



International Journal of Advanced Research in Arts,
Science, Engineering & Management (IJARASEM)

Volume 11, Issue 2, March 2024



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.583



A Critical Commentary on Ruskin Bond's Select Stories

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ABSTRACT: Indian writer of English short stories Ruskin Bond is well-known for writing from his own experiences and his observations of the objects and people he encountered are reflected in his works. He has a very flexible personality, is courteous and is sober by nature. Although he tackles serious subjects in his stories, he keeps them lively to draw in the casual reader.

Therefore, Ruskin Bond writes from his own experiences, he speaks from his generation. His early tales, such as "Room on the Roof", are based on his early experiences. His stories from the Middle Era reflect his extensive life experience interacting with middle-class people.

In addition, he addresses social issues and suggests solutions. His later works are flawless and exhibit greater maturity. He uses images and symbols from the natural world to embellish his stories.

I've tried incorporating Ruskin Bond's major literary works in this thesis. The thesis is organised into seven chapters in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. Studying his most important works and the lifestyle he chose to lead as a man to become a writer is the main goal of this research. There is also a thorough examination of his short stories and how they relate to the author. Several chapters in the thesis are devoted to various topics for critical examination.

INTRODUCTION TO RUSKIN BOND

Ruskin Bond is a prolific Indian writer known for his numerous works, including 21 novels, 500 short stories, seventeen essays, eight travel writings, and seventeen song and love poems. Born in 1934 in Himachal Pradesh, he attended Bishop Cotton School in Shimla and later studied in England. His first novel, "**The Room on The Roof**", was published at 17 and won the prestigious John Llewellyn Rhys prize in 1957. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 for his contributions to children's literature. He was born on 19 May 1934, at Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh to a first-generation British migrant. He went to England for his primary studies. He has since written over 300 short stories, essays, and novellas, including calmness, tenderness, and innocence. He writes about rustic people living in local rural areas, their culture, and their way of living. He vividly describes the hills, valleys, rivers, climate, and surroundings. The hills of Dehra, Shimla, Shamli, Landour, and Mussoorie are often present at the backdrop of his stories. The Blue Umbrella, Fun Side Up, and The Flight of Pigeons, as well as over 30 children's books. His interest in the paranormal has led him to write popular titles like Ghost Stories from the Raj, A Season of Ghosts, A Face in the Dark, and other hauntings. Bond has lived as a freelance writer in Mussoorie since 1963, living with his adopted family in Landour, a town in the Himalayan foothill. His writing style is distinct, aiming to make readers understand the landscape and ethos through carefully mastered words. His works provide insight into universal themes such as the tension between past and present, city life versus rural values, the dignity of ordinary folk, and living in harmony with nature. He has a sober temperament that has influenced his way of living. He has a very flexible personality and is courteous. He tackles serious subjects in his stories but keeps them lively by making them appealing to the average reader. Ruskin Bond embodies his age because his stories are a reflection of his personal experiences.

I. INTRODUCTION

A Critical Commentary on Ruskin Bond's Select Stories Ruskin Bond-

Representative of Serenity and pristineness of Nature In Good Days to You, Uncle, Ramu's father states that humans need the land as much as tigers need the jungle. However, human sensibility has led to a domineering species on the planet. Ruskin Bond, an optimistic figure, began his life learning on the mountains, fostering a deep respect and affection towards nature. He has a deep knowledge of various plant and flower varieties in the mountains and enjoys seeing and conceiving voiceless creatures. Bond believes in the importance of a deep connection between man and



nature, promoting mutual existence and harmony. He is aware of environmental issues such as development, litter generated by visitors and tourists, and destruction caused by traders. Bond promotes nature through compassion for a single tree, not a single bough. He is outrightly concerned about nature's conservation and engages readers with his love and affection towards nature. In *Youth, It Sheltered Me, And I Will Protect It Now*, Bond mentions that some pilgrims have developed a deep sense of the relationship between human and non-human worlds, but current situations contrast with the influx of vacationers into restricted areas.

OPTIMISM OR REALISM

Terry Paulson's book, "The Optimism Advantage," argues that an optimist is not unrealistic, but rather a person who takes challenges and tries to change situations for the better. Optimism does not mean being naive about the reality of a situation, but rather taking challenges and trying to change it for the better. In his story "Bus Stop, Pipal Nagar," Suraj, an orphan, sells assorted items and earns two rupees a day. He suffers from epilepsy, but his spirit and hope for a better future remain strong. Suraj dreams of passing his exams and getting a scholarship to a good college but fails the exam. Despite this, he continues to smile and believes in his ability to pass next year. Ruskin Bond's stories are not fairy tales, but rather a journey through the lives of his characters. He does not offer any miracles to end the misery of his characters but rather allows the reader to experience their struggles and imbibe their optimism. Pitamber, a poor rickshaw puller in "Bus Stop, Pipal Nagar," proves that optimism is inherent and requires no external stimulant. Bishnu, another character in "The Panther's Moon," lives in a remote village and travels ten miles daily to attend school. His optimism is pragmatic and simple, with characters who want little joy and support

II. THE ROOM ON THE ROOF (1956)

Published in 1956 at the age of just 21, "Room on the Roof" is the first book written by Indian author Ruskin Bond. The narrative revolves around Rusty, a sixteen-year-old Anglo-Indian youth who experiences social dislocation in the home of his strict guardian in Dehradun, India. He becomes close friends with Kishen, a Tibetan healer, and two local boys, Somi and Ranbir. They explore the intricacies of puberty, go on adventures, and negotiate cultural differences together.

At the start of the book, Rusty, an Anglo-Indian child left without parents, resides with Mr. John Harrison, his strict guardian. Rusty yearns for freedom and adventure because he feels constrained by the expectations and rules placed upon him. He makes friends with Somi and Ranbir, two local boys, who show him the pleasures of living outside the walls of his guardian's home.

When Rusty meets Kishen, a Tibetan healer who resides outside of Dehradun, his life takes a different turn. Rusty gains a mentor in Kishen, who instructs him in Tibetan spirituality and culture. In Kishen's company, Rusty finds comfort and camaraderie and improves his understanding of himself.

Rusty begins to doubt who he is and where he fits in the world as he gets to know his new friends better. He encounters the complexities of love, friendship, and loss and gains insightful knowledge about acceptance, bravery, and loyalty. Rusty decides to leave Mr. Harrison's house and go on a self-discovery journey at the end of the novel. To live life on his terms, he decides to follow his heart and create his own route.

III. THE BLUE UMBRELLA (1974)

Ruskin Bond, a well-known Indian writer best known for his works set against the backdrop of the Indian Himalayas, wrote the short story "The Blue Umbrella". Since its 1980 release, it has grown to be one of Bond's most well-known stories, frequently appearing in anthologies and being adapted for different media.

The protagonist of "The Blue Umbrella" is a little child named Binya, who lives in a little community tucked away in the Himalayas. She once stumbles upon a stunning blue umbrella that belongs to a visitor from the city of Nandu. Binya exchanges her fortunate leopard's claw necklace for the umbrella, mesmerized by its beauty. The villager's jealousy increases when the umbrella becomes the talk of the town, especially about Ram Bharosa, the shopkeeper, who wants the umbrella for himself.

Offering Binya a handsome sum of money and even a brand-new umbrella in return, Ram Bharosa comes up with a scheme to buy the umbrella from her. Though initially tempted, Binya eventually declines the offer after coming to terms with the actual worth of her cherished item. But tragedy strikes when, during a storm, a group of neighbourhood



boys steal the blue umbrella. Although the loss has devastated Binya, she finds comfort in the villager's generosity as they band together to support her.

IV. THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN (2022)

Paula Hawkins' psychological thriller book "The Girl on the Train" was released in 2015. The protagonist of the tale is Rachel Watson, an alcoholic who is dealing with the fallout from her failed marriage. When Rachel gets entangled in the strange disappearance of Megan Hipwell, a woman she sees on the train on her way to work every day, her life takes a terrible turn.

Divorced Rachel Watson spends her days daydreaming about the seemingly ideal couple's life that she sees outside her window while riding the train. Rachel used to live with her ex-husband, Tom, in a house a few houses down from the Hip wells, Scott and Megan. Because of her alcoholism, Rachel's own life is in disarray, and she frequently experiences blackouts, which cause her to forget things.

Rachel becomes extremely disturbed when she sees Megan on her porch one day with another man. After a short while, Megan disappears, and Rachel gets mixed up in the investigation because of her hazy memories from that evening. Because she is obsessed with finding the truth about Megan's disappearance, Rachel is forced to face her demons as well as the sinister secrets that lie beneath the surface of the seemingly perfect suburban community.

As the story reveals, every character has hidden agendas and secrets connected to Megan's disappearance. The truth gradually comes to light through twists and turns, exposing the characters' depths of dishonesty and betrayal.

V. SCHOOL TIMES (2010)

The collection of tales and anecdotes in "School Times" is based on the idea of school life. It explores the routines, misadventures, and difficulties that students encounter in an ordinary Indian classroom. Bond examines many facets of school life through a sequence of vignettes, including friendships, rivalries, academic pressures, extracurricular activities, and interactions with educators and other authority figures. The stories frequently contain poignant reflections on the passing of time, humour, and nostalgia.

Themes:-

- 1) Nostalgia: - "School Times" revolves around the central theme of nostalgia. A sense of nostalgia and warm memories for the purity and simplicity of youth are evoked by Ruskin Bond. He brings readers back to their school days through his stories, bringing back fond memories of the past.
- 2) Friendship: - Another recurrent theme in the collection is friendship. Bond examines the relationships made between classmates, the companionship experienced during school-related events, and the enduring influence of childhood friendships on an individual's life.
- 3) Innocence and Coming of Age: - The stories in "School Times" also deal with the themes of coming-of-age and innocence as they progressively lead to adulthood. Bond masterfully conveys both the naiveté of youth and the milestones that signify the progression towards adulthood.
- 4) Individuality and Identity: The anthology explores young people's battles to make sense of the world, negotiate social structures, and stand up for who they are in the face of peer pressure and societal norms.
- 5) Humour and Satire: Bond uses humour and satire to highlight the peculiarities of school life, such as amusing teacher anecdotes, student pranks, and the absurdities of being a student.

VI. SUMMARY

Bond uses detailed and poetic language to create vivid images of India's natural scenery and cultural contexts, especially the Himalayan region, which serves as the backdrop for many of his stories. Readers can fully immerse themselves in the world he creates thanks to his descriptive language, which frequently stimulates the senses. Bond frequently uses real-life examples for his characters, emphasizing the peculiarities, virtues, and hardships of common people. He gives his characters nuance and humanity so readers can identify with and remember them. With his personal and conversational storytelling style, Bond frequently draws readers into the narrative and makes them feel as



though they are listening to a friend narrate an anecdote. His writing inspires empathy and a sense of connection with his readers because it is sincere and emotional. Bond writes stories that frequently touch on themes of nostalgia, time passing, and innocence in childhood. He often muses on the pleasures and difficulties of youth, arousing nostalgia for bygone eras and pure innocence. Bond often captures the absurdities of life with a light touch, infusing his writing with a gentle sense of humour and irony. His sense of humour infuses his stories with depth and charm, offering light-hearted moments amid themes of greater gravity. Even though Bond's writing has a strong cultural foundation in India, it has an overall universal quality. His stories, which touch on universal themes of love, friendship, loss, and redemption, speak to readers from a wide range of backgrounds. Its clarity and economy of words distinguish Bond's prose. He has a talent for telling stories simply and effectively, eschewing fancy prose in favour of expressing complicated emotions and ideas.

VII. CONCLUSION

The stories of Ruskin Bond, who is well-known for his honesty, simplicity, and poignant depictions of human experiences and the Indian landscape, evoke deep thoughts in readers about nature, life, love, and the human condition. His stories frequently honour the timeless bonds of friendship, the beauty of little things, and childhood nostalgia. In summary, Ruskin Bond captures the essence of the human spirit through his timeless tales, allowing readers to travel through the landscapes of the heart and mind, where wisdom meets innocence and the ordinary becomes extraordinary. With their insights into the intricacies of human relationships, the resiliency of the human spirit, and the enduring power of hope in the face of adversity, Bond's stories provide windows into the rich tapestry of Indian life. Ruskin Bond enchants readers of all ages with his skilful storytelling and astute observation, leaving an enduring legacy that forever changes the literary landscape.

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