

Structural and Narratological Analysis of a Commercial Crime Fiction: “The Heist Artist” by Vish Dhamija

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ABSTRACT

This research paper “Structural and Narratological Analysis of a Commercial plot: The Heist Artist By Vish Dhamija” does a structural narratological analysis of the commercial crime fiction The heist artist using the LOCK System, a method for analysis devised by James Scott Bell. It highlights the difference between different types of plot and narrative techniques used. The use of suspense, surprise, and mystery has also been looked into. The field of psychological analysis of this book has also been looked into.

Keywords: LOCK System, James Scott Bell, Commercial Plot, Indian Crime Fiction.

Introduction.

“All stories have a curious and even dangerous power. They are all manifestations of truth – yours and mine. And the truth is all at once the most wonderful yet terrifying thing in the world, which makes it nearly impossible to handle. It is such a great responsibility that it’s best not to tell a story at all unless you know you can do it right. You must be very careful, or without knowing it you can change the world.” – Vera Nazarian, *Dreams of the Compass Rose*.

Language is essential, not today, or yesterday, but for quite a long period. Even without language people used to communicate with each other. There were some loopholes, which gave rise to the need of creating a ‘language’ to convey feelings, emotions, and intentions to others. When we converse with a certain ‘someone’, their replies towards us are always calculated and nuanced. We tend to judge anything and everything aimed at us by compiling a certain minimum amount of data like, the way they said it, their facial expressions, body language, the tone of their voice: is it monotonous (meaning he is just bored and dragging it long) and thus we get the bigger picture; and the emotions and the message of the conveyer gets relayed to us.

There can be a million cases where the reader does not read the line as the author wanted him or anyone else to read, which then, changes the course of the story, making it bad or maybe, perhaps better. Structural narratology comes into aid here.

Narratology is derived from structuralism and semiotics and is based on the idea that there will be a common literary language, or a universal pattern or code which is followed by a certain genre or text of work. Vladimir Propp’s ‘Morfologiya skazki’ or ‘Morphology

of the Folk Tale' written in 1928 served as the foundation of narratology creating a model of folktales based on "seven spheres of action", Claude Levi-Strauss's 'Anthropologie Structurale' or 'Structural Anthropology' written in 1958, did outline the grammar of mythology, A.J.Gremias's 'Semantique Structurale' or 'Structural Semantics' written in 1966 gave the system of six structural units called "actants" and lastly, Tzvetan Todorov's 'Grammaire du Decameron' or 'The Grammar of Decameron' written in 1969 introduced the term "narratologie".

Structural analysis of any work of art defies the fact of taking the creator into consideration and thus criticising the work alone, not as an embodiment of values, beliefs, wants, and emotions of the author but as a piece of art itself.

There are different types of narratives based on either how the plot follows or either based on the point of view. There are four narratives which are based on the way the plot is written. They are- linear, non linear, quest, and viewpoint. Then again there are narratives based on the point of view which can be classified into three distinct categories, i.e. first person narrative, second person narrative, and third person narrative.

About the author and the book

Born in Ajmer, Vish Dhamija is a British Indian crime fiction author. He has published nine novels and is based in London now. Being the only author of Indian origin to be listed among the major legal thriller authors world-wide, Vish Dhamija is often addressed as "master of crime and courtroom drama" and "India's best page turner" by the Indian press. His books are often the simulation of legal fictions. One of his fictional characters DCP Rita Ferreira, featured in his series 'Bhendi Bazar' and 'Doosra & Lipstick' was sought by a major production house recently.

He has introduced a sub-genre of thriller and fiction in India, which is widely known as 'legal thriller'. Often in books of his (legal thrillers) the system of justice is a major part. Among nine of his books, I have selected the book "The Heist Artist" to carefully analyse the genre of the novel. This paper will analyse the structural narratology of this book.

Analysing plots using the LOCK SYSTEM .

The importance of Plot and Structure.

Plot is the backbone of any novel. The way the plot takes place depends on the writer. Different stories take us through the different genres of novels and books. When a reader reads a book, the reader's brain storms through a million different questions, one of which is " why should I continue reading this book?" The hardest part for any author would hands down without any argument be the feat of gripping the readers into the book. Whilst many authors do not think of it to be a major issue of gripping readers to their books because they produce literary works instead of commercial works, so their focus is not on how to sell, but it is on writing a meticulously intricate combination of vocabulary and language which is used to convey a story, but storytelling is not compulsorily the only purpose of the plot here.

The plot and structure of any story are the components of a larger picture, the story. Some say that the plot and story are basically the same things, but I humbly argue to the fact.

The difference between a plot and a story is the same as the difference between 'fabula' and 'sjuzet'. Fabula is "the raw material for the story", the chronological order of events which took place in real life, whereas 'sjuzet' is the order in which the events are organised whilst telling the story. I like to compare fabula with plot and juxtapose it with comparison of 'sjuzet' with story. (matt)

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, said Jojen, The man who never reads lives only one" – George R.R. Martin. (Chapter 5, A Song of Ice and Fire) A Dance with Dragons.

Analysing the plot using the LOCK System by James Scott Bell.

This chapter of the research paper will see this novel in the light of LOCK and analyse how this particular plot falls under the genre of Crime fiction.

LOCK system Explained.

LOCK SYSTEM-

L stands for Lead.

The character is 'wow', 'nice', 'ideological'. The readers relate and get stuck to the character even before the book or novel ends. The character is what makes the reader want to read the books. The character needs to be of great importance while writing any plot. Also, most crime fictions used to be plot-driven earlier, but now, writers are giving importance to the characters as well. The lead needs to entrap us with his/her exquisite and peculiar characteristics. The character needs not to be necessarily a good or positive character for the readers to relate.

People read books and novels to experience something they can never experience in real life. Often the readers want to do something, which they possibly cannot do in real life. The readers look for "CATHARSIS" in the plot. Character is more important than the plot for 'catharsis'. If the 'Lead' of a novel, is a 'righteous', 'a person of low stature in society', 'a commoner fighting for justice', 'a young boy turned thief due to unfavorable circumstances', the readers are more likely to relate and experience catharsis. Also, if there is a suspicion about the character, it makes the reader want to read more.

O stands for Objective.

The objective of the lead character is the driving force of the novel. The objective is something that the lead desires for, or something which the lead wants to do. It may be either to get something or to get away from something. The objective is the most important character after the Lead. It is because once the reader gets connected or interested in the lead, the reader will need a good enough reason to stick around and complete the book. The objective may be externally or internally driven. Although it is not necessary or compulsory for either the commercial or the literary plot to strictly adhere to these conditions. Fiction can have both the objectives. Usually, there is one major objective of the novel or plot. The lead can have short term goals or other small objectives which will help the Major objective. The question which the readers might have while in their mind are-

1. Will the lead be able to identify the objective? If yes, then how will accomplish the objective? (Bell)

This question helps the author to hook the readers up into the book till the next question arises in the reader's mind. Curiosity is the most intriguing emotion in a human mind. The author decides to use this to his advantage.

C stands for Confrontation.

Conflict and opposition is required for the story to be interesting. If the lead recognizes the 'Objective', and then achieves it right away, the story just comes to an end. Now that the author has got the readers hooked up to the plot, the readers know the objective, the readers know about the lead and also about the character of the protagonist. All that is needed now, is some action. Any reader would have different expectations from different genre of plots. The readers have a favourite genre because of a something specific in that action. Confrontation. There needs to be some action for the story to breathe life.

The antagonist needs to offer resistance for the lead. This also serves as a foil, and thus helping the lead to outshine and be the 'Lead'. All the readers secretly want to feel an intense connection with the lead. They want to worry about the lead. They want to think "How will he get out of this fix? Will he live? He has to help himself out. But how?" This is what will help the readers experience 'catharsis'.

K stands for Knockout.

All that ends well is good. Considering the fact that the reader has reached the end of the novel or book, it can be assumed that the reader already likes what he is reading. Still, a good ending is utterly, completely compulsory. The ending should have an astounding knockout power. The power to satisfy the reader with a suitable ending. The leads completes his/her journey and send the opposition flying at the end of the novel.

Using "The Heist Artist" as an example of a commercial crime fiction to structurally analyse it using LOCK system.

The Heist Artist

-Vish Dhamija.

LEAD – Right of the bat, our lead seems interesting, with the novel opening with a scene from a cricket match betting and the next chapter beginning with the lead being in a criminal record. Vagh Pratap Singh, aka the Captain, is nearly in his forties and is a divorced person. His date of birth seems to be unknown even in the police records. With both parents being dead, his backgrounds are unknown too.

"Suspected of armed robbery and complicity in manslaughter besides several break-ins, thefts, frauds and forgeries." (Dhamija)

He was 5'11", eighty-five/ninety kilograms. Uses coloured lenses. But has brown coloured eyes. A 'master of disguise'. His personality is charming, said to be to the extent of being hypnotic. He was last seen in the disguise of a 'sadhu/sanyasi' with dreadlocks and long flowing hair. The last known whereabouts of him was near Kalbhairav temple in Benares. He was born in Ajmer. His father was killed by a thief when he tried to protect the theft in his home. Although nothing was stolen, still his father being a righteous person wanted to get hold of the thief. So he chased him right away and got stabbed by the thief. With his father dead, and mother having no knowledge of the family's business,

the business went haywire. When he was twenty two, his mother died, and he had to leave his home town penniless. The suspicious thing about this man is that his records have been found in the police records. The book opens with his photo and signature in the police records. This gives us the feel, the urge to know more about the character. Is he bad, is he good? Why is he wanted?

“Call it confidence or call it my sixth sense, but I honestly believe that the Delhi Police have horseshit on me. Or am I delusional?” – The Captain(Dhamija)

The lead is also structured in such a manner that the reader empathises with the lead.

OBJECTIVE- The objective of the lead is to steal a painting called “Poppy Flowers” by Vincent Van Gogh.

“From \$3.8 Mn To \$200 Mn, Stolen Van Gogh, Raphael Artworks That Were Never Found” was the headlines of The Economic Times on the 25th of June 2019. It stated that this painting was stolen Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum in Cairo in 1977. A decade later the painting was discovered in Kuwait in 2010. But again in yet another tragedy the painting was stolen. The recent evaluation of the painting approximately charts to be \$200 Mn.

“Even if had seen him in the backseat of a Rolls Royce, Udhham Kumar would still look like a goon. Bribes, kickbacks, illicit businesses, hawala, blackmailing and whatnot; the guy reeked of greed and corruption.”(Dhamija)

Udhham Kumar, the person who assigns the heist to the lead Vagh Pratap Singh. The captain agrees to the task.

Udhham wanted him to track down-Vincent van Gogh’s Poppy Flower.

"And how much is he going to pay for it?"

"Close to 200 million US dollars, plus change"

"What do I get?"

"Ten million dollars."

.....

"And what if I refuse?"

"I'll start by breaking your teeth."

(Dhamija)

Udhham Kumar is seen being hell bent on getting the painting.

“Ten million dollars.” Serves as the objective for Vagh Pratap Singh. After doing small time crimes, putting his life on line and still earning very less, the lead wanted to earn big and settle. The objective of the story is ‘stealing’ which automatically triggers the reader and rushes the adrenaline. After the lead gets the location of the painting he proceeds.

“I knew who Bipin Patel. was I knew where he lived. I knew what his businesses were. I knew how dangerous he was. And I didn’t give a rat’s ass about anything else”(Dhamija) He was determined to snatch this chance and bag the painting. The Objective was very clear for him.

CONFRONTATION- In his quest to obtain the painting “Poppy Flower”, Vagh Pratap Singh aka the Captain faces many problems. He was hired by Udhham Kumar, a politician to steal the painting. The painting was estimated to be US Dollar 200 million. He sets out to get the painting. But he is confronted by Sub-inspector Hari Mohan Gupta. Also, Udhham Kumar does not want Captain to get any amount of money, so he is set to kill him after the Captain gets the painting. The painting was with Mr. Bipin Patel.

“The first, Bipin Patel, was the reverse of Panchatantra’s fabled coloured jackal..... Back in Mumbai, he had been referred to as the ‘Matka King’.” (Dhamija)

Bipin Patel gets furious when he is introduced to the fact that the painting has been stolen from his safe. A great amount of it being contributed by the fact that he himself was the one who gave him away to the Captain.

“Poppy Flowers was now on Bipin Patel’s desk, flattened out with four small paperweights that kept him from rolling back..... ‘But is it genuine, that is the question. That’s what I’d like you to tell me, Professor.’” (Dhamija)

As soon as he gets this news, he informs the police that his safe had been robbed. The police creates a ruckus surrounding the building. Here, comes the Sub Inspector Gupta. He had one last wish before he could retire and that was to catch the Captain. And he also had his suspicions about the Captain being on move beforehand. Although he did not know what, he became sure of it, when he heard about the painting being stolen.

“With one year to go before his retirement, Sub Inspector Hari Mohan Gupta swore that if he put only one more criminal behind bars, it would be Vagh Pratap Singh.”

“ Something was cooking between Udhham Kumar and the Captain. Hari Mohan didn’t know what it was, but he knew that it had needed the Captain to pose as an art professor – Hari Mohan was intrigued, and amused.” (Dhamija)

He soon reaches Bipin’s office, as he is sure that he knows who stole the painting.

“ ‘Sir, he says he knows who the burglar is.’

‘Do you know someone called Albert Rueben?’” (Dhamija)

Meanwhile, Udhham Kumar was looking for the Captain, Sylvia and Damodar. He suggests an alliance with Bipin Patel to make things easier for him. He calls Bipin Patel but he refuses the compliance. Bipin knows the person calling. He is furious and is determined to get his painting back.

“ ‘No , you didn’t hear me out – I will give you nothing, and if I don’t find my painting intact, you will pay for it. And you’ll pay for it very dearly, Udhham’ Bipin Patel was raging now, his voice thundering down in the line.

‘You have no idea who you’re talking to,’ Udhham responded, equally angry.’

‘Oh, I know who I’m talking to, you fuckin’ piece of shit.’” (Dhamija)

It was infuriating for Udhham Kumar as two of his most trusted sources betrayed him. He was hell-bent on getting a hold on Damodar first and then the other two.

“Damodar’s car was now in sight and Udhham called the tractor driver and asked him to get ready and accelerate exactly when he instructed. The Hyundai’s windshield was smashed into million pieces.” (Dhamija)

Damodar dies. Most of the book explains the confrontation or the part where they are on a run.

Knockout – After a long run and millions of problems the lead faced, he finally completes the objective. The ending had quite an impact. The suspense was lifted at the very last chapter and was pretty satisfactory. The plot takes its own time to build up a lot of tension using the confrontation and also dropped a few hints here and there, letting go of ‘limited facts’. There are a series of events that suddenly take interesting turns thus resulting in the knockout. The following table represents the series of events and what would have been the possible outcomes if those turn of events would have not occurred.

Sr. No.	Name of the Character	What happened / What would have happened without it.
01.	Bipin Patel	<p>Reasons – Has his painting stolen. Goes out looking for the painting, and gets the help of Udhham Kumar near the end. Gets the police involved which causes a great ruckus. He gets deceived by the Captain and is more furious because of that. Alternate ending- If he would not have gone out for the captain alone and would have teamed up with Udhham Kumar in the first place, he might have lived.</p>
02.	Udhham Kumar	<p>Reasons- He does not want to leave any loose ends behind. He does not want to pay the Captain for his work. Damodar and Sylvia, his two most trusted sources betray him. He was anyways a rusty politician with many connections. Devices a plan at first, to send Damodar and Sylvia with the Captain for the heist. Once the captain gets the painting he planned to kill the captain and pay money to Damodar and Sylvia. His plan backfired when both Damodar and Sylvia betrayed him. He was determined to kill all of them. He ends up killing Damodar. He dies in the shootout between him and Bipin Patel Alternate Ending – If he would have just agreed to pay \$10 million to the Captain, things would have been smoother.</p>

03.	Sub-inspector Hari Mohan Gupta	<p>Reason- He is about to retire. Before retiring he wants to get a hold of the Captain.</p> <p>He was always curious and could not believe the fact that the Captain had left behind the life of being a 'heist artist' and became a monk. So, when he got to know about the painting being stolen from Bipin Patel, he connected all the dots. He informs Damodar and Vagh Pratap Sing, throughout the story about Udhham and Bipin. He wants to get a hold of them.</p> <p>He finally gets a hold of Sylvia and the Captain, and tells them to hand over the painting or else he will arrest them. He takes the painting and helps them cross the Indo – Nepal border.</p> <p>Alternate ending- He could anyways not identify the real Van Gogh painting. He could have arrested the Captain as that was the last arrest he wished to do before retiring.</p>
04.	Damodar	<p>Reason – He is ordered by Udhham Kumar to kill the Captain and get Sylvia and the painting to him. He follows Udhham Kumar but devises a plan during the heist to betray Udhham Kumar and get the money for himself and Sylvia. He fails to do so, as it turns out that Sylvia and the Captain are a thing. He had to be a part of them and betray Udhham Kumar. He decides to do it. However, he wants to do it for his mother, who is in Nepal.</p> <p>He however dies due to a mishap during the chase.</p> <p>Alternate ending- He would have died even if he would not have betrayed Udhham Kumar as the Captain and Sylvia would have done it. Also, he could have just gone back to Udhham Kumar and reported them and he would have lived possibly.</p>
05.	Sylvia	<p>Reason- She was hired by Udhham Kumar too, for his plan.</p> <p>Sylvia was hired by Udhham Kumar, as he liked her and also the way she worked. She was pretty and intelligent. However, Sylvia had a history with the Captain and she is the one who hooked him up for the work. During the heist when Damodar tries to kill the Captain, Sylvia sides with the Captain and pursues Damodar to join him.</p> <p>When on the run Sylvia uses her brain to the fullest to succeed in the heist. Towards the end of the story,</p>

		<p>when Hari Mohan Gupta forces them to hand over the painting, she is the one who does it. After that, the Sub-inspector helps them to cross the border safely to Nepal. Here she gives a surprise to the Captain on his birthday, the original painting. She had tricked the inspector by giving him a false painting.</p> <p>Alternate ending- If Sylvia would not have thought of this well ahead and had handed over the original painting, the heist would have not been completed.</p>
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Table 2.1. List for Knockouts and characters leading to Confrontation.

Use of suspense and conflict to create surprise in “The Heist Artist” by Vish Dhamija.

People tend to pay attention towards something interesting and put in efforts only with possible chances of surprise ahead. (Schank)

Literary fictions often combine suspense and surprise, while they use conflict to increase the tension, so that the suspense increases, resulting in a bigger surprise. Perspective manipulation and variation in characters are one of another thing authors do in fiction.

“I had been preparing for this moment for months now. When I started teaching here, I couldn’t have delivered this lecture so convincingly. Now they trusted me, all eighteen of my students. I could sell them a fake Van Gogh tomorrow and they’d lap it up as the real deal on my say so.”(Dhamija)

The lead was extremely deliberate in planning the heist, he had extensively planned everything to the T. This gave the readers a head start towards the possibility of the lead being successful. The price of the painting “\$ 200 million” was mentioned again and again over the course of the book. As already mentioned earlier in this paper, people tend to pay more attention to things that are interesting. The gigantic amount makes it interesting for the readers and thus gets their attention of the reader. It is also used to increase the tension. The bigger the tension created in the story the bigger will be the conflict and thus greater suspense and thus a bigger surprise.

Leaving in incomplete bits of information to bait the readers to collect them and analyse the situation using the incomplete bits.

Also, just like Agatha Christie, in her famous novel, *And Then There Were None* uses foreshadowing and leaves the readers with deliberately limited hints, Dhamija leaves the readers hints clues here and there. He also has a very peculiar pattern of writing. He reveals some information quite early in the story and narrates events later in the story, that is connected to the information. Sylvia, a character in the story is also the main twist in the plot. She is a very trustworthy source for Udhham Kumar.

“Get Sylvia on the line,’ he barked at the man.

Sylvia was Udhham Kumar’s advisor-cum-cloak-and-dagger operative for a variety of reasons.”(Dhamija)

This shows how trustworthy she is to Udhham Kumar and creates tension among the readers. It is crucial for the author to make sure that there is a certain degree of urgency to the fact that the lead will be in trouble. If the antagonist, or the conflict or confrontation, is too weak, the ambiguity in the ending dissolves, making the possibilities of the lead succeeding much more prominent and sturdy than the possibilities of him not succeeding. The readers, who relate to the lead will not be in a state of suspended mind, or suspense in that case.

A lot of incomplete information was left out by Dhamija to the readers, in the early parts of the novel. The most important information which Dhamija unveils, and supplies the reader with false information is:

“‘ Mumbai?’ Udhham Kumar asked, louder than he had intended. He had instructed Sylvia to stay put in Delhi for the length of the assignment, discreetly following the Captain and listening his conversations.

‘Why do you need to go to Mumbai?’

‘I have a feeling something big is about to happen and I’d like to visit my church in Mumbai before that.’

‘Oh, but there are many churches in Delhi, and anyway, as they say, God is everywhere,’ he said trying to brush her off

‘There are churches, and there is my church.’ (Dhamija)

At this point in time, the readers are disclosed only the piece of information that, Sylvia is working for Udhham Kumar and wants to go to her church because she needs to pray or get something done before the ‘big thing’ happens. Soon after, the readers are introduced to another mystery. The lead, the guy the readers want to win, with all the odds stacked against him, seems to have some help from someone. Dhamija does introduce that there is someone, but leaves the readers thinking about the identity of the someone.

‘I got home, picked up my phone and sent a message – ‘Hit Gold. Tell UK?’

‘Not yet.’ My phone pinged a second later.”(Dhamija)

“My Blackberry pinged. The message read – ‘Change of plan...” (Dhamija)

With the fact in my mind that the readers are now equipped with all the essential information, Dhamija takes the tension, a notch higher and prepares the readers for the maximum suspense. The readers already know Udhham Kumar wants to kill the Captain, and that is why he also hired men.

“‘Three. I want two people to accompany you.’

‘You are shitting me!’

It was apparent that he didn’t trust me. Well 200 million US dollars were a good enough reason not to trust your own flesh – and – blood.

He dialled Sylvia’s number now. ‘The time has come,’ he said to her.” (Dhamija)

“You three need to work together; the Captain will lead the mission, but only until you two have the painting in your hands. Then Damodar and you take the lead. Once you guys are out, you call me and drive out of Delhi.

'And the Captain? Does he come with us?'

"Yes, but not all the way. Damodar will take a diversion, and at one point, my guys will be waiting. They'll take care of the Captain – finish him and bury him there and then."

(Dhamija)

So, the stage has been set. Udhham has sent his men to kill the Captain. This factor gives the readers something to worry about.

3.2.4. The plot twist and surprise.

During the heist, Damodar tries to make a detour in the plan devised for killing the Captain. He decides to ditch Udhham Kumar as well as the Captain and take the money for himself. This is the point in time when Dhamija tries to spice things up, and add a little conflict to the confrontations. As already mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, emotion and empathy plays a very important role in any fiction, mainly crime fiction. This part plays as the twist and also lets the reader know that no matter how the plan goes, the Captain is to die in all the plans being made.

"Think about it, Sylvia, I've heard him say enough times that the painting is worth some 200 million dollars. That's a lot of money,' he pressed on. He outlined his alternative plan, the one he had been working on for the past couple of days. Take the painting, get rid of the Captain, disappear from Udhham Kumar's radar, then sell the painting and share the proceeds, just the two of them." (Dhamija)

Damodar had been quite sceptic of the plan Udhham Kumar had made, of disposing of the Captain. He was thinking that he was disposable too, like the Captain. The Captain was unaware of the fact that he was about to be killed, but the readers were aware of the fact. But the fact that the Captain had a plan devised already, and everything was going according to his plan.

"You shoot him, I shoot you, Damodar.'

'What!' Damodar almost shrieked. 'Are you mad? We had a deal, remember? We are in this together, we agreed-'

'We agreed to nothing, Damodar. You spoke, I listened.'

'Sylvia, don't listen to him, he's a rogue. You and I both work for bhai,' Damodar changed tactics.

'You do. I don't work for your bhai, I never worked for him.'

'Are you two an item?' he asked.

'Full marks to Damodar.' I laughed." (Dhamija)

This is the point in time when the readers feel a little relief about Sylvia not being a part of the plan or the coup d'etat. After a prolonged intense tension and rising conflict, there is a sense of relief and also a sense of surprise. A surprise that the strongest confrontation has sided with the character whom the reader wanted to live. After this surprise, and the resolve of conflict, Dhamija gives rise to another conflict which then gives rise to another suspense in order to present the readers with another set of surprises.

After the painting has been stolen, it is obvious that being stated how dangerous Mr. Bipin Patel was, there had to be a compulsory confrontation from his end. Also, after the impressive coupe d'etat the three had pulled off, it was quite a given that Udhham Kumar would also be part of the confrontation. Sub-inspector Hari Mohan Gupta, with all his sheer determination to catch the Captain also sets out to get a hold of him. Towards the end of the story, Bipin Patel, and Udhham Kumar kill each other in a shootout. Damodar is also killed by Udhham Kumar. The sub-inspector gets a hold of Sylvia and the Captain. He confiscates the painting from Sylvia in exchange to help them get across the Nepal border.

“ I stood still as Sylvia took the bag and walked towards the inspector. Our last chance was slipping away. The nearer Sylvia got to him, the further away our plan got from us.”
(Dhamija)

“Sylvia took out the tube – the two-hundred-flipping-million-dollar tube that had cost Damodar his life.”(Dhamija)

“I saw him make Sylvia take out the painting, unfold it and show it to him before rolling it and putting it back in the tube.”(Dhamija)

At this point, the fact that after coming so close to finish the objective, to the lead finally getting what he struggled for, for what he sacrificed so many thing, he failed. The lead failed miserably. Dhamija wanted the readers to plunge into a great sadness and disparity of the lead. He wants the readers to feel how hard it might have been for the two of them to hand over the painting after struggling so much to get their hands on it.

“I’m sorry,’ I murmured as I hugged Sylvia when she came close.

We were in it together, remember, Captain? And we are alive and free. Let’s take it a day at a time. Don’t lose hope.”(Dhamija)

The book has come to an end with a sad ending. The lead failed to complete his objective and the readers might be sad and perplexed by this fact. But Dhamija again pours in some element of surprise, which relates and connects to a few hints back when the heist had not yet started.

“Your birthday gift, Captain. From me to you. Gurudakshina. Be careful, it is worth Two. Hundred. Million. Dollars.’

I carefully removed the tube, opened it and pulled the rolled-up painting out. I unfolded it on the dining table next to my birthday cake. It was Poppy Flowers.

‘How did you...?’ That was all I could manage to ask, my voice soft with disbelief.”(Dhamija)

This is where the suspense comes in after the surprise. The suspense connects this event to a event which the readers already know but had been misled to.

“ ‘Remember I had gone to Mumbai for two days while you were romancing Sheena?’

‘Not romancing Sheena, but yes I remember your trip...’

'I didn't tell you why I was off to Mumbai. I'd told Udhham Kumar that I was visiting my church. That wasn't a complete lie...'

She had gone looking for a painting that had been replaced in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and was from that era – Van Gogh's era.

"I took two canvases, just in case; the second one of a kind of insurance, in case the painter went horribly wrong and ruined the canvas. I returned to Delhi, erased them and put them in a bedroom to dry and lose the lingering whiff of ethanol. Then I found a local artist and got him to paint the replica of Poppy Flowers on the canvas. He was good. I knew the fake could fool anyone because of the age of the canvas, and it did." (Dhamija)

The reader finds out that the character who he/she has been rooting for, has finally achieved what he wanted and a successful ending to the story. Also, when the reader gets the fact that he had been fooled earlier, when Dhamija deliberately left hints and loose ends for the readers to think what he wanted them to think and not what the reality is, it gives the reader a sense of fickle happiness. It becomes so that the reader first gets the surprise, that is the product, or immediate feeling and later, gets the progressive feeling or the process or suspense. This commercial crime fiction by Dhamija is truly a master piece.

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