

MANIFESTATION OF CHILDREN IN THE SELECT STORIES OF RUSKIN BOND

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Abstract

A discussion about children's literature is not complete without Ruskin Bond and his children characters. In India, he is one of the pioneers of children's literature. His literary world's panorama is incomplete without children. His own childhood memory helps him to write about-for the children. His child protagonists are as usual as common children. They are not unique or having extra quality. Bond deals with the psychological and emotional needs of the children. Bond also mirrored sense and sensibility of children. His protagonists represent the everyday experiences of life and the problems that children face for survival. Bonds children are having same life experience as real life children facing. Their life is full of adventure, passion for animals, haunted houses having ghosts and witches, loss of family members in calamity, love for Mother Nature etc. Bond's own childhood is revealed through the child protagonists. He fulfilled his childhood dream through the child characters and their deeds.

Keywords: *Ruskin Bond, children, short story*

INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond is unique writer for creating children's world among the vast group of readers. He has observed miniature activity of children and penned them. His children are not having extra power but they are problem solving of daily life. Bond recreates children's daily life experiences and their problem, and how children solve their problems to survive in Himalayan range. He has depicted his own life and childhood in his stories. For this paper Bonds book 'GREAT STORIES FOR CHILDREN' is selected. This book contains 19 stories of/for children. In most of the stories protagonist is Bond himself. Story moves around his life and child characters. His story and its

children help him to come out from his own childhood's worse memory. Reading Bond's story is like revisiting or enjoying again our own childhood memory. His oeuvre reveals childhood memory. Human's bondage with not only humans but also with nature, mountains, rivers, Forests, animals, etc. is reflected in stories.

The story book 'GREAT STORIES FOR CHILDREN' contains 19 stories in it. In broader sense, stories can be divided in four parts. About Bonds children stories Dwivedi aptly observed, "Ruskin Bond's stories exhibit the touches of *Hitopadesh* and *Panchtantra* giving delight to his readers with his good stories." (Dwivedi 62)

First section of this book contains stories of children's friendship with eternal friends- Trees. Bond, being a master of exploring the endless vistas of nature, his stories are showing love for trees by child to old man. These first phases of stories accommodate five stories in it; 'A special Tree' is a story of Rakesh and his grandfather. 'The Coral Tree' is a story of small girl picking flowers from one young man's home who is at his doorstep to leave this house. 'Wild Fruit' is a story of a Vijay and one mischievous child. 'When the Trees Walked' is a story of a boy, who is living with his grand parents. 'Good Bye, Miss Mackenzie' is a story of a small boy who wished to be a forest officer and his meeting with Miss Mackenzie.

In all these stories, trees have also important role like children. Bond was not able to live with grandparents but children of his stories are with the grandparents. Most of the stories titles are on the trees name. Grandparents are multiplying love for tree. Rakesh, a boy of 'A Special Tree' live with his grandfather in outskirts of Mussoorie. They lived in Himalayan foothills with many trees and animals around their home. Rakesh's parents were anxious about Rakesh's study and there is no school nearby their village so they send him to his grandfather's home near Mussoorie.

Rakesh's grandfather increases his love for nature. Their discussion about cherry seed-

'Are cherry seeds lucky?' asked Rakesh

'Of course.'

'Then I'll keep it.'

'Nothing is lucky if you put it away. If you want luck, you must put it to some use.'

'What can I do with a seed?'

'Plant it.' (Bond 9)

Very simply Rakesh is learning how to take care of Jungle. He also described what luck for seed is. It is of no use if you keep it with you, not to plant it. Rakesh and his grandfather's happiness is shown when two buds sprout from the seed. They showed their sadness when a goat ate all leaves and a lady cut it into two. At the same time they are hopeful also for the new sprout. Rakesh's happiness is also pictured when first fruit came to his hand. At the same time told about the birds who survived on trees fruit. Same story is 'When the Tree Walked.' A boy living in outskirts of Dehradun

with his retired IFS grandfather and his wife. They all are keen to protect Jungle. Their discussion mirrored their love for all living creature on the earth.

‘... there’s only one way to attract butterflies,’ he said, ‘and that is to grow flowers for them.

Grandfather wasn’t content... cutting and saplings which he would plant in the forest.

‘But no one ever comes here!’ I had protested, the first time we did this... we are planting them for the forest and animals and birds who live here and need more food and shelter.’

(Bond, 72)

Grandfather also taught this boy a poem by George Morris, ‘woodmen spare that tree.’ Our moral duty for the forest, trees and animals is presented in this story. Trees also have life and they also wish bondage with other trees as well as human being and animals.

‘The Coral Tree’ is a story of a small girl, a smiling girl like flora and fauna. When protagonist of the story is on the edge of leaving his ancestral house, he met a smiling girl who was picking flowers from his garden. A confident girl was meeting first time to this man but talked with him like best friend. A young man helped him to pluck coral flower and became his second best friend. That young man became nostalgic after talking that girl. While leaving that girl and his ancestral home behind, that young man had seen happy nature in that girl. Next one story is ‘Good bye, Miss Mackenzie.’ A hopeful boy Anil met to Miss Mackenzie in his garden. This lady is living alone in this home. All his family members died. Not a single family member left in India she is only British lady left. Anil, an enthusiastic boy came to her garden one and started plucking flowers. Which are only companions of Miss Mackenzie. In their discussion it seen that Anil wants to become IFS officer and trying to learn more and more about flowers. After getting interest in Anil’s talk, she welcomed him into his house and become ready to gift him a rare book on flowers. But bad luck for both. Miss can’t see her favorite flower and Anil can’t get that book. Miss Mackenzie died before their next meeting.

Next one is a story of a mischievous boy and a poor boy Vijay titled ‘Wild Fruit’. Vijay lived in nearby village of Mussoorie. He has to climb mountains and cross valleys to reach at school. On the way he can see many trees. There are many wild fruit tree along his foothills. He fed up with that fruit. When Vijay reached in the city, he sees many stall of fresh fruits and fruit toffee wrapped in paper. He wished many times to eat them but he has no money to purchase them. On the way he sees one another boy who daily purchase some toffee and swallowed them. One day he played on Vijay. He makes fun with Vijay.

Common characteristics seen in the children of Bond are: Love for nature, healthy life, thinking for all living creatures on the earth, braveness, savior of the world as well as nature, fearlessness, jolly nature, having tough life, high ambitious, healthy attitude towards life etc. Bond’s children are brave. They are living in outskirts of village. They are strong enough to cross valleys, streams and jungle area to study. It shows their sturdy mind with body. Self-respect is always there in

the mind and mentality of children. Ruskin Bond is a master craftsman par excellence. He does not feel awkward to dive deep into the minds of his characters, especially children, while dealing with them.

CONCLUSION: Bond showed his mastery over portraying flora and fauna. His skill of demonstrating Himalayan life is outstanding. His children are not only brave but confident and fearless also. Rakesh, Vijay, Anil, a flower picking girl are just example of brave army of Ruskin Bond. They are exploring the endless vistas of nature. They are planting sapling for birds and animals. They are not harmful for natural life. Bond's own life is displayed in the stories.

He holds a prominent place in India that has not only projected nature as victim of human progress, but also the nature-child relationship and role of nature in the growth of child's mind. His vision and sensibility as a writer emanate from the experiential state of his childhood... The best part of Bond's portrayal of children is his involvement, his coming down to their level and his association with their erratic life. His oneness with the children has infused life force to his common theme. He does not merely describe a child but becomes a child for the time being. His children and short stories explained above expose child psychology and childhood hidden behind the layers of adulthood. (Gurudevi 85)

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