

Stylistics Pattern in Padmini Bannerjee's "The Goose Thieves" Short Story

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Abstract—Stylistics is not a new term in language research. It is closely related to *style*. The research object of stylistic is style, language which is used in a particular context in a particular language. This research investigates some language pattern found in *The Goose Thieve* short story which aims to elaborate the relationship between language with its artistic function. Artistic function here means aesthetic function, particular language forms, especially figurative language in *The Goose Thieves* short story. This research employs Sudaryanto's *simak catat* method. At last, the result of this research is expected to be able to found some forms of figurative language used in *The Goose Thives* short story.

Keywords— *Stylistic, stile, The Goose Thieves, figurative language*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a vital part within literary work. Due to its core means to communicate with the reader of literary work is language. In term of literary work, Nurgiyantoro (2002) compare language as color paint, in which both of them are the valuable element in creating a work. Hence, language plays a fundamental role in conveying message of the literary work. What makes literary works and non-literary works different are language, literary work uses aesthetic language. As well as Zulfahnur, et al. (1996) that literature is a work which has aesthetic element. Syafa'at (2015) revealed that the aesthetics in a literary work is built through the art of word or language which is born from soul expression. Related with this, reading a book will be more interesting if it has aesthetic value, so that is why, reader is more interested in and enthusiastic about reading to read literary work. Moreover, if the author presents their writing through a unique and interested language style. Therefore, using a good style in literature can influence the readers' interest.

Aminuddin (1995) revealed that creating literary work cannot be separated from the use of language with its manipulation. Furthermore, the existence of language is not ready to use, but it should be maintained, developed, reinstructed, and built with experience and knowledge of the language user.

Handayani (2010) stated that a literary work is created through deep contemplation of the author. It aims to be enjoyed, understood, and inspired by society. The reality life

of society becomes the sources of story created by the author, which then it is processed and integrated with author's imagination, thus it will be a good and valuable story. In this case, short story is one of form of literature, it also come from any imagination and also creative idea of the authors as the respond of circumstance of reality life around them.

The use of language in terms of literary text is different from the use of language in non-literary text, such as in speech, academic writing, law, etc. Handayani (2010) revealed that the use of language in terms of literature tend to contains high imaginative language which is purposes to get the reader interested in reading this such literary text and it is expected to prevent the boredom of the reader. The author supposed to commit well consideration in determining language. The author should choose the right diction which aims not only for understandable consideration, but also for aesthetic consideration which aims to emerge beauty or aesthetic effect. Because the basic character of literature itself is its aesthetics.

Handayani (2010) pointed out that in linguistics perspective, literary work is viewed as a work which utilizes language as the core means in conveying its sense. In investigating specific aspect of language use in literary work is stylistics. Stylistics or language style is one of interesting element in a literary work. Every author has their own different style in writing down their idea. Thus, a work can reflect the nature of the author, as well as human's character is different each other (Pratikno, 1984)

Stylistics is a part of linguistics which focus on language use variations, which the most aware and complex in a literature. Stylistics is a study about language style (Turner G.W. in Pradopo, 1997: p. 254).

In this research, the researcher is going to conduct research on stylistics which concern on language pattern in a short story entitled *The Goose Thieves* written by Padmini Bannerjee. This short story tells about a group of students (Bina, Nishi, Valerie, and Vinita) and the geese. They were much fond of the geese. The boarders had named the geese after famous explorers because they were constantly exploring the school grounds. The four geese named Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo, Captain Cook, and Amundsen. One day, Bina heard the conversation in the kitchen between the cook and the school-bus driver, George

about the plan to fatten up the geese in Christmas feast. Bina was so worried to hear her sweet and lovable geese will be fattened for the Christmas feast. Hence, she and her friends working out a plan to stop the geese from turning up on the school dining table for Christmas. Bina planned to grab the four geese and smuggle them somewhere far away from school there would be no geese for the cooks to fatten and slaughter for the Christmas dinner. When the D-day of Christmas drew nearer, Bina and her friends come to school wearing large sized overcoat. Right after the class ended, Bina, Valerie, Nishi, and Vinita had already disappeared down the corridor, pass the library and assembly hall, across the country yard and towards the kitchen. The time is right, nobody was there. They started to chase the geese around and tossed them inside their overcoat. Unfortunately, right after they can chase the geese, Mother superior came and look sternly at them and ask for their explanation of this complications. It made Bina, Nishi, Vinita, and Valerie getting afraid. At last, Bina spook up and explained how it could be, that actually, they were so fond of the geese and do not want the geese to be fattened up for Christmas feast. Unexpectedly, mother superior laughing then she said and patted the girls on their shoulders, "Whatever gave you girls the idea we were to eat these fellow's? Certainly not. We won't kill them for the sake of on meal. They're yours, girls! Yours to play with and look after. Finally, the geese were not fatten up for Christmas feast.

This short story was chosen by the reason that this contain valuable and positive lesson which can be taken and realized by the reader in their daily life. In this case, Pradopo (1994) stated that a good literary work is able to directly educate the reader about social values. The purpose of this research is to identify the stylistics pattern used in Padmini Bannerjee's *The Goose Thieves*.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Stylistics

Stylistics is closely related to style (Nurgiyantoro, 2014; Ratna, 2009; Shipley, 1962). Furthermore, 1) stylistics is used to investigate language use in literary work, interdisciplinary between linguistics and literature 2) to assist in analyzing language style (Kridalaksana, 1983; Pradopo, 2005). The object of stylistics is language which is used in particular context and particular language style. Fowler (1987) revealed that all texts contains style, it is not for language, and it is not solely for literary text. Style may emerge in any text whether literary text or non-literary text. Basically, style is used in daily activities. Almost every action used style. It means that no activity is done by human without using style, without message. At last, style is the message itself. In conclusion, stylistics related to the definition of style in general which occupy all aspects of life (Ratna, 2009). Regarding to the style of literary work, especially the success literary work is artificial. It means that the style used is deliberately created to represent the idea of the author (Murry, 1956; Aminuddin, 1995; Riyono, n.d.). Therefore, style can be defined as a language quality in which directly reflects thought and feeling.

Through style, somebody can be recognized, because style can depict the author's characteristics. Even Ratna (2009) proposed that style can bear desire, because style gives new image.

Stylistics analyzes the way author manipulating (exploiting) element and structure of language and what effects emerge from it (Sudjiman, 1993). In this case, some people worried about linguistics approach toward literary text will damage its aesthetics as literary work because linguistics tend to concern on grammatical aspects, not interpretability of discourse, as well as Widdowson (1979) stated that "the integrity of literature as an aesthetic object can only be experienced directly, cannot be explained and is bound to be irreparably damaged by any attempt to treat it as use of language". On the other hand, a linguist stated that "no criticism can go beyond its linguistics" (Whitehall, 1951).

Stylistics guides the reader to understand a literary work through language understanding which is used well by he author (Sugiarti, 2010). Stylistics exploited language to achieve aesthetic effect in communication. Analysis of stylistics usually conducted to explain something in general in terms of literature to explain the relationship among language with artistic function and its meaning (Leech and Short, 1981; Wellek Warren, 1956; Nurgiyantoro, 2005).

Stylistic analysis in linguistics refers to the identification of usage patterns in speech and writing. Stylistic analysis in literary studies is usually made for the purpose of commenting on quality and meaning in text (Khataak, Mehnaz, and Khataak, 2012). Stylistics, in other words, is the study of style used in literary and verbal language and the effect writer or speaker wishes to communicate to the reader or listener.

B. Short Story

Short story as a work of arts serves at the minutes of life. In documentation, like a mirror that shows the short story event (Nurroh, 2011). Author with their imagination will not be able to sleep well before all the event were written down into the literary text, which finally can be read and understood (Nuroh, 2011). Therefore, when someone read a short story, they are expected to know the event, the situation, the happiness, sadness, and any other information from the short story they read.

Short story is a story. In terms of fiction, story being an essential part. Without story element, the existence of a story will not appear. Besides, story also defined as a narration as an event which is deliberately created based chronology. Abrams (1981) defined a story as a simple event which occur chronologically. While, Kenny (1996) defined story as events occurred based on chronological and is presented in a fiction work. On the other hand, Keegan propose another definition of short story, that is "it was something that could be read in one sitting and brought a singular illumination to the reader".

Based on some definitions of short story above, Nuroh (2011) concluded that short story is an expression of author's feeling about their response of life, and through their imagination skills, all is written in beautiful way, a deep

imagination and a strong theme can give a deep impression for the reader (Nuroh, 2011).

C. Diction

In a literary work, diction is the way author using words or sentences to convey concepts or ideas (Nuroh, 2011). In analyzing diction, the researcher should firstly identify whether the text contains concrete or specific words, or contain abstract or common words. The appropriateness in selecting word related to meaning of word which occupy denotation and connotation. In common, word is differentiated into denotative and connotative meaning. Nuroh (2011) stated that every word has its denotative meaning. It is called denotative because it refers to a referent, concept, or particular idea of the referent. In short, denotative meaning is the true meaning, and not figurative meaning. To sharpen meaning or get the sentence aesthetic, many kinds of style will emerge. Style of a text is not only signed by diction, but also signed by style of the author.

D. Style (Language Style)

In terms of literature, the use of language style is considered essential. Language in a literary work is certainly different from language which is used in daily life. A literary work will be tasteless without any aesthetics element in it. The ability of the author in maintaining words influence very much toward the aesthetics of the literary works. Language style also influence readers' interest, because language style is one of interesting element in a literary work.

Nurgiyantoro (2014) revealed that language is a means in conveying information. Hence, the clearness of information in order to the information delivered well to the reader is determined by the language used. Thus, as an author who convey the information need to choose, to pry, and to use language well to make the readers accept and understand the information easily.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive qualitative research with stylistics approach. The data source of this research is a short story written by Padmini Bannerjee entitled *The Goose Thieves* which is taken from a short story compilation book entitled *Short Storyes for Children*, published by Children's Book Trust Nehru House in 2008. Data collection is acquired with Sudaryanto's Simak catat technique. After all, the data analysis is conducted through three steps: data reduction, data presentation and making conclusion

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researcher is going to analyze language pattern used in Bannerjee's *The Goose Thieves* short story. Through this research, the researcher found some language styles used by the author in writing his short story. It can be the characteristics of the author. In this research, the researcher attempts to analyze stylistics in literary text by

means of stylistics in Padmini Banerjee's *The Goose Thieves* short story.

Stylistics is not merely for analyzing literary text. It is also used in analyzing non-literary text. However, stylistics is frequently correlated with language of literature. Nuroh (2011) said that stylistics is used to replace criticism which is typically subjective and impressive, with style analysis of literary text which is typically objective. This analysis is conducted by analyzing forms and signs of linguistics as well as appears in physical structure. Through this way, it will be acquired concrete evidence about style of a work.

Analysis of Language Style Uses in Padmini Banarjee's The Goose Thieves short story

Based on analysis of language style used in Padmini Banarjee's *The Goose Thieves* short story, the researcher found some pattern which applied in the short story. The researcher found the use of phrasal verb, figurative speech (metaphor, satire, irony, climax, repetition)

A. Phrasal Verb

The use of phrasal verb aims to reach aesthetic aspect of literary work. The author is actually able to use another verb to convey his idea. However, in this case, he supposed to use phrasal verb. Phrasal verb may have different meaning from its base word. This will emerge such unique thing or effect in a text, which consequently create an aesthetic aspect of the literary work. For example: *look for* and *look after*. Both phrasal verb has their different meaning from their base words. *Look* means directing eyes in order to see something or somebody. Nevertheless, *Look* will have different meaning when it is combined with other word like *after* and *for*. *Look after* means taking care, while *look for* means seeking

The researcher found 38 uses of phrasal verb in Banarjee's *The Goose Thieves* short story. (See in appendix 1)

1) Figurative Speech

Figurative means words or phrases which is used not with their basic meaning but with a more imaginative meaning (Cambridge Dictionary, 3rd Edition). There are many kinds of figurative speech the researcher found in the short story, such as metaphor, hyperbole, euphemism, climax, repetition, satire, and irony.

a) Metaphor

Metaphor is such analogy which compare two things directly without using word "like or as" (Keraf, 2009). On the other hand Cambridge Dictionary (3rd edition) defines metaphor as an expression which describes a person or object in a literary way by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to the person or object you are trying to describe. A metaphor is a statement that one thing is something else. It is figure of speech which omits the comparative terms such as like, as, resembles, seem, than, and so on. It implies that one thing is another (Perrine, 1983). An example of metaphore in Banarjee's *The*

Goose Thieves short story is like a sentence “It was Bina who first got wind of what was happening” (page 37). The phrase get wind of something means to hear a piece of information that someone else was trying to keep secret. Hence, the word *wind* here does not mean wind in its true meaning, *wind* here compared with a piece of information. For the detail analysis, see on appendix.

b) Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a *language* style which contains exaggeration meaning. Hyperbole is also defined as a way of speaking or writing that makes someone or something sound bigger, better, more, etc than the way they are in fact. Reaske (1984) defined hyperbole is a figure of speech which employs exaggeration. Sometimes it is used for comic purposes, but more often it is used seriously. Even Nuroh (2011) revealed that hyperbole can produce a very dramatic effect. For example in the sentence “Nishi explode (page 38), to express that nishi is getting angry, the author used the word explode to appear an exaggeration effect. For the detail, see on appendix.

c) Euphemism

The word euphemism is derived from Greek, euphemizein which means Euphemism is a word or a phrase used to avoid saying an unpleasant or offensive word (Cambridge dictionary (3rd edition). The researcher found one example of euphemism in Bannerjee’s *The Goose Thieves* short story: ...we should have a heart-to-heart talk about it (p.39). For the detail, see appendix.

d) Climax

Climax is derived from sentence which is typically periodic. Climax is a language style which contains thought in sequence in which the idea getting increase from the previous idea (Keraf, 2009). In Bannerjee’s *The Goose Thieves* short story, the author found two examples of climax: 1) “If you keep demanding more food, We’ll really fatten you up and have you for the Christmas feast like those geese outside.” (p.37-38); 2) The more I think about it, the better it appears. (p.39). For the detail, see appendix

e) Repetition

Repetition is a form of repetition whether in the form of sound, word, phrase, sentence, etc. which aims to beautify utterance (Nurgiantoro, 2014; Keraf, 2009). The researcher found two examples of repetition in Bannerjee’s *The Goose Thieves* short story: 1) “Oh hello, Christopher Columbus, Hi Marco Polo, hi Captain Cook, hello Amundsen” (p.37)

The repetition is on the word *hello* and *hi*. 2) “...Valerie who was chasing him round and round a cactus bush.” (p.42). the repetition in this sentence is in the word *round*. For the detail see on appendix.

f) Satire

Satire Is derived from a word *satura* which means a a try which full of fruits. Satire is an expression which aims at laughing or rejecting something. Satire is a way of

criticizing people or ideas in a humorous way, or a piece of writing or play which uses this style (Cambridge dictionary (3rd edition). The researcher found two satire expressions in Bannerjee’s *The Goose Thieves* short story: 1) “Is this some kind of a practical joke?” (p.41); 2) “Ist this your idea of fun?” (p.43)

g) Irony

Irony is telling something in opposite. Cambridge dictionary (3rd edition) defined irony as a situation in which something which was intended to have a particular result has the opposite or a very different result. For example, in the sentence “Four of us turning up like this! It’s funny, isn’t it?” (Page 41). *It’s funny, isn’t it?* show the irony, because it does not describe the true situation. It is expressed to hide their afraid feeling. For the detail, see on appendix

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research related to language style used in Bannerjee’s *The Goose Thieves* short story, hence this research concludes that Bannerjee’s *The Goose Thieves* short story used some language stiles such as: 34 phrasal verb; 17 figurative speech which is divided into 4 metaphor, 5 hyperbole, 2 satire, 2 repetition, 2 climax, 1 euphemism, 1 irony; and 3 idioms.

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APPENDIX
PHRASAL VERB

No.	Page	Phrasal Verb	In Sentece (short story)	Meaning
1.	Page 37	Look for	Bina, who was looking for some botanical specimens... (p.37)	To try to notice someone and something.
2.		Lounge around	George, the school-bus driver, was lounging around talking to the cooks inside (p.37)	To spend your time in a relaxed way, sitting or lying somewhere and doing very little
3.		Name after	The boarders had named the geese after famous explorers... (p.37)	To give someone or something the same name as aother person or thing.
4.		Chase out	...Miss K. tried to chase the intruders out (p.37)	To run after a person or an animal in a threatening way in order to make them leave.
5.	Page 38	Fatten up	We'll really fatten you up and... (p.38)	To give an animal or a thin person a lot of food so that they become fatter. To cook
6.		See around	But we've seen them around for weeks. (p.38)	Too look around somewhere
7.		Work out	Bina had been quiet all this time, working out a plan. (p.38)	To arrange a plan
8.		Turn up	... we can do to stop the geese from turning up on the... (p.38)	To
9.	Page 39	Count out	... count me out. (p.39)	To not involve somebody or something.
10.		Burst out	"What!" burst out Nishi, ... (p.39)	To express angry
11.		Think over	The four of them thought over and ... (p.39)	To think deeply
12.		Find out	Whenever anybody wanted to find out what they were discussing (p.39-40)	To find something
13.	Page 40	Go off	...and went off, mumbling to herself. (p.40)	To stop

14		Throw out	... the upstairs lady threw out some water... (p.40)	
15.	Page 41	Turn up	*When three other girls of the same class turned up wearing oversized coats. (p.41) *... some excuse for turning up in their mothers coats. (p. 41) *”Four of us turning p like this!”	To wear something for body
16.		Stare at	The others stared at them... (p.41)	To lookj for a long time with the eyes wide open, especially when surprised, frightened or thinking.
17.		Charge out	The moment classes were over for that day, the four friends charged out. (p.41)	
18.		Throw off	Their natural science teacher already tottering rather than unsteadily on stilettos was thrown off balance... (p. 41)	To confuse or upset someone for a short time by saying or doing something that they are not expecting.
19.		Disappear down	Bina, Valerie, Nishi and Vinita had already disappeared down the corridor... (p.41)	To go to somewhere cannot be seen or found
20.	Page 42	Walk out	... the four explorers walked out from behind a bush. (p.42)	To walk out from someplace
21.		Lunge at	“Grab,” yelled Nishi forgetting to wishper and lunged at Christopher Columbus. (p.42)	To move forward suddenly and with force, especially in order to attack someone
22.		Reach for	“Eee-yowa,” howled bina as she reached for Marco Polo ... (p.42)	An act of stretching out your arm
23.		Slip away	... was left with a feather from his tail as he slipped away. (p.42)	To slip away
24.		Run after	Valerie run after Amundsen... (p.42)	To chase someone or something that s moving away from you

25.		Scurry accross	Captain Cook who was scurrying accross the cabbage-patch. (p.42)	To move quickly, with small short steps
26.		Toss inside	Bina caught her prey and tossed him inside her overcoat. (p.42)	To throw something carelessly (inside the overcoat)
27.		Stick out	... she had thought and he stuck out conspicuously... (p.42)	To put something especially in a not very careful way
28.		Lash out	“That’s enough!” a sharp authroritarian voice lashed out. (p.42)	To suddenly attack someone or something physically or criticise them in an angry way.
29.		Chase around	Valerie who was chasing him around and round a cactus bush. (p.42)	To hurry or run in various directions
30.		Look up with	The girls looked up with instinctive dread. (p.42)	To try to find a piece of information by looking in a book or on a computer.
31.	Page 43	Whirl round	Then, as Valerie, Vinita whirled round, their prey fled... (p.43)	To turn around in circles
32.		Look at	Mother Superior looked sternly at tem. (p.43)	To think about a subject carefully so that yu can make a decision about it
33.		Trundle off	...his ruffled feathers and trundled off. (p.43)	To produce in a boring way something that has often been seen or used before
34.		Put down	Nashi put Amundsen down and he too waddled off. (p.43)	To put an object that you are holding onto the floor or onto another surface, or to stop carrying someone.
35.		Waddle off	Nashi put Amundsen down and he too waddled off. (p.43)	To walk with short steps, swinging the body from one side to the other.
36.	Page 44	Burst out	“Oh! Its so funny,” she burst out... (p.44)	To suddenly say something loudly
37.		Play with	They’re yours girls! Yours to play with and look after.” (p.44)	To keep touching and moving something around with no purpose or interest.
38.		Look after	They’re yours girls! Yours to play with and look after.” (p.44)	To take care of someone or something

FIGURATIVE SPEECH

No.	Figurative speech	Text	Meaning	
1.	Get wind of something	It was Bina who first got wind of what was happening (page 37).	To hear a piece of information that someone else was trying to keep secret	Metaphor
2.	Sink	Bina's heart sank (p.38)	Being sad	Hyperbole
3.	Explode	Nishi exploded (p.38)	Being angry	Hyperbole
4.	Close to tears	Vinita was close to tears (p.38)	Almost crying	Metaphor
5.	Heart-to-heart talk	...we should have a heart-to-heart talk about it (p.39)	To discuss wisely	Euphemism
6.	Quake	I quake on my boots when I see her coming (p.39)	Being afraid and frightened	Hyperbole
7.	The more I think about it, the better it appears	The more I think about it, the better it appears. (p.39)	=	Climax
8.	Out with it!	Out with it, Beans (p.39)	To say to someone when you want them to tell you something which they do not want you to know	Idiom
9.	Burst out	"What!" burst out Nishi, (p.39)	Being surprised	Hyperbole
10.	Pin-drop silence	There was pin-drop silence for a few seconds (p.42)	The quiet situation	Metaphor
11.	Deathly silence	There was a deathly silence (p.43)	A very quiet and silent circumstance	Hyperbole
12.	Icy voice	She asked in icy voice (p.43)	Unfriendly voice	Metaphor
13.	Tight-lipped	Mother Superior was tight lipped (p.43)	To avoid showing anger or refusing to speak about something	Idiom
14.	Exchange glance	The four of them exchanged glances (p.44)	To look at each other	Idiom
15.		...Valerie who was chasing him round and round a cactus bush. (p.42)	Repeat the word <i>round</i>	Repetition
16.		"Oh hello, Chrisopher Columbus, Hi Marco Polo, hi Captain Cook,	Repeat the word <i>hello</i> and <i>hi</i> .	Repetition

		hello Amundsen” (p.37)		
17.		“If you keep demanding more food, We’ll really fatten you up and have you for the Christmas feast like those geese outside.” (p.37-38)	-	Climax
18.		“Is this some kind of a practical joke?” (p.41)	-	Satire
19.		“Four of us turning up like this! It’s funny, isn’t it?” (p.41)	-	Irony
20.		“Is this your idea of fun?” (p.43)	-	Satire

SHORT STORY

The Goose Thieves

It was Bina who first got wind of what was happening. She happened to be passing the school kitchen where they cooked meals for the nuns and boarders. George, the school-bus driver, was lounging around talking to the cooks inside. Bina, who was looking for some botanical specimens in the backyard, stopped suddenly in her tracks. Waddling sedately towards her was a bevy of large, awkward looking geese.

"Oh hello, Christopher Columbus, hi Marco Polo, hi Captain Cook, hello Amundsen," she greeted them. The geese hurried towards her, their heads bobbing back and forth. The boarders had named the geese after famous explorers because they were constantly exploring the school grounds. Once they had wandered into Bina's classroom, during a very boring civics class and had scared the daylight out of Miss K. The class had roared with laughter as Miss K. tried to chase the intruders out by flapping a large, checked, board duster.

As Bina patted them, she heard one of the cooks giggle and threaten George. "If you keep (37)

demanding more food, we'll really fatten you up

and have you for the Christmas feast like those geese outside."

Bina's heart sank. These sweet, lovable geese were actually being fattened for Christmas! It couldn't be! The schoolgirls were much too fond of them. But what could they do anyway? Bina sought her friends Vinita, Valerie and Nishi and told them what she had overheard.

Nishi exploded. "Nonsense! Not our Marco Polo and Amundsen, our poor Captain Cook, and Columbus — no, no we won't let them be killed and eaten."

Valerie however was the thoughtful sort. "But how can we stop them? They have every right to do what they like with the geese. That's done every Christmas. We have no right to make anybody do anything. After all, they aren't even *our* geese!"

Vinita was close to tears. "But we've seen them around for weeks. School won't be the same without those darlings waddling in and out of the classrooms. We can't let them be killed!"

Bina had been quiet all this time, working out a plan. "I think we *can* do something about it," she said finally. "In fact there *is* something we can do to stop the geese from turning up on the school dining table for Christmas."

Nishi muttered disbelievingly, "If you're going (38)

to suggest to Mother Superior that we should have a heart-to-heart talk about it, count me out. I quake in my boots when I see her coming."

"Besides," said Valerie, "who are we for her to listen to? "

"Listen to me," Bina interrupted. "I have a real good idea. The more I think about it, the better it appears."

"Out with it, Beans," Vinita was impatient.

"We'll kidnap them!" Bina exclaimed and sat back to watch her friends' reaction.

"What!" burst out Nishi, "kidnap!"

"You mean it'll work?" Vinita sounded doubtful.

"Why not?"

Only Valerie said slowly, "It's a possibility! We could keep them in my backyard. We have lots of space."

The four sat together and thought. Gradually it struck the other three that Bina's idea was workable. If they could but grab the four geese and smuggle them somewhere far away from school there would be no geese for the cooks to fatten and slaughter for the Christmas dinner. The next few days, the four of them thought over and discussed plans in secret, till the rest of the class almost went crazy. They would huddle in a corner of the lawn or in the assembly hall or library. Whenever anybody wanted to find (39)

out what they were discussing, they would innocently say like Valerie once did to an inquisitive girl — "Oh we are discussing the exploits of Marco Polo the traveller."

"But we learnt all about him in geography last year," said the stubborn girl and went off, mumbling to herself.

D-day drew nearer. It was mid-December and getting very cold. The girls came to school clad in heavy blazers. The day before the plan was put into action the four friends met on the lawn.

"All set?" Bina looked round and blew on her hands for warmth. "Everybody sure about their parts?"

"Hmmm."

"Of course."

"Everything's fine."

"Good."

The next morning Bina went to school, wearing a large sized blue overcoat. Mother Superior noticed her at once, even before morning assembly.

"What is this?" she asked Bina. "You know very well that you're not supposed to wear any coat except your blazer to school."

"Yes Mother," Bina said innocently, "but on my way here the upstairs lady threw out some water which fell on me. I couldn't come to school wearing

a wet blazer." (40)

Mother Superior nodded. "That's all right," she said.

She was however dumbfounded when three other girls of the same class turned up wearing oversized coats.

She shook her head in disbelief as they in turn made some excuse for turning up in their mothers coats.

"This is too much," she shouted. "Four of you! Is this some kind of a practical joke?"

Nishi looked nervous. Bina patted her arm and said aloud, "What a coincidence. Four of us turning up like this! It's funny, isn't it?"

There was a pause and then Mother Superior smiled, "Go on, go to your class. But I hope coincidences like this do not happen too often."

The girls fled to their classroom. The others stared at them in surprise. The moment classes were over for that day, the four friends charged out. Their natural science teacher already tottering rather unsteadily on stilettos was thrown offbalance and fell heavily against the tall human skeleton in the corner of the room, as the four ran past her. Their classmates squealed in sympathy. Bina, Valerie, Nishi and Vinita had already disappeared down the corridor, past the library and assembly hall, across the courtyard and towards the kitchen. The kitchen was deserted and (41)

there was nobody in sight either.

Just then, as if on cue, the four explorers walked out from behind a bush.

"Grab," yelled Nishi forgetting to whisper and lunged at Christopher Columbus.

"Eee-yowa," howled Bina as she reached for Marco Polo and was left with a feather from his tail as he slipped away.

Valerie ran after Amundsen, and Vinita after Captain Cook who was scurrying across the cabbage-patch.

Bina caught her prey and tossed him inside her overcoat. But he was larger than she had thought

and he stuck out conspicuously on her left side as he straggled to free himself. Bina ignored him, and shouted instructions to the others, "Get him from over there, right there.... Oh no! he's gone behind the bench.... you go from this side.... got him. . . .no? Oh there he is quick get him... .great!" Nishi gripped Amundsen tightly, Christopher Columbus having fled towards Valerie who was chasing him round and round a cactus bush.

"That's enough!" a sharp authoritarian voice lashed out. The girls looked up with instinctive dread. Mother Superior stood on top of the kitchen steps, tall and unapproachable. The cook, Mary, peeped out from behind her. There was pin-drop silence (42)

Then, as Valerie and Vinita whirled round, their prey fled cackling loudly to safer pastures. Mother Superior looked sternly at them. "Now what's all this in aid of?" she asked in a quiet icy voice. "Is this your idea of fun?" There was a deathly silence. From inside Bina's coat Marco Polo gave an indignant squawk. Bina retrieved him and dumped him unceremoniously on the ground where he shook back his ruffled feathers and trundled off. Nishi put Amundsen down and he too waddled off.

v Mother Superior was tight lipped. "Can I explain (P43)

pect an explanation?"

The four of them exchanged glances. "We did not really mean it, Mother Superior.... We just thought it was very cruel. . . .And we're so fond of them!"

"It's not fair to eat them... we love them so much."

"After all there are so many other animals in the whole world. Why eat these?"

Mother Superior raised one hand to silence them, "One of you explain. Not all of you together. . . ."

Bina explained. She had a soothing voice. By the time she finished, Mother Superior was quite relaxed and trying to hide a smile.

"Kidnap them!" she exclaimed. "Kidnap?"

Mary, who had been quiet all this time, suddenly roared with laughter.

"Oh! Its so funny," she burst out. They all had an uproarious laugh. Finally Mother Superior said, patting the girls on their shoulders, "Whatever gave you girls the idea we were going to eat these fellow's? Certainly not. We're too fond of them. We won't kill them for the sake of one meal. They're yours girls! Yours to play with and look after."

"Thank you, Mother Superior," four voices sang in chorus. "Its wonderful to know you never intended killing them in the first place." (p. 44)