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RESEARCH ARTICLE



THE TREATMENT OF JUVENESCENCE IN RUSKIN BOND'S SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Childhood is one of the predominant themes in Ruskin Bond's stories. For this, he is well known as "a writer of children" to the readers. The reason behind the growth of new children's literature in India is partially attributed to the degradation of affection in modern family life. Advancement of technology also has its share in the increase of short stories. Bond mesmerized his teenaged followers with a blend of the magnetism and originality in description. His stories are based on his childhood experiences. Bond modified the description of stories, though they resemble the ancient *Panchtantra* stories. Fortunately, after shifting to Ivy Cottage, as a grandparent to his adopted children, Bond started scribbling stories. Mainly Bond has written stories for the enchantment of his espoused grandchildren namely, Rakesh, Mukesh, and Savitri. He contented his inner desires through short stories like a small kid. Earlier readers were passionate towards the fancy writings of Billy Bunter, Nancy Drew etc. Due to the exact portrayal of Indian atmosphere and relations, Ruskin Bond turns into the greatest writer for Indian Children.



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INTRODUCTION

Bond has become lovable writer of the readers very easily, as that class was neglected by other English writers. He became an introvert due to the isolation in his childhood. Through the nostalgia, he can simply relate himself with the child characters in his stories. Bond states:

I don't suppose I would have written so much about childhood or even about other children if my own childhood had been all happiness and light. I find that those who have contended, normal childhood, seldom remember much about them; nor do they have much insight into the world of childhood.

(Bond: 1997:4).

Bond's stories facilitated him to ascend from his childhood sufferings. In this regard Bond associates himself to David Copperfield. Surprisingly Bond started writing children's stories in his mid-thirties. People of rural areas and their culture has become one of the themes in Bond stories.

Bond's stories can be classified on the theme of childhood into autobiographical and general categories. Through these stories Bond expresses his childhood reflections, and unfulfilled desires. His Stories like - *Life with Uncle Ken*, *A guardian Angel*, *The Last Tonga Ride* reveal autobiographical element. Bond's experiences and his devotion towards his town, Dehra can be revealed through these writings.

Bond reveals his own experience with grandmother through the narration of *When you can't climb trees anymore*. In his another story A

guardian angel Bond recalls his childhood memories with guardian Mariam. Bond's tale *The Last Tonga Ride* illuminates the desire of the boy ride on the absolute streets of a small town, trespassed by excessive trees all the way. The boy revered the thrill of Tonga ride particularly of Bansi Lal. He was passionate not only by the ride but for the provocative stories of Bansi Lal.

Other category of his tales is named as pastoral stories which ascend from the Himalayan land scape. He is an ardent and insightful observer of children in countryside, noticeably, Himalayan India. His magnitude rests in the portrayal regular activities of locals. In his stories like *Sita and the River*, *Panther's Moon*, *The Thief*, Bond discloses the fight of teenagers to live in the creative domain. In the story *Sita and the River* though the girl left alone at the time of floods had saved herself and pets from the natural calamity. Bond presented the power of strong decision due to the girl's deed at the end of the story.

In *Panther's Moon*, the animal in the woodland has turned into a symbol of struggle for existence to Bisnu, who is a twelve year old boy. Bisnu is challenged with the notion of failing in his exams, so the panther arose like his contestant. Finally, the boy with determination succeeds not only in his schooling, but also gets ahead in captivating the wild animal. Through the character of Puja Bond exhibits a kind of firm nature and she accompany Bisnu to in the expedition. Puja escaped from the panther with and leapt down the banking of the field. The panther missed it's pray and tumbled into the ditch a few feet away from puja. Before the animal recover from its surprise, Bisnu dash down the slope



with his axe. He after hazardous situation says: "It is dead, said Bisnu. It will not trouble us again in this body". (Bond: 1988:168). The total story spread through the village and Bisnu became a hero to the people of Manjari. Bond highlighted the adventurous nature of the both brother and the sister and indirectly suggested his opinion that no one is inferior in the world even a villager or a mere animal.

The Thief is a story that depicts the change in the character of a boy, and presents it in a heart touching way. Surprisingly in the story, the thief notices his own dishonesty and faith in Arun. The boy in the story starts changing his attitude when Arun shows humanity towards the disloyalty. Child characters in Bond's stories put their effort for independence and individuality. Unlike the adolescent heroes they, have a keen eye to solve the problems in life. Occasionally Bond's characters exhibit ambiguity in decision making. Through the story *The Flute Player* writer contributes a small description of the uncertainty of a child called Kamala, who lives with her parents in England. She comes to Jaipur to see her grandmother. Generally kids are fond of games and not of sleeping. With that instinct, one day Kamala goes out from the bed side of her grandmother. In the forest she happens to see a boy who plays on a flute. Both pluck mangoes; play in the river for a while. Kamala though habituated to the uncontaminated limitations, is excited towards the pleasures of the village. She feels the pleasures as celestial but, the decent picture of her 'home' disturbs her attention. She anticipates: "Was England home? Wondered Kamala, or was this Indian city home? Or was her true home in that other

India, across the busy trunk road Perhaps, she would find out one day". (Bond: 2001: 63).

Most of his children stories revolve around the courageous actions and exploring contemplations of the youngsters. *Four Boys on a Glacier* expresses a clear depiction of trekking on the Himalayas. They experience the celestial splendor of the snow mountain throughout their adventurous mission. The story is about a cross cultural friendship between fifteen year old Laurie and his Indian friends. Their discovery of a hidden pool in the hilly mountain changes their life. They swim, wrestle, and make plans to trek up to 12,000 feet of a glacier above sea level. The journey serves as an incitement and develops self-confidence to the four children.

Another tale *How far is the River?* explains the spirit of distracted enthusiasm which is peculiar in adolescents. Bond describes tantalizing longing of a young boy, who has never grasped the striking sight of the river in his life. The children of the community had heard about the river. The protagonist ho is 12 years old has an uncontrollable aspiration to see the river, as he heard about waterfalls and the river. But He missed to touch the flowing water the river. One day when his parents went out, he strongly decided to have a look of river an immediately started his adventurous journey all alone. He has selected the path which was normally used by the workers of the village. He began his journey in the same path but it was like a deserted one on his way, and luckily the boy met a wood cutter.

The wood cutter and the boy walked together up to 7 miles. After crossing the unsteady wind path, he reached to an attractive valley but the boy was not sure of how many miles he should walk



to reach the path. At that juncture he came across a shepherd and asked about the directions. Both walked few miles together and he left alone with no hope in the silent path. Unexpectedly the loneliness was broken by the thunderous sound of the river. He was surprised by the view of the river and run deep into the water and enjoyed thoroughly the touch of the flowing water through his toes. Bond expressed the power of strong determination of a small boy in attaining his desire.

Bond's tale *Riding through Flames* presents a different type of adventure in the forest. Little Romi in *Riding through the Flames* faces the challenge by riding fearlessly through a fiery jungle on his new bicycle. It is entirely a different kind of adventurous story of the boy Romi and Teju in the flames of forest. Bond describes how Romi escape from the forest fire safely with Teju. Both are small and innocent children. Romi didn't know Teju before but felt as if they had been friends for years. Bond emphasizes his disinterest on abolishing the forest and articulates his concern to defend the wealth of Environment. So, he has chosen the forest as location to the story. By the heroic deed of Romi the author captivated the readers. Romi symbolizes Bond's humanism as he was an embodiment of valor, hope, and coolness. He rescued Teju and helped his own father for his speedy recovery. Bond suggests his readers that nature is not all the time serene but it occasionally becomes fury as in *Sita and the River* and *Riding through the Flames*. Bond captivatingly documents the childhood movements through the characters Romi and Teju.

Bond through writing childhood stories recalls his past life and memories. Bond wants to spread affection and sympathy amongst all creatures of the world and kids are the utmost energetic inheritors of his vision. They are rapid in making groups. Minor things like a stone, a flute, may support them to start their relationship. Ranji in the tale *A Rupee Goes a Long Way* offers a pleasing ornament of gold with splendid grits to the girl to build a friendly relation with her. Bond through the story *The Fight* reveals the combat between the two boys same age group to take bath in the stream at first. Later they become aware of friendship. Ranji taught his enemy Suraj, art of diving whereas Suraj guided his rival in combat. These two children exhibit a kind of collective understanding unlike egocentric grownups.

Be my friend, I will make you a *Pahelwan* like me! I know if you teach me to dive and swim under water, I will make you *Pahelwan*! That's fair isn't it?

They looked at each other with honest, unflinching eyes, and in that moment love and understanding were born. (Bond: 2000:163).

CONCLUSION

Bond passionately considers that the role of books in altering the life of a child. Bond's life is a perfect example of truth. Children are fond of Bond's stories for his eccentric illustration; and they associate themselves with the characters and actions in the story. He is well known to the readers as the writer of hills, but his illustrated youngsters are also similar to the characters of native people of the country. Readers are automatically attracted towards his



representation of common problems and harmonizing of all the age groups.

Moreover, Bond textures a kind of solace in the company of children and he says: "I am just a sixty year old boy without any pretensions to being a sage." He is an ardent lover of children, and this can be understood, when he enjoyed his 67th birthdate among the youngsters in a school. But he dislikes to be branded as 'children's writer'. His stories steadfastly take us outside from the frenzied society to pleasant lands and hills. Hence, in all his stories, the speaker happens to see a sight of his infancy and traces the reformation, both in the situation and in person.

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