

*Review*

## The changing trends in Indian writing in English with special reference to Ruskin Bond

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The writers settled abroad and the ones who divide their time between India and abroad have contributed much to this rapidly developing Indian Literature sub-genre of English literature. Now Indian English literature no longer remains limited to the writings necessarily of the "sons of the soil". It has broadened the scope of fictional concerns of these writers from purely Indian to the global and transnational. Today Indian English as well as Indian writing in English has got its own identity. A number of recent Indian novelists have produced significant novels, making a mark in the literary world. One among the very few Indian authors in English who are marketed well by the media, are encouraged by schools and parents is Ruskin Bond. Ruskin Bond is the acclaimed author of over five hundred novellas, stories, essays and poetry - all of which has established him as one of the India's most beloved writers. India gets an exquisite reflection in his stories. The sole point is not to entertain. His approach to his child characters, their activities, desire, feeling win the favour of the readers.

Ruskin Bond is thus, in no way inferior to any of his contemporaries. His works are neither ambiguous nor theoretical. As a very simple and ordinary man he shares with us the most intimate moments of his life and lives of those with whom he has come in close contact. This paper intends to look at him more closely about the changes he brought in Indian Literature through his writings. His works are highly approved by society at large. His stories are very famous and he writes in an extremely enjoyable language and style which even holds a child throughout the entire narrative. He is considered to be one of the icons among Indian writers and children's authors and a top novelist. He has received many awards for his fictional works. His works are set in India, the land where he was born and grew up.

**Key Words:** Ruskin Bond, Indian English, writers.

### INTRODUCTION

Bond claims that India is his home. He states that he is drawn to India because of the atmosphere—the diversity that has mingled to produce a unique place. He was born in India, his mother's family has been in India for two generations, and his father was born, lived, and worked in India. In an article, Bond writes: "Race did not make me an Indian. But history did. And in the long run it is history that counts." According to Bond, his mother's families are descendants of Timur the Lame. Doing father, who takes away his son on the slopes of Dehra for

planting saplings in many of Bond's stories, is Mr. A. A. Bond, his loving father. The writer is so deeply attached to his father, that he brings him back to life whenever he has to talk of a father in the plot of his story.

Ruskin Bond's great strength lies in his art of characterization. He is a master creator of characters and he has left behind a whole galaxy of characters. Characters are very central in his art. Bond's stories are peopled with big and small men and women. They are ordinary, simple, educated and uneducated men and

women like house servants, shop-keepers, schoolboys, thieves, gardeners, beggars, wrestlers, school-teachers, farmers, soldiers, drivers and so on. Bond's world is the world of the poor and the middle class people. Bond's greatness can be seen in the originality and naturalness of these characters. His stories are not books printed on paper but worlds full of real living and breathing people. He is no creator of cardboard characters; his men and women, angry, hungry, strange, foolish, honest live their own lives in the books, they are moving and acting most of the time. His characters are true human beings. He always writes serious stories but that does not stop him from creating such characters. He is equally good at creating very interesting situations. His stories are like pan-vision films with hundreds of people suffering, acting and moving all the time. Bond's true greatness lies in his sharp observation, his knowledge of the joys and pains of ordinary, humble folks, his great sense of humour and above all his kindness for the saints and sinners alike. He rarely talks of philosophy in his books. He is just a great storyteller. His characters are realistic and live. He is a short-story writer who recognized that a character may not remain the same throughout the story but he or she can grow or develop or deteriorate as a result of what happens in the short story. He acquired an immense amount of knowledge of human nature, psychology, there is feelings and then applied them to the depiction and exploration of the character. He has created a large number of characters. Bond's fiction (1999), in all probabilities, is very akin to real life. His characters originate from the people he has either met or seen around him. Bond frankly admits; I've been writing stories of one kind or another. . . it has always been the people I've known and met who have given me these stories – friends, lovers, relatives, chance acquaintances, strangers, or other people's friends and relatives. (Bond : 2000 : VII ).

Stories hang about Bond in Dehra and Mussoorie that even a conversation with him finds its way into some of his fictional character. He holds an interesting conviction that no two persons are alike. It is their stark individuality that attracts him. Plots of stories are woven around their individual traits, which are highly captivating and surprising. Bond loves them because he says;

I find most people interesting. The dull ones are those whose lives are a little too orderly, or who are forever boasting of the ease with which they have succeeded in life. Yes, life is full of surprises. And so are people, in their different ways. (Bond : 2000 : VIII).

Endowed with a great insight into the psychology of man he is motivated to write about what is uncommonly common in human nature. Therefore, his prime concern while writing a story is to highlight the extraordinary in an ordinary type of man. The story moves with the

development or some revelation in the character within the folds of a given situation. Resultantly, there are a number of moving character-portraits bright and serene in varied colours and shades. He points out: "Theme of my stories develops from characters. Their plot is subservient. In fact, there isn't any plot in the midst; it is more a study of a character or a portrait of a person." (Aggarwal : 1998).

Bond is the writer of hills and small towns. Most of his characters-men, women and children of various age and class - belong to the high hills and valleys of Garhwal. They are born in small tranquil villages and hamlets. They are the people of soil-farmers, traders, vendors, chawkidars and schoolteachers etc. Boys and girls of different age play a pivotal role in many of his stories. His observation of adolescent psychology is unsurpassable. After R. K. Narayan, it is Bond who has related himself so naturally to the innocent world of children. He loves them because they are as natural as nature itself. His courtship with children started when he was at the verge of middle age maturity. Hypocrisy of the grown ups forced him to peep into the innocent world of children. The glaring contrast of the young and the old world is manifested through characters corresponding to their age and spirit. He says;

When I was about forty, I started writing stories about children – the children of nearby villages of hills, middle class children working in the fields or going to school. . . I write because I may have an understanding with them. (Aggarwal : 1998).

Bond's range of characters is large. He is the most consummate author of hills and it is impossible to ignore the universal appeal of his characters. Like any man, they are greedy, kind, shy, sensuous, brave, stubborn, loving, friendly and crooked. They may take away other's life to protect themselves. Cold-blooded murders are also a part of Bond's gallery; he deals with them with equal felicity, focusing upon the mysterious background of their being so. For Ex: In Flight of Pigeons, Father of Ruth Labadoor (heroine of the novel) is murdered. This murder is committed by the Indian rebels who are a part of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and who have decided to kill all the British of the small town of Shahjahanpur.

Bond lays emphasis upon the circumstances of a person for his idiosyncrasies. It is the process of growing up that has made him what he is today;

We are creatures of circumstances. If our genes have shaped our biological make-up, our environment has shaped the development of our natures. (Bond : 2001 : VII )

Bond's portraits are not static. In spite of their seeming

inactiveness, they steadily move towards maturity. The process of development is conspicuous in both young and old. They are remarkably pliant to harmonize with the people and surroundings. We can classify them as types and individuals both. They are gripping and tantalizing as individual human beings, while representing their particular class to which they belong. It has always been interesting to trace the source of these creations. During his long walks, Bond meets many people and some of them get deeply imprinted in his memory. They become a part of his 'mental luggage'. He revives them through stories. Critics may accuse him of particular obsession, but it is quite natural that some of our meets linger with us. Bond says;

Meet some of the people I can never forget. . . because their individuality made them stand out from the common place. It was not money or success but pride in themselves that set them apart: people like my Granny, or my father, or the old kite maker, or the wayside station's khilasi, or the epileptic boy who sold trinkets for a living. (Bond : 2000 : VII )

Bond's extensive gallery has a variety of pen portraits ranging from man and woman, young and old, rich and poor, simple and complex, autobiographical and fictional. Some of them like Rani, Markham and Sensualist are meant for psychological observations, while some like Kishen Singh, Pritam and Hari are regional simpletons. Some characters such as Sita, Suraj, Vijay and Rusty etc. have allegorical connotations and some are autobiographical or semi-autobiographical portraits. Bond has created a few caricatures too like Sita Ram and uncle Ken. His world is not of male dominance; girls and women are not less gripping than men in his stories. In "Room on the Roof", hero's character Rusty's relationship with a married woman Mrs. Meera Kapoor (wife of a drunkard Mr. Kapoor) is narrated in such a way that without Meera Kapoor there is no novel. As Meena gave Rusty a room in the their house which is on the roof. The title of the novel is "Room on the Roof".

Autobiographical nature of his fiction makes him an Indian Charles Lamb. The dilemma of growing up is powerfully presented through Rusty, his favourite autobiographical hero of the stories Rusty, The Boy from the Hills. Through him Bond speaks of his own tribulations standing at the threshold of manhood. Rusty's sensibility, his urge for friendship and above all his Indianness are truly of Bond himself.

Doing father, who takes away his son on the slopes of Dehra for planting saplings in many of Bond's stories, is Mr. A. A. Bond, his loving father. The writer is so deeply attached to his father that he brings him back to life whenever he has to talk of a father in the plot of his story. Bond shows his awareness of the development in the field of science and philosophy of the 20th century. The

result is that in his hands the novel becomes highly philosophical and psychologically insightful. He looks into the minds and hearts of his characters and reveals the thinking and feelings, likes, dislikes. Sufferings and frustrations of his characters. Bond presents highly complex characters. Their actions at first appear to be puzzling and even contradictory, but when Bond analyses the person's psychology and shows us why exactly he acted in those different ways, his character becomes convincing. This can be seen in "Room on the Roof" that Kishen son of Mr. Kapoor left the home when his father marries other lady after his mother's death. Kishen is a boy of arrogance in the beginning of the novel, later he wants to lead his life independently after the death of his mother who is later assisted by Rusty.

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