



## THEORY OF DEDUCTION IN 'A STUDY IN SCARLET'

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### ABSTRACT:

Deduction is an approach of solving a problem or mystery in which one starts from generalized or established fact(s) to individual incidents. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle used deductive reasoning through his immortal character of Sherlock Holmes in solving mysteries of crime. Looking at the clues available in the crime and deducing them with his unique reasoning power gave immense popularity to the character of Sherlock Holmes and this journey of popularity started with the novel 'A Study in Scarlet.'

Keywords : mysteries of crime , character of Sherlock Holmes, hypotheses.

### INTRODUCTION:

Deductive reasoning, also called logic, is reasoning which constructs or evaluates deductive arguments. Deductive arguments are attempts to show that a conclusion necessarily follows from a set of premises or hypotheses. Sherlock Holmes looked the clues with power of deductive reasoning and then drew conclusions which helped him to solve mystery of the crime.

It is in the beginning of the novel *A Study in Scarlet* that Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes meet to become inseparable friends and companions. Dr. Watson's curiosity about Sherlock Holmes' strange ways brought them together as close friends and companions who also shared a suit for economic purpose.

During the initial period of sharing the suit Watson comes across a monograph written by Holmes on the Theory of Deduction. In the monograph the writer says that a logician could infer from a drop of water the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other, all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it. Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can be acquired by long and patient study. Dr. Watson being a common man was rather puzzled when he read the article. Finding it difficult to fathom the ways of deduction explained in the article, Dr. Watson rejected the claims of the writer. He declared that those were boasting of an idler who had nothing to do with practical life. It is rather obvious for a common

man to get frustrated when he fails to understand complicated ideas. It is also quite obvious that a common man tends to reject ideas which he fails to fathom.

Nevertheless, Sherlock Holmes told Dr. Watson very categorically that every word written in the article was true and it was written by him. He further reminded him how his assumption that he had been to Afghanistan astonished him. Sherlock Holmes explained to Dr. Watson how he had a turn for both observation and deduction and how theories expressed in the article appear to be chimerical to him but are extremely practical. He deduced that Dr. Watson had come from Afghanistan from the very theories he had talked about in his article. From long habit the train of thought ran so swiftly through his mind that he arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. However to prove his point of view Sherlock Holmes explained to Dr. Watson how he deduced that he came from Afghanistan. He observed that he was gentlemen of a medical type, but with the air of a military man, which meant that he was an army doctor. He had further deduced that he (Dr. Watson) had come from tropics, because his face was dark, and that was not the natural tint of his skin as his wrists were fair. He had undergone hardships and sickness, as his haggard face said clearly. As British army was facing war in Afghanistan Sherlock Holmes concluded that Dr. Watson had come from Afghanistan. On hearing Sherlock Holmes' explanation Dr. Watson found it quite simple to understand.

The following web article edited by Carl Rollyson talks about Holmes' these very methods of detection:

The learning Holmes cultivates serves his particular method of detection. This method is established in *A Study in Scarlet*, when Holmes says on meeting Watson for the first time, 'You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.' After considerable delay, Holmes explains how close observation of Watson's skin, appearance, and posture, combined with knowledge of current events led quickly and inevitably to his conclusion. Holmes cultivates close observation of relevant detail to form and verify hypotheses. That is the same general method C. Auguste Dupin describes when explaining how he managed to read his friend's mind in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. An incident of such observation and reasoning becomes part of the formula of a Holmes story. Holmes considers him-self a scientific detective; for this reason he holds himself above the more ordinary human passions that might cloud his reasoning powers. His objectivity can make him seem callous. For example, in *The Dancing Men*, he shows little concern for the victims and is more interested in the solution of the puzzle than in protecting those threatened.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Watson again failed to understand Sherlock Holmes' way of deduction or rather suspected his methods of deductions when he saw a stalwart, plainly dressed individual on the street and wondered what he was looking for, Sherlock Holmes at once remarked that he was a sergeant of marines. Coincidentally the elderly gentlemen with a large blue envelope in his hand, comes inquiring about Sherlock Holmes himself. Dr. Watson asked the gentlemen whether he really was a retired sergeant of marines. The gentleman replied in affirmative compelling Dr. Watson to seek explanation of the deduction. Dr. Watson was rather startled by that fresh proof of the practical nature of his companion's theories. Sherlock Holmes again explained how

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he saw a blue anchor tattooed on the back of the visitor's hand. His military carriage, regulations side whiskers, some amount of self-importance and certain air of command led him to believe that he had been a sergeant of marines.

Such crystal clear explanations of deductions finally cleared clouds of doubts from Dr. Watson's mind. Dr. Watson started liking Sherlock Holmes and he developed great respect for his powers of deductions.

The story of *A study in Scarlet* begins with Sherlock Holmes getting a letter from Tobias Gregson a Scotland Yard officer. The letter informed him that their policeman on duty had discovered body of a gentleman in an empty house at 3, Lauriston Gardens off the Brixton Road. The gentleman had cards in his pocket bearing the name of 'Enoch J. Drebber, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.' Sherlock Holmes was invited to the spot for observing the body and the place of the crime and to give important inputs to solve the mystery.

Sherlock Holmes went to the place along with Dr. Watson. On the way Dr. Watson found Holmes unaffected by the ghastly incident they were going to witness. Dr. Watson asked Holmes what he thought about the incident extracting Holmes's remarks as he says, "It is capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment."<sup>2</sup>

To Dr. Watson's surprise Sherlock Holmes did not directly go to see the body. He observed the approach road to the house very minutely first then he went to see the body. Dr. Watson was rather puzzled regarding the death of the man. Sherlock Holmes and others were shown a scarlet red word 'Rache' written on the wall by somebody's blood. But before that Sherlock Holmes observed the body. The body had no apparent wounds but there were numerous gouts and splashes of blood which lay around. It was presumed that the blood belonged to the second individual who was probably the murderer of the gentleman. Sherlock Holmes minutely observed the body even sniffed its lips and finally asked to remove the body. A wedding ring fell tinkling when the body was being removed. The presence of wedding ring and discovery of word 'Rache' made Scotland Yard officials to suspect the role of a woman in the murder mystery as the word 'Rache' stands for 'Rechel', a female name.

After completing his observation Sherlock Holmes declared that the gentleman was indeed murdered but this time the murderer used poison to kill him. There was no woman in the crime as 'Rache' stands for revenge in German. The murderer came to the spot along with his victim in a cab. The horse pulling the cab had three old and one new shoe. The murderer was over six feet tall, was in the prime of life, had small feet for his height, wore square toed boots and smoked a Trichinopoly cigar. He further remarked that in all probability the murderer had a florid face, and his fingernails were long.

Both Lestrade and Gregson along with Dr. Watson had no clue, to understand Sherlock Holmes' deductions. Richard K. Ho. in his essay "Through the magnifying Glass" very aptly narrates the legendary detective's techniques in the novelette *A Study in Scarlet*:

A mysterious figure, cloaked in a long dark overcoat arrives at the scene of crime. In the deep recesses of his pockets, he carries two items: a simple tape measure and a magnifying glass with a rounded lens. His only other tool is his mind. Pacing about the room, the stranger quietly hunts for invisible clues between motes of dust and particles of dirt. Sight, smell, touch--

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-- all of his senses are called into service, not a single one neglected. Every faculty is devoted to observation and assimilation. The confident manner in which he carries out his investigations suggests an intense, almost obsessive intellect. The evidence is gathered and systematically analyzed. His focus is impenetrable, his technique infallible. The result is inevitable. Within an hour, the case is cracked. The irresolvable crime is solved. The mysterious stranger unveils the solution with a triumphant flourish, and then promptly exits the scene, leaving dozens of professional police officers scratching their heads.**03**

Sherlock Holmes not only left Scotland Yard officials Lestrade and Gregson startled but also amazed. Dr. Watson once again doubted his deductions and asked for explanations. Sherlock Holmes replied there was no room for mistake and explained how he had deduced that the cab had made two trips (ruts) to the place. There was no rain during the past one week except the previous night and the two clear side by side marks of cab that laid deeper impression due to muddy clay of rain. There were marks of horse's hooves and the outline of one of the hooves was a comparatively clearer one. Since the cab was there after the rain began and was not there at any time in the morning it means it must have been there during the night, and therefore, it brought two individuals to the house. So far as the height of the murderer is concerned it can be measured by his stride which Holmes measured on the way to the house. Moreover the word 'Rache' was written on the wall at six feet from the ground as men instinctively write above the level of their eyes. Holmes also measured the height of the person from his stride to confirm his conclusion. Height of a person can be measured from his stride and the measurement suggests correct height for 8 times out of 10.

When Holmes was asked about his deduction regarding the age of the man he replied that he had seen the footmarks of the man on the clay outside and on the dust inside the house. If a man can stride four and half feet without the smallest effort means he was in the prime of life. Holmes further, explained that his study of the word 'Rache' through magnifying glass showed that the plaster was slightly scratched which would not have been the case if the nails had been trimmed. Holmes also gathered some scattered ash from the floor. It was dark in color and flaky – such an ash was only made by a Trichinopoly. Holmes explained how he had made intensive study of cigar ashes and he could distinguish at a glance the ash of any known brand either of cigar or of tobacco. Finally Dr. Watson asked Holmes about his idea of florid face. Sherlock Holmes replied that though that was a more daring shot, he had no doubt that he was right. Holmes explained that since the man was killed by poison the blood splashes in the place of crime were of the killer himself. Holmes further explained how men with florid face suffer from nose bleeding in extreme fit of anger.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Arthur Conan Doyle's first novel established his unofficial consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes as one of the most of popular character in the world of fiction and the credit goes to his power of deductions. Based on precise scientific theories the deductions of little clues make the story very gripping and develop scientific temperament in the readers.

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