

Sense of love towards nature and children in the short stories of Ruskin Bond

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Abstract:

The portrayal of child characters in the hilly areas of Dehradun by the writer Ruskin Bond has become his trade mark. He describes childhood along with the nature in such a beautiful way that the readers become mesmerized with his writings. He talks about nature, about life and the difficulties which are faced by the people in the mountainous villages. There is lack of opportunity for the youth and they are bound to live in a limited means without any development. People have to migrate to outside cities for their livelihood leaving behind their childhood and their families alone. The emotional distance which is created by the separation of working members and the children of the family is very painful. Ruskin Bond raises this kind of issues with the help of his stories and novels. His words are very simple as well as harsh in certain situations. He deals with his plots in such a way that the output situations are felt favorable to the readers and does justice to his characters. He has never let his child and youth characters down as they are being carried away by the influence of others. He sees throughout the story that his characters win over their ill situations and lead a happy life in the future. The love for Ruskin Bond towards children is seen in most of his novels. Most of the senior writers don't give much emphasis to characters of children. But, Ruskin Bond gives a special importance to children and thoroughly explains their character and their thought process which is very innocent. All petty activities related to children like jumping in a stream, climbing a tree to pluck a mango, wandering in the streets and observing others and nature etc. are described in detail. This tickles the funny bone of the readers who have had similarly thoughts in their childhood. The feeling of childhood helps people to hold themselves from the effects of ill post-modernism. The nature of children is universal all over the world. Ruskin Bond has shown the habits of children that are equal in every part of the world.

Keywords: *mesmerized, innocent, wandering, emphasis*

Introduction: Ruskin Bond is one of the most popular recent Indian writers in English. Ruskin Bond is true love of nature. Nature and ecology is one of the dominant themes in his works. One finds Wordsworth's pantheistic philosophy in Ruskin Bond that is presence of life or spirit in every object of nature like trees, plants, rivers. He lives in Mussoorie, at the foothills of the Himalaya. The region is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, flora and fauna. Bond is worried about the destruction of the natural environment in the name of development. His deep concern is depicted in his short stories. Writing with love, his pure, innocent characters represent his love for nature. They interact with animals, trees and flowers; they reflect his concern and his effort to preserve the environment through tree plantation. The stories highlight the duty and responsibility to the environment. The aim of this paper is to highlight how Ruskin Bond has expressed his concern for nature which has been exploited by human beings in the name of urbanisation and modernisation and how the harmful effects of humans' exploitation of nature directly affect human life and living space.

Ruskin Bond shows exceptional talent in writing about nature and children. His enchanting stories are woven with splendid Himalayas as the background against which human activities depict themselves. He writes about ordinary people living in small towns of Himalayas and his stories deal with simple things in life. His description of Indian bazaars of the early post independent period is a mirror reflecting the social setting, culture and traditions of the people of small towns. The child protagonists and other prominent child characters are woven around these settings and locales in a semi-humorous and compassionate manner to form a rich fabric of fascinating stories like the Adventures of Rusty and his friends in the novels *The Room on the Roof* (1956) and *The Young*

Vagrants (1981). Bond's works clearly show his love for animals and nature. Nature has been a great strength and a source of solace and comfort for Bond. He derives inspiration from nature.

The Cherry tree is a simple story that unleashes an enormous love for nature. The story revolves around Rakesh – a small boy living with his grandfather in Mussoorie. One day, he plants a cherry seed in his garden and forgets about it. One day, he notices that the seed has just sprouted and begins to protect the plant from various disasters; alongside the multiple seasons and climatic changes, he shields the plant and showers his love. When Rakesh turns 9, the plant gives its first fruit as the most significant gift. The story strives to emphasize that hard work and perseverance never fail. It also nurtures the quality of love towards nature. Your kid will learn to work hard and not depend on shortcuts.

Ghost trouble is a story about a naughty ghost – pret who lives in a peepal tree. Pret plays random mischievous pranks over the people who come around. One fine day, the peepal tree is cut down in the name of commercialization and development. That is when Pret gets stranded as a refugee and enters a house. Pret builds a bond with a small boy in the house and starts playing pranks with the people in the house. Though initially, the people of the house get scared, gradually they understand that Pret has no intentions to harm anyone and accept him as one among them in the family. This story drives the wild imaginations of your kids, where they imagine and picture Pret and his naughty pranks. It also teaches us the most important lesson about how bad it could be to damage nature in the name of development.

Cricket for the Crocodile is a hilarious plot where Ruskin Bond explains how important it is for human beings to coexist with wildlife. The story is about a lazy crocodile in a village called Nakoo, and he never likes being disturbed by human beings. The boys in the city and village, along with a few other characters, play cricket near the river banks in which Nakoo resides. When Nakoo gets disturbed by the game of humans, it comes out to play its own game with humans. The plot portrays not only hilarity but also empathy towards fellow living species.

Dust On the Mountain is about a simple young boy Binsu, who loves nature and his village. He takes different odd jobs from other places to support his family. He meets different people alongside the travel, makes new friends, and always stays optimistic. Once he comes across the limestone quarry that destroys nature in the name of development and commercialization, he realizes his inborn love for nature and the need to protect it. He has to either stay in the city to support his family or return home to protect nature. This story again emphasizes the need to preserve our mother nature. It also builds within the kids the perseverance and optimistic character to build upon to stay positive throughout the obstacles that they may face in life.

The high moral code present in the child characters of Ruskin Bond, their struggle for survival and undaunted spirit makes these child characters an inspiration for the young and old alike. The deeply embedded sense of honesty, sensitivity and maturity makes their story didactic and a lesson in philosophy of life. Through their ordinary experiences these characters display extra-ordinary qualities of head and heart. These characters are not entirely fictitious for the children he came across in villages, their everyday experiences suggested themes for his stories.

The Blue Umbrella begins with the story of a girl named Binya who lives with her mother and elder brother Bijju in a beautiful village along the hillside of Himachal Pradesh. One day, Binya found a Blue Umbrella owned by a group of Japanese tourists who had been to the valley. She was fascinated by the umbrella and was overwhelmed when the tourist offered to trade the umbrella for her leopard-claw pendant.

The Blue umbrella caught the eyes of an envious local shopkeeper, Ram Bharosa, who plans to steal the umbrella. How he steals the umbrella and what happens at the end will melt the reader's heart. The story carries us over to the beautiful valley of Himachal Pradesh. It also teaches us the ill effects of being envious and how being kind and caring help a person stand out and succeed in life.

The Thief is another short story all about a 15-year-old boy, a thief who happens to be the story's narrator. Accidentally he meets a man – Arun – in a wrestling match. Arun makes an effort to provide the thief with a good life. The thief begins to live with Arun and does all the household chores. Arun, in return, teaches the thief to read and write. One fine day, the thief robs Arun and tries to run away. But the love and trust that Arun had immensely poured into the thief brings him back home. That is when the author makes us realize the power of trust and love that changes the people around us.

From *Rusty, The Boy from the Hills* Rusty is a famous fictional character created by Ruskin bond. The books consist of several short stories about Rusty, who lives with his grandparents. He is sensitive, docile, and an adventurous boy who encounters unusual experiences. This book gives the kids a roller coaster ride that kindles the kids' imagination to think outside the box—from the pet python, surviving an air crash, encountering a ghost, and many more experiences that never fail to touch the tip of our children.

The Angry River explores the courage and high moral values of a young twelve year old girl 'Sita' who lives on an isolated island with her grandparents surrounded by the river. The courage displayed by the young girl as her hut gets washed away in the torrent when she is all alone. Her undaunted spirit makes her fight the flood and save herself. She does not give in to her fears even though she is afraid. She shares her fears with her only companion her doll which she calls 'Mumta'. Her faith in the divine remains unshakable as she believes that just as she created 'Mumta' and would always protect her similarly, God created her and will always look after her. On finally being united with her grandfather she understands with great sensitivity that grandmother has not survived and that 'it would be on her shoulder that grandfather would have to lean in the years to come.

Dust in the Mountain is yet another poignant story of a young boy Bisnu, twelve, who takes on the responsibility of the man of the house. He comes to Mussoorie to work at a tea kiosk for a meagre fifty rupees, sleeps in the verandah in the cold winter nights. 'I will go to Mussoorie to find work. There is money to be made there, if not I will come home. I can walk back over the Naag Tibba Mountain. It will take only two and half days and I will save the bus fare'. He faces many hardships but does not quit. His moral values make him take on the responsibility of providing for his mother and younger sister. His maturity in the end makes him go back to his village as he realizes after working at the lime quarry that it is more fun to create, grow than to destroy. 'I will work on my land. It's better to grow things on land than to blast things out'. His sensible and mature makes him an inspiration for the boys of his age.

The Guardian Angel explores the individuality of children in judging the people around them. They do judge people by the adult perceptions. They have their own moral parameters. Despite knowing about his Aunt's less than moral ways of living the author still recalls of her as the very special guardian 'Angel of my childhood'⁹ unlike adults children do not judge a book by its cover. The narrator does not think of his aunt in a bad light because he knows how to distinguish profession from personal. Despite her shady profession Aunt Marian's love for him was pure and unadulterated.

Conclusion:

Ruskin Bond's characters are more factual than fictional. He draws liberally from his observations. His fascination with the hills particularly Mussoorie and its simple inhabitants makes him create characters that are so real that the reader can easily identify with them. This paper intends to explore the high moral values and strong will power, the undaunted spirit and courage exhibited by these child characters that make them stand apart in the crowd despite their humble and modest upbringing. Their struggle to survive in the hostile environs without compromising on their integrity and honesty makes them extra-ordinary. Bond's fiction resembles inhaling a lungful of new mountain air, His relationship with Nature is extremely intimate. He is a lover of Nature. In Nature he can feel warmth of his parents' affection, his companion's love, children's care and latent quality. Everything in Nature rouses him whether it is a sweet sounding winged animal or harsh throated frog, blooms or clear sky or rainfall, chill winter or singing heat, fields or barren lands. For Bond each aspect of Nature is fascinating. He doesn't deal with social issues, psychological break downs or political scams in his compositions yet centers around the celestial beauty of the slopes. His fictional canvas is brimming with the drawing of the enchanting dales of Garhwal. Indeed, even the glamor of London, attraction of its streets, charm of the skyscrapers, its alluring social life couldn't keep him from coming back to the small slope town Mussoorie in India.

Bond is a strong votary of individual opportunity. According to him opportunity is necessary not just for human being however for natural life also. He does not appreciate tampering with nature in the name of progress. In stories like "My Father's Trees in Dehra", "Sita and the River", he raises his voice against deforestation and destruction of the landscape. He feels that a person should stay in contact with nature to retain the basic human values like sympathy and love.

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