

7. The Thrill and Suspense in the Moonstone

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Abstract

As soon as the word 'Thrill' comes in our mind- a sudden surge of sentiments and emotions full of suspense, horror, fear, joy and excitement arise as a tremor which agitate both our mind and heart in such a way that it becomes a subject of unrestrained curiosity. The present work aimed to ascertain that how among the masterpieces of Collins- The Woman in White, Armadale, The Moonstone and No Name, The moonstone- a rambling winding tale, the first English detective novel (according to T.S. Eliot) told by a series of intriguing witnesses who all have an axe to grind, spell bound its readers from the very outset to end only for 'Why' and 'How'.

Keywords: *Thrill, Suspense, Detective, Secret Divulged*

Willkie Collins, a prolific writer, created many levels of intrigue and suspense throughout the entire book. It is its thrill, suspense and intrigue that keep its way a head in its time, the year 1868- when Britain was fighting against India in order to maintain control over the Country. The moonstone is an expensive, rare gem that brings a curse with it. Originated from the head of an Indian god, Lord Vishnu the moonstones curse is that it is usually stolen and the old keeper is usually killed by some means. It is interesting to note Collin's choice for a fair sex as the Centre character of the novel- Rachel Verinder whose love interest Franklin Blake turns out to be the thief but even he does not know it. Now it becomes a subject of investigation and for that purpose Sergeant Cuff is called in to investigate the case of thefting but his suspicions are disproved and he is dismissed from the case. Rosanna Spearman, a suspicious housemaid in Lady Verinder's house commits suicide and seems to have hid a package. The climax of the novel is achieved with the guesses of Ezra zonings who points

out about Franklin. Correctly guesses that Franklin was under the influence of opium when he took the diamond from Franklin and have pawned it. Finally Godfrey is killed by the three Indian priests and the moonstone is brought to its proper place.

As much as we explore the novel, a question arises in our mind whether the moonstone in real sense was a gift or curse? When Rachel was gifted this gem by her wicked Uncle Colonel John Hern castle, she was quite unknown about the history of precious gem, which she gladly accepted. But the theft of this precious Indian gem which was in real possession of Lord Vishnu becomes a curse for the thieves and a matter of suspense and a thrilling mystery that unfurles around the theft of the moonstone, a priceless diamond plundered from India. The narrative is woven together as witnesses, detectives and suspects take up the story in turn: the bewildered butler, the heart broken housemaid, the opium addicted scientist. The secret is held in suspense until the very end, and no one is trust worthy.

The novel – something of fragmentary by nature focuses of each episode by presenting different characters and framing the story somewhat awkwardly with the hero, Franklin Blake, attempting to unravel the mystery a year after the theft occurs. The first episode felt like a series of frustrating false starts- first we meet Franklin on a generic gravel pathway, which is apparently meant to be Italy, then we are back in England and he is being cold Shouldered by the beautiful yet slightly dull heiress Rachel Verinder, and then finally, a series of flashbacks begin which tell the tale of the theft of the moonstone. The essence of the moonstone lies with the sorrowful story of – Rosanna Spearman, who hopelessly pinning way in unrequited love, eventually commits suicide in the shivering sands.

The instinct of thrill and suspense can be experienced by the readers from the very beginning. At the very outset of chapter 1 of the novel the statement of Franklin: “The idea is that we should all write the story of the moonstone in turn as far as our own personal experience extends, and no farther” shows the subjective opinions and view points of the narrator that shift the readers to arrive at the objective matter- the facts and events and their narration in itself create a sense of suspense & thrill which compels the reader to adhere with the novel till end.

When Gabriel Beeteredge states: “The horrid mystery hanging over us in this house gets into my head like liquor and makes us wild” (Ch XVII)--- The novelist Willkie Collins, using simile expresses the

motif of intoxication, runs through the first period and infects various strands of the plot. Here the intoxication arises from the mystery surrounding the moonstone. It also arises from the moonstone itself, in whose depth one loses oneself. As the liquor booms the mind so Gabriel suffers from 'detective fever' and this liquor like effects makes him wild.

Further the conversation between Ezra Zenning and Rachel Verinder draw the attention of the readers towards the conspiracy of persecution: "They seem to be in conspiracy to persecute you," she said. What does it mean? "Only the protest to the world, Miss Verinder- on a very small scale against anything new". Here Collins' remarks on the "English" who seem to be resistant to new, being mystical until proven either of races, colours, appearance religions or ideas of science.

When we have a comprehensive and comparative study of *The Moonstone* with Collins' other masterpieces- *The Woman in White* we find more or less the similar plot of Love, romance, mystery, sensation, severe emotional suffering and possibly murder before the books reach to its final confrontation. In both of the books "The Moonstone" and "The Woman in White" the secret is ultimately divulged by sensational investigation, the prototype for the eccentric, canny detective in conflict with the babbling local police authorities (even cuff's passion for roses presages Sherlock Holmes bee keeping). Multiple equally plausible suspects are introduced, each with motive and opportunity. Consciously withholding key pieces of information, Collins introduces the rules of "Fair play" which dictate that detective should know more than the readers. The summation of the crime before the gathered suspects, the revelation of the least likely suspects as the villains (Albeit with surprising twist) the confluence of multiple view points to assemble the truth, a reconstruction of crime, and the ultimate triumph of law and order were first formulated in 'The Moonstone' in 1868.

In 'The Woman in White' the protagonist encounters a ghostly woman dressed all in white on moonlit road and is drawn in to a web of intrigue that will transform his life forever offering his assistance to this distressed, spectral woman, he is later shocked to discover that she had just escaped from a nearby insane asylum. On the other hand Sir Percival Glides also harbours a secret. It is ultimately divulged that he is an illegitimate child not the legitimate heir to his estate or title. The novel also ends by divulging the mystery that thrills the reader. Walter falls in love with Laura, but she's already engaged to a man called Sir Percival Glyde. Everyone thinks Laura dies at count Fosco's house- but it

turns out, it was Anne who had died and Fosco switched the bodies, meaning Laura ended up being shipped off to Anne's former Asylum.

As in *The Woman in White*, the solution to the mystery in the moonstone is pieced together from the accounts of multiple narrators. This technique, which Collins first adopted after he witnessed the testimony in a trial, allows the author both to withhold key pieces of information from the reader and to adjust the pace as the plot demands. In the opening chapters, the discursiveness of chatty, avuncular Gabriel Bettridge sets the scene and introduces the characters. Mathew Buff's lawyerly account moves the action along factually and quickly. Rosana Spearman's letter creates a peak of emotional intensity. The overall effect is to call in to question the reliability of anyone narrator's version of events. Truth is elusive, although if everyone told what or she knew, the solution to the mystery could be found close to home.

No doubt Collins remained peerless in creating thrills, suspense, mystery and developing characters. He knows the technique how to inform the domestic sphere with a gothic stream of mystery secrets dark intension and deep anxiety about sexuality and identity. His dialogue is so crisp, his backdrops so vivid, and his pacing so suspenseful that he foreshadows on entity new medium of storytelling. Certainly *The Moonstone* like *The Woman in White* possesses the secret of traits in suspense novels: an utterly satisfying conclusion.

Work Cited :

- 1) Wikipedia
- 2) *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins
- 3) *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins
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