



**CRIME LITERATURE  
A GENRE IN INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT & IBN-E-SAFI**

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**ABSTRACT**

General consensus can be found to the origin of this special genre, although with many differences of opinion and criticism. Fundamental roots of the genre are strongly originated from European world, specifically from Britain and America. Generally crime, detective, thrill and suspense literature can be found in every culture and civilization of the world. This is also known as popular literature, which was denied as a part of literature in India and Pakistan but having a huge space and acceptance level as a part of literature in England and America. Assured creative writers can be found in the history about the genre. The utmost popularity of the genre in Britain started with the introduction of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The devices, metaphors, level of curiosity, thrill and a mixture of mood is fabricated in such an interesting way that can shake the imaginative approach of the readers. Amongst several British and American writers the prominent impetus of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) is unique in genre. In this category of the detectives I would like to highlight separately American and British writer's contributions to the detective genre. The popularity of the crime genre increases in the nineteenth century. Extremely popular figures of the genre in both countries were; *Edgar Allan Poe, William Godwin, Charles Dickens, Georges Simenon, Agatha Christie, Benjamin Black, Wilkie Collins, Balzac, Voltaire, and Arthur Conan Doyle*. Above all an American novelist Edgar Allan Poe has been commonly reputed as the father of so-called Detective Fictions. Detective Fiction reached its peak in 20th century. This period is generally known as a "Golden Age" of the genre; and in this sense it separates this kind of literature from other literature. As soon as the detective fiction became popular, it was inevitable that the woman detective would appear. The most famous of all is undoubtedly Agatha Christie's *Miss Marple*, She uses essentially the same weapons as *Hercule Poirot*: an inconspicuous appearance covering extraordinary brain powers. Ibn-e-Safi, Asian great name in detective genre fold many aspects of civilizations in his novels. His Imran was another Sherlock Holmes. History, humour, Politics, colonization, decolonization, crimes, investigation, superiority of law and strides for Urdu language remain debated topics in his novels. Many of Ibn-e-Safi's novels present dilemmas of European society. Ibn-e-Safi is an Arthur Canon Doyle of the

subcontinent. Imran Series and World of Espionage are prime examples of his magnum opus. Safi blends mystery with humour, espionage, law enforcement, science fiction and fabulous drama. Brutal murders, beautiful women, dangerous international criminals, cunning disguises and an unbeatable crime-solving genius are the hallmarks of Imran series. This article will highlight the work and popularity of Ibn-e-Safi in India & Pakistan.

KY PUBLICATIONS

### **Ibn-e-Safi; A Life Sketch**

Asrar Ahamed (1928-1980) used the pen-name of Ibn-e-Safi in his work. He was born and brought up in the village of Nara, District Allahabad, U.P., India. His father Safi-Ullah and his mother Nazeera Bibi gave him the name of Asrar Ahamed. His parents were well educated and landlords of the Nara village. Safi-Ullah had four children from Nazeera Bibi, named, Asrar Ahamed, Isar Ahamed, Ghufairah Khatoon, and Balaghat Khatoon. Asrar Ahamed and Balaghat Khatoon survived while others passed away in young ages. Balaghat Khatoon later known as Azra Rehana married with Lateef Ahamed Siddiqi and died in 2005. Safi-Ullah died on 27 June, 1967 and Nazeera Bibi died in June, 1979, on this unbearable loss Ibn-e-Safi wrote a short poem "Maan" Mother (Ahamed, 1984). Ibn-e-Safi migrated to Pakistan with his mother and sister in 1952. His father Safi-Ullah was already working in Syed A.M Wazir Ali & Company Karachi, a vending company contracting for British Indian Army. Their first residence was in C-1 Lalukhet (now known as Liaquatabd), where he started Asrar Publications. At times, he wrote his name Israr Ahamed Narvi, showing association with the name of village "Nara". In 1953 at the age of 26 Ibn-e-Safi married to Umma Slam Khatoon, when she was 15 year old, with whom he had seven children. Isar Ahamed Safi, he was an eye specialist and died on 3rd July, 2005. Abrar Ahamed Safi, a mechanical engineer in America. Ahamed Safi, a mechanical engineer in Lahore. Iftikhar Ahamed Safi, an electrical engineer in Riyadh Saudi Arabia. His first wife Umma Slama Khatoon died on June 12, 2003. Asrar Ahamed (Ibn-e-Safi) at the age of 41 married again with Farahat Ara in 1969, with whom he did not have any child. His second wife Farahat Ara died in Karachi, on 31 December 2010. Asrar Ahamed received his early education from Majedia Islamia high school Nara.

Ibn-e-Safi completed his matriculation from D,A,V school, Allahabad, as family shifted from Nara to Allahabad. He completed his intermediate from evening Christian College, Allahabad. In his college life Ibn-e-Safi participated in different literary activities which enlighten his personality in many ways. In 1947, he took admission in Allahabad University, but due to the worst scenario and consequences of partition in India, he was unable to pursue his education. He took admission in Agra University as a private candidate and completed his Bachelor of Arts.

### **Ibn-e-Safi and His Times**

Ibn-e-Safi is widely regarded as a pre-eminent South Asian espionage and crime novelist. During the time of Ibn-e-Safi (1928-1980) Western world in literature was crossing the period of Modernism (1901-1939) after great periods of Victorian literature (1837-1901) and Romanticism (1798-1837). West was saturated with literary personalities. The famous general contemporaries of Ibn-e-Safi in West were George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), E.M Forster (1879-1970), T.S Eliot (1888-1965), Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and Ted Hughes (1930-1998). In sub-continent his famous contemporaries were R.K Narayan (1906-2001) Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991), Qurratulain Hyder (1928-2007), Naseem Hijazi (1914-1996), Qudrat Ullah Shahab (1917-1986), Ashfaq Ahmed (1925-2004), Ibn-e-Insha (1927-1978), Mohsin Bhopali (1932-2007), and Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955). Ibn-e-Safi through his strong gaze and vivid artistic description evokes the great political and social upheavals of the Western society in his novels. The humanity is the fundamental direction of Ibn-e-Safi in his novels. The novels of Ibn-e-Safi illustrate the power of good crime fictions. He was a writer of enormous talent with an ability to create cosmic effects in his writings. The readers of all ages of his

novels remain so alive and active, which distinguish him from other novelists. The compelling methodology and curiosity in lines was breathtaking. Investigation was his vitality. Ibn-e-Safi wrote with immense vigor and liveliness and brought people exuberantly to life through crime investigation and removing social evils. Ibn-e-Safi is an eye witness of Indo-Pak partition. He migrated to Pakistan after partition. World War I & II, North and South Korean war in 1953, Middle Eastern crisis after World War, China, Egypt Greece, Iran and European world remained topics in his writings.

He observed the world and its disputes. Ibn-e-Safi fabricated all these events as he observed in his writings. He represented his era in his writings. Orientalists' ideology of uncivilized and savage citizens of Asia and Africa developed a post-colonial era in literature. Writers around the world highlighted the approach of orientalist's in their work. Indian and African post-colonial literature is in its unique form of defense. Westernization is a phobia in some parts of Asia while in other it's totally opposite. It's a symbol of modernity in Middle East and a symbol of dominance in India and Pakistan.

Ibn-e-Safi in his novels examined European world as politically liberal, model of knowledge, world full of ideologies, place of dehumanization, urbanization, industrialization, constitutionally strong but substandard morally. Cultural dependence on orientalist's was a major correction of Ibn-e-Safi for the society. Ibn-e-Safi avoids seductive literature and lays an emphasis on quality work in his novels. According to Ibn-e-Safi, Westernization creates while non-Westerner world transmits. Ibn-e-Safi tried to reflect orientalist's approach in his work to shake the imaginative approach of new generations. Occidentalism and orientalism were having equal influences on Ibn-e-Safi's syllogism that has been reflected in his writings.

The history of detective literature in Urdu is not as old as in English literature. Earlier in Urdu literature; writers focus was to produce religious, social and political serious manuscripts. Most of the writers were unaware of the engaging and heart pressing plots in novels. Sometimes they copied

some of the Western novelists as well. When it comes to mystery, crime and detective literature in Urdu; there comes the name of legend Ibn-e-Safi. Ibn-e-Safi really proved himself to be one and only abundantly readable writer in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. From a common man to a politician and businessman he was thrill creator for all of them. His characters Imran and Fareedi were as popular as Sherlock Homes.

There were some writers before and after Ibn-e-Safi who also worked a lot on their novels and even copied some of the Westerners as well but don't be able to get that status in detective literature as Ibn-e-Safi. Amongst those writers Ishtiaq Ahmed's Wadi e Marjaan, Gainda Ka Toofan, Taboot Ka Raz, Mazhar Kaleem's Bloody Game, Business Crime, Mazhar ul Haq Alvi's Lava, Adam khor Qabeela, Aqleem Aleem's Sangtarash, Maut Ke Sodagar, Iqbal Kazmi's Angare, Aatish Fishan, Aag, Munshi Teerath Ram Frozपुरi's Laal Kathor and Zafar Umer Zubairi's Neeli Chhatri were some of the writers who worked for the genre. But none of them and many others can be compared to Ibn-e-Safi's work. It has been accepted by Ibn-e-Safi himself that only 8out of his 240 novels have any borrowed ideas. His originality and creativity of work can be estimated by the way he created plots and characters like Fareedi, Imran, Hameed, Julia, Safdar, Qasim and Fayyaz.

The work of Ibn-e-Safi is in two types of collections. The novels Jasoosi Dunya [The World of Espionage] have 126 titles. In collection Imran Series there are 116 titles. In Imran Series, "Shola Group" of stories made his pen-name Ibn-e-Safi famous. There are 12 writings which have been assembled under the heading "Other Works". In Jasoosi Dunya and Imran Series there are 18 works in which European cultural, economic, historical, political, and social conditions are discussed. Ibn-e-Safi very dramatically crystallized the scene of Europe. He witnessed Mughals era in India and England's colonization over India later he was also a victim of India's partition. Selecting Pakistan as a new homeland for himself; history teaches him a lot of lessons. Well experienced through consequences of European Wars and Indo-Pak's partition, the writer very artistically exposes and unfolds the realities of

the time. Through his novels Ibn-e-Safi linked the stories of the world and exposes policies of wicked criminals 'probabilities of their missions and characters. His novels are so compelling and engaging. Sometimes they act as an eye-opener from wicked criminals. He presents stories in so realistic way that readers never find a sudden or jumping conclusion. He linked the consequences in a rational or scientific way.

In some of his novels the surrounding is so cozy that readers imaginatively find themselves at the place, and sometimes he produces anecdotes, and awful events. This was the beauty of his creative pen that really amazes his readers of all ages. His novels were also enriched with scientific information. He draws the places so beautifully where he took his investigators that they really are as similar, as he expresses in his novels. Every single line, character and event created by him was so enjoyable and excitable that people, who cannot read and write at that time in India, ask others to read for them. He did an exceptional job, while highlighting the bloody era of separatism faced by a country of billion plus citizens in his novels. Loathsome British Raj and notorious year of Indian partition events are recalled by his memory and he presents a dramatic picture in his novels in the form of characters and stories. The panic era; of World War I & II, Indo-Pak partition, drugs smuggling, international crimes, sex workers, immoralities, lawlessness and the mission of superiority of law and implementation of law remains engaging topics in his almost all novels.

Cheeky characters, hilarious phrases, breathtaking incidents, events, wondrous experiences of Imran and Faridi, thrill and suspense of investigation and the quality of Urdu language was so tasteful for his readers in his novels. In India and Pakistan at that time people loved to wait for his next episodic novels which entertained them a lot and they read it again and again till the next publication. His thematic characters, range of investigation was local and international which include countries like England, Italy, Spain, Scotland, Pacific Island, Zanzibar, South Africa, the United States of America, Egypt and Greece etc. The level of popularity can be judged through the statement of

Agatha Christie during her short transit flight at Jinnah International Airport Karachi said: I am not a learned scholar of Urdu literature, but I have short glimpse of detective novels of the Indo-Pak. There is only one genuine novelist of the genre, which is "Ibn-e-Safi" (Ashraf, 2009).

The most intriguing aspects of his novels is that even the high class politicians were also addicted to read his novels in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh at that time. Comic, horrifying, brutal and moral aspects in his scenes made his novels more enjoyable for his readers. His stories were very unique, compelling, completely engaging and excruciatingly real in their nature.

#### CONCLUSION

The article is conducted with an aim of resurgence and revitalization of the detective genre in Urdu literature and to author's representation of European Society as an orientalist. The comparative analysis of socio-cultural issues, hegemonic control of Europe over developing world and spirit of resurgence in Third World has been carried out in a deep-down way. Analysis of the novels indicated how Ibn-e-Safi unfolds the obnoxious way of European policy makers against Third World. Half-baked acceptance of detective genre in Urdu literature is also a serious task of the study in hand. Rule of law was another mission of Ibn-e-Safi in his novels. As an Orientalist, Ibn-e-Safi identified enigma of European colonization and decolonization generally in Third World and particularly in India. Imperialism lasts an everlasting impact upon the people of Asia and Africa. Experience of Indo-Pak partition and injustice with brutality during partition can be identified in his two series work. The study in hand highlighted in depth the possible socio-political influences on Ibn-e-Safi like orientalism, Occidentalism and social Darwinism and Indo-Pak partition.

European Imperialism remain another debate in studies that shows that how Third World was treated. Many of the postcolonial studies of Asia and Africa have been referred to prove the real concern of European colonization. Perplexed World War I & II and European society has also been crystallized by the view of Ibn-e-Safi. To sum up, Ibn-e-Safi's characters were as famous as Spider-Man,

Superman and Sherlock Holmes. European Integration after World War II, Italian Fascism, Spanish Franco era, British Imperialism, American emergence as a super power, Greece political instability and bright past have been equally comprehended in the light of his novels and missions.

### References

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The references used in the preparation of research work are enclosed herewith. There are two special websites with regard to the information on Ibn-e-Safi. These are:

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