, as if there was still something behind; and Dinah waited, for her heart was so full that tears must come before words. At last Hetty burst out with a sob:

"Dinah, do you think God will take away that crying and the place in the world, now I've told everything?"

"Let us pray, poor sinner: let us fall on our knees again, and pray."

( George Eliot, *Adam Bede* )

The God of Dinah is made a living force to the reader also by the systematic evolution of the tone and texture of
the novel. The scene appears to be so very natural.

But the God of Risakar is brought in to work up the reader's feelings. It seems the Bankim scene is not a natural consequence of the forces that precede it.

Bankim stated in a letter to one of his biographers that he got no time to revise the latter part of *Krishnakanteri Hill*. It is tickling to conjecture what he had in his mind. Most of the improvements in the different editions are directed towards softening the character of Rohini. If she was given by the novelist a charitable amount of additional humanism, the pattern of the book would change to a great extent.

(a) The last technical point is about the treatment of the hero. In the original version, Govindalal was made to commit suicide in the Bartini tank, right after the fashion of Rohini whom he had saved from death from the same tank. In the revised version, there is renunciation of the world by Govindalal. Bankim has incorporated in the appendix his return as a mendicant after twelve years. The original matter reads like a romance carried to the excess of sentimentality. It takes away the verve from the heightened shooting episode and gives it the colour of a detective-story.
A mendicant rendering lends a saving grace to the melodramatic

drowning technique.

There is an attempt at harmonising the
tone of the addendum with that of chap. 8 in which Nishakar decoys
Rohini to her doom with a religious apology. Part of the criticism
on chap. 8 is applicable to the final portion as well. It is
perhaps enough to say that the realistic finish of Vishavriksha
keeps up the spirit of the design; a romantic end dictated by
a religious philosophy, sounds a note of dissonance in Krishnakant
Will.

Notes and References

1. James, Henry, The Art of the Novel, Charles Scribner's
Sons, New York, ed. by Blackmur, R.P., New York, 1953, Introduction,
P x .

2. Lubbock, Percy, The Craft of Fiction, Jonathan Cape,

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid, Vishavriksha:

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2. Lubbock, Percy, The Craft of Fiction, Jonathan Cape,

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid, Vishavriksha:
Chatterjee, Sachis Chandra, Bankimchibani. Sarat Chandra Chakrabarty and Sons, Calcutta, 3rd ed. p. 273:

"নেত্র তোর বিহীন আঁশে কিঞ্চিৎ আলোকে, নানা, সবান্ত আনন্দে - আপনার আবেগে অনেকে পায় তার, কি তার?

তোমার বিচার সকলে নিয়মিত, তোমার শরীরে সমাদরে আবহাওয়া!"

তোমার সমাদর বুঝতে পারিনি। যদি আমিলে মেজাজ ছিলে, তবু অনেক

তোমার শরীরে আবহাওয়া এবং সাহসের তৈলে লালর মাথাটাকে ধান করি নিতে পারিনি।


"এর প্রথম অংশে কিছু আর যায় না পাহাড়ে পাহাড়ে যায় না, যে ভূমি অপরের দিকে করে করে তুলে তুলে করে তুলে তুলে, যে ভূমি সব অনুচিত আসনে পাঠায় এক কাগজে কল্পনা করে তুলে তুলে করে তুলে। তবে ফলে কোন শ্যামল পাহাড়ে পালায় করে তুলে তুলে করে তুলে। না হয় পাহাড়ে পাহাড়ে যায় না, যে ভূমি অপরের দিকে করে করে তুলে তুলে করে তুলে তুলে। যে ভূমি সব অনুচিত আসনে পাঠায় এক কাগজে কল্পনা করে তুলে তুলে করে তুলে।

সত্যি মুহূর্তের মধ্যে আর তোমার সূত্রে কোন কোন তোর সময়ে আর তোমার সময়ে আত্মা।"

The quotations from the novels of Bankim Chandra have been taken from the Sahitya Parisad edition.