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THE PORTRAIT OF CHILD IN LITERATURE IN RUSKIN BOND'S SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Ruskin Bond is considered a pioneer of children literature in India. Ruskin Bond came close to children's literature. Sinc- Ruskin Bond liked his boyhood very much therefore all his children stories whether autobiographical or semi- autobiographical expressed his longing for a happy childhood. Ruskin Bond likes children because they are more frank, open minded and emotional. According to Ruskin Bond two children can become good friends merely by exchanging a piece of marble, a coin, a doll and bangles. Children do not like the restraints put on them by their elders. Ruskin Bond loves children because they are not deceptive. All children love freedom, jumping in pools, climbing on trees, and are always curios to know about their surroundings so Ruskin Bond is more close to children of the world.

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The pioneer of Indian English short story was Kamala Sathianandan in the year 1898. exactly after three decades the big three in Indian English literature, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao started writing short stories selecting the themes from the Indian myths, epics, and folk tales. Mulk Raj Anand. R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, K. A. Abbas, Kushwant Singh, Anita Desai. Keki N. Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahupatra etc, contributed to Indian English short story between 1930s and 1980s.

A. N. Dwivedi described short story as... in Papers on Indian Writing in English.

A short story is rather deeply rooted in our Indian tradition. Which used to give us folk tales and fables from the earliest times. And this tradition has always been enriched by oral as well as written tales. It is unquestionably as old as Indian society and culture.¹

Ruskin Bond was born in Kasauli in 1934, and grew up in Jamanagar, Dehra -Dun and Simla. As a young man he spent four years in the Channel Islands and London. He returned to India in 1955 and had never left the country since. His first novel *The Room on the Roof* received the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. awarded to a Commonwealth writer under thirty for a work of outstanding literary merit. He received a Sahitya Academy Award in 1993, and the Padilla Shri in 1999. He lives in Mussorie with his adopted family.

Since beginning of writing short story, poets, writers, and novelists gave lots of importance to the children as protagonists or antagonists in literature. Ruskin Bond is one among such wonderful authors. His way of writing stories and projecting child characters is unique. In all his works one can easily notice his strong passion towards Nature and his fellow people especially children.

Meenu, S. Sodhi. They commented Ruskin Bond in: *Die Fictional World of Ruskin Bond* as:

"Ruskin Bond is popularly acknowledged as one of the best short story writers for children."²

Ruskin Bond created a brand as a short story writer. Though he took the characters from ordinary lives. he elevated those characters with the great qualities of human feelings.

In his short story *the Thief Story* fifteen year old boy tried to cheat Anil intentionally with his SW eel tongue. But Anil's company and his assurance towards the boy's future made the boy feel sorry about his mistake for Anil.

In *The Theirs Story* Ruskin Bond wrote as:

"He was the most trust in, person I had ever met. And that is why it was so difficult to rob him. It's easy to rob a greedy man, because he can afford to be robbed: but it's difficult to rob a careless man sometimes he doesn't even notice he's been robbed and that takes all the spice out of the undertaking."³

In Ruskin Bond's *flow lar is the River*. he simply described how a young boy fulfilled his wish even though he met many problems on his way to the river. When his parents were away to home. he started from home after packing a loaf of bread with him. First the boy met a wood cutter on his way to the river and knew the exact distance from him to the river. After covering some distance the boy met a girl who gave a wrong information about the distance to the river.

The description about the girl of the writer told the craftsmanship of the writer... In *How far is the River* Ruskin Bond described as:

She held a long curved knife with which she had been cutting grass, and there were rings in her nose and ears and her arms were covered with heavy bangles. The bangles made music when she moved her hands, and it was as though the hands spoke a language of their own."⁴

Finally the boy met another boy who was driving, a 1CW goats down the path and came to know the exact distance to the river. The boy shared the loaf of bread with him again he started journey on the hot, dusty, and stony path. After reaching the river the cold mountain water. its colour, the beauty of the site made him forget all his pains and he was on cloud nine.

The Cheryy Tree is Bond's another wonderful short story, where a six years old Rakesh showed curiosity towards a small cherry plant which he planted accidentally and forget about it nearly a year. On one fine morning. he came to know by his grandfather about the cherry plant which lie planted one year before. Rakesh was very happy and he watered the plant and arranged a small fencing with the pebbles.

When the cherry plant about two feet high, a goat entered into the garden and ate it's all leaves. While he was worrying his grandfather consoled him by saying cherry trees are tough. In another incident the cherry tree was cut by two. Then his grandfather scolded the woman who cut the plant and they thought it would die. In a very surprising manner the cherry plant started growing year by year than Rakesh.

There is an agreement between Rakesh and his grandfather that was grandfather had to tell the stories to Rakesh. After listening the stories Rakesh had to read news paper news. But Rakesh felt bore reading news after listening stories.

Ruskin Bond portrays children as frank, open minded and emotional. In his stories children are innocent, love freedom and environment and are always curious to know about their surroundings. Ruskin Bond's portrayal of children may seem naïve by today's literature.

Modern literature has started to portray children mainly in two ways. One is the fantasy mode. where the children area equipped with magic. Haryy Potter series is one good example. The other is to portray children having all had traits of adults. In this kind of literature, children are evil, behaving like evil adults the best example is William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

But Ruskin Bond sympathies are with children.

Ruskin Bond does not like the traditional children stories of India but he prefers stories like "Maugli" by Rudyard Kipling. Ruskin Bond's art of characterization is unique and different from others although many critics find fault with him for being autobiographical and subjective but Ruskin Bond can be defended by comparing him with Charles Lamb. Ruskin Bond's characters are both types and individuals and most of them represent the middle class. Ruskin Bond like Maugham chose characters from his own surroundings neither abstract nor based on his imagination. The rich and poor, small and grown up, vendor, trader, schoolboy, gardener, all are portrayed in their respective way of living. Some of his characters resemble his father, Somi, Mr. Kapoor, Meena, caricatures like Rusty, Kishan, and some others are adjusted in the fictional world.

His book for children, *The Hidden Pool*, is a collection of short stories. *The Hidden Pool*, is the story of three friends, Laurie, Anil and Kamal. Laurie is the son of a British engineer in India and Anil and Kamal are his Indian friends, who introduce him to the festivals, foods, and traditions of India. Laurie finds out a hidden pool in the mountains which varnishes their friendship. *Hidden Pool*, is the place where they swim, wrestle, and make plans a trip to a glacier at 12,000 feet above sea level. Ruskin Bond's another children's book, *Grandfather's Private Zoo*, is a collection of ten short stories that had been published at an earlier time in a various magazines and newspapers, some of these stories are written in the early 1960s in Delhi. The collection of the stories refers the happy times which Ruskin Bond had spent at his grandmother's house in Dehra, in these stories he takes the theme from the statements, heard through the people of village about his Grandfather, Clerk's fondness for unusual house pets. Ruskin Bond presents the book in first person narration as an autobiography, only to make it authentic⁵.

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