



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A HIGH REGARD FOR CHILDREN AND NATURE: THE WORKS OF RUSKIN BOND

First Author

Khanahmed Haleema, Research Scholar,

Govt. College for Women (Autonomous), Dr.B.R.Ambedkar University, Srikakulam-532 001.

Second Author

Dr. K. Surya Chandra Rao, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D., Principal, Govt. College for Women (Autonomous), Srikakulam-532 001.

ABSTRACT:

Ruskin Bond, an eminent Indian author, is lauded for his ability to exquisitely capture the spirit of nature and the naivety of childhood in his literary creations. His short stories portray the deep influence of nature on the lives and experiences of his child protagonists. Romantic poets such as *William Wordsworth* and *William Blake* envisaged an intimate connection between nature and childhood. Wordsworth portrays nature as a comforting retreat offering relief and revitalisation where childhood innocence is idealised. On the other hand, Blake juxtaposes childhood innocence with the grim realities of life, often using nature as a symbol for these opposing states. Bond's stories delve into the importance of nature by highlighting how various aspects of the world serve as a setting for his characters' escapades. They explore how the distinct flora and fauna found in the Himalayan region play a significant role in shaping the characters' perceptions and choices throughout their journeys. In addition, they focus on Bond's portrayal of childhood, emphasising traits such as callowness, fortitude, and inquisitiveness exhibited by his characters. This paper examines how the young characters in Bond's stories manoeuvre through the challenges of a fast-changing world and find comfort and knowledge through their interactions with nature. His storytelling not only encases the innocent and delightful aspects of childhood but also delivers a powerful message about the environment. It encourages readers to value, protect, and peacefully coexist with nature.

Key words: *exquisitely, spirit of nature, influence, emphasising, inquisitiveness...*

INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond's literary world is defined by hope, simplicity, and a profound love for nature and human life. Unlike much of modern literature, which often explores science fiction, crime, and dramatic themes, Bond offers a pure and refreshing view of life through his captivating stories. His writings encourage readers to find beauty in everyday moments, like the songs of birds, the sound of rain, the scent of flowers, the gentle swaying of trees, and the calm presence of animals and insects. Rather than urging readers to escape from reality, Bond helps them become more aware of the natural world and the simple joys that life has to offer. His stories about innocence, adventure, and human relationships reflect his deep understanding of people and his talent for expressing emotions with warmth and authenticity. Through his thoughtful observations and graceful storytelling, Bond has become a timeless writer whose works continue to inspire readers of all ages. This study uses a detailed textual analysis of Ruskin Bond's literary works, including his short stories, poems, novellas, and novels.

These works have been examined through close reading and formalistic methods to explore their themes, style, and artistic elements. To enhance the analysis, the researcher also engaged with the author through personal meetings and phone calls, gaining deeper insights into his creative process. This interaction helped create a meaningful connection between the text, the author, and the underlying ideas in his writing. The study further interprets Bond's works by examining traditional family values, social relationships, and cultural influences, addressing any gaps in interpretation where necessary (125-129). The paper mainly explores the recurring theme of innocence, especially as shown through the lives of children, their close bond with nature, and their experiences of everyday human life. It also looks at Bond's fascination with unexplored places and the spirit of adventure, which creates a semi-mythical imaginative world. This blend of realism and imagination allows Bond to transform people and places into symbols of human emotions, highlighting the unique charm and lasting appeal of his fiction. Ruskin Bond began writing his early stories in Dehradun while working hard to become an independent writer.

In the 1960s, after some time working in office jobs in Delhi, he moved to Missouri. Many of the stories written during this time focused on realistic portrayals of ordinary people and their feelings. A common theme in his works was the feeling of longing for something that had been lost. In the 1970s, when Bond faced both personal and professional challenges, he turned to children's literature, which gave him a new direction and helped him overcome many difficulties. His deep understanding of children's thoughts and emotions allowed him to create stories that resonated with young readers. Around 1986, Bond went through one of the most difficult periods of his life. After more than three decades of writing, he had not yet received the recognition he deserved. During this time, he was hospitalized in Mussoorie (2005) for treatment of a duodenal ulcer, haemorrhoids, and a bladder infection, while also battling financial problems. A turning point came when he received a letter from David Davidar, who had recently joined Penguin Books India as an editor and publisher. Encouraged by this opportunity, Bond submitted the manuscript of **The Room on the Roof** (1956), which had remained unpublished for some time. Its publication marked a significant milestone in his career and helped establish him as one of India's most respected and widely read authors.

BOND'S STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Ruskin Bond is widely recognized for his significant contribution to Indian children's literature. His stories present an authentic Indian atmosphere, shaped by his close association with the family of Prem, with whom he lived for many years in Mussoorie (P.P-256-259). This experience allowed him to understand the daily lives, emotions, and imagination of Indian children, which became the foundation of his children's writings. Living in a cottage surrounded by oak and maple forests, Bond spent several happy years writing stories, poems, and books for young readers. During this period, he developed a strong bond with Prem's family and became a grandfather figure to the children. Many of his stories were inspired by them. For example, *The Cherry Tree* (1980), was written for Rakesh, while other works were influenced by Mukesh and Savitri. These personal relationships added warmth and realism to his narratives.

Bond's children's stories reflect the simple joys of childhood, including friendship, curiosity, adventure, nature, and family life. His works portray children as cheerful, imaginative, and compassionate individuals who find happiness in ordinary experiences. The stories often include elements of forests, animals, birds, villages, and small-town life, creating a familiar and comforting environment for young readers. Although some of his stories carry a nostalgic tone, they remain realistic and emotionally engaging. His language is simple, natural, and easy to understand, making his works accessible to readers of all ages.

One of Bond's greatest strengths is his ability to observe children's behaviour and emotions with remarkable sensitivity. He captures their innocence, excitement, fears, dreams, and relationships with exceptional accuracy. His storytelling combines traditional values with modern themes, making his works relevant across generations. Before Bond became popular, Indian children mainly read foreign characters and adventure series (P.P-210-217). His stories introduced relatable Indian settings and memorable characters such as Rusty, Bijju, Ramesh, and Vinod, allowing young readers to connect more closely with the experiences portrayed in his books. As a result, Bond became one of the most admired writers of children's literature in India.

Bond's children's stories can broadly be divided into autobiographical and fictional works. Many of his autobiographical stories draw inspiration from his own childhood experiences, memories, friendships, love for nature, and life in Dehradun and the Himalayan hills. Works such as *The Last Tonga Ride* (1991), *The Cherry Tree* (1980), *The Tiger in the House* (1996), *My Father's Trees in Dehra* (1991), *The Playing Fields of Simla* (2000), *The Tree Lover* (2017), *Returning Home to Dehra* (1989), *The Funeral*, and *All Creatures Great and Small* reflect his personal experiences and emotional attachment to people, places, animals, and nature. These stories vividly recreate familiar landscapes, including roads, gardens, forests, houses, and schools, while expressing his deep affection for the natural world.

A distinguishing feature of Bond's children's literature is its emotional honesty and universal appeal. His stories celebrate kindness, simplicity, courage, and respect for nature while encouraging readers to appreciate the beauty found in everyday life. Rather than relying on fantasy alone, he creates meaningful narratives based on ordinary experiences that leave a lasting impression on young minds (p.p-145-149).

Bond's decision to write for children was also influenced by his own childhood. Growing up after his parents separated, he spent much of his early life feeling lonely and emotionally isolated. His father was his closest companion, and after losing him at a young age, Bond experienced a deep sense of loss. These experiences made him quiet, thoughtful, and observant from an early age. As an adult, he transformed these memories into stories that explore childhood with empathy and understanding. He believed that his difficult childhood helped him understand the emotions of children more deeply and inspired him to create literature that offers comfort, hope, imagination, and companionship to young readers. Through his writings, Bond has created a timeless literary world where children can discover friendship, adventure, emotional warmth, and a lasting connection with nature (p.p-162-172).

Bond's Stories about Mysteries and Ghosts

Ruskin Bond describes the period during which he wrote most of his ghost and mystery stories as his "dark" or "supernatural" phase. His interest in this genre was inspired by renowned writers such as M. R. James, Hugh Walpole, Walter de la Mare, Sheridan Le Fanu, Rudyard Kipling, and Satyajit Ray, as well as by the traditional ghost tales narrated by the mother of one of his friends. These stories introduced him to Indian folklore featuring spirits, ghosts, witches, and other supernatural beings. Although Bond's ghost stories contain elements of mystery, suspense, horror, and humour, they are never excessively frightening. Instead, they balance supernatural themes with realism and human emotions. Bond believed that ghost stories provided an effective way to express thoughts and feelings that often remained hidden in the subconscious. As a result, his supernatural fiction became popular among both children and adult readers. His stories create an atmosphere of mystery, frequently using the hills of Mussoorie as an evocative setting that enhances the sense of wonder and imagination. Unlike conventional horror fiction, Bond's ghosts are often gentle, harmless, or even sympathetic rather than evil or violent. His primary aim is to entertain readers while exploring themes of mystery, curiosity, and human nature. Reflecting his optimistic outlook and faith in the goodness of people, Bond's ghost stories combine suspense with warmth, humour, and compassion, making them distinctive within Indian English literature.

"The Night Train at Deoli"

"The Night Train at Deoli" is narrated by a young man of about eighteen who often travels by train between his hometown in the hills and the plains. During these journeys, he carefully observes the people, places, and events around him, showing Bond's keen interest in everyday life. The train regularly stops at the small station of Deoli in the early morning, when the platform is usually quiet and empty. On one such trip, the narrator notices a young girl selling baskets. He buys one from her, and a brief conversation begins. When he passes through the station again, they meet again, and their growing familiarity leaves a lasting impression on him. However, during a later journey, the girl is no longer there. Although he asks others about her, no one can provide any information. The narrator wishes to find her but decides not to leave the station or visit the nearby town, fearing that uncovering the truth might ruin the beautiful memory and hope he has kept. Instead, he chooses to cherish the possibility of seeing her again on future journeys. Through this simple yet touching story, Bond explores themes of innocence, longing, memory, and the beauty of unfulfilled relationships.

The Man Who Was Kipling –

The Man Who Was Kipling reflects Ruskin Bond's early admiration for Rudyard Kipling and his literary works set in India. The story is told from the perspective of a young boy who is full of curiosity and has a vivid imagination. While visiting the Albert Museum in London, he meets a mysterious man who looks like Rudyard Kipling, or perhaps his spirit or a figment of the boy's imagination. During their conversation, Kipling expresses his worries that people in India may have forgotten him and his writings. The boy reassures him that Indian readers still remember and value his books, which brings Kipling both joy and relief. He also explains that his idea of the "White Man's Burden" was meant to support the British Empire, not to spread hatred or injustice. Because of his admiration for Kipling, the boy accepts these explanations without questioning them. At the story's end, the mysterious figure disappears suddenly, leaving the boy surprised and deeply moved. Through the boy's innocence and imagination, Bond reflects on literary memory, history, and the lasting impact of Kipling's works on Indian readers.

His Neighbour's Wife:

The narrative explores the strange relationship between a twenty-six-year-old man and a thirty-two-year-old married woman, which initially seems somewhat distant. In this tale of innocence, Arun's bachelorhood gradually changes when, after some time, he marries Leela, who had become his neighbour's widow (p.p-261-270). The lack of understanding in human relationships is the root of life's contentment. While the story's structure may seem impressive, the journey of an honest heart discovering the harsh reality is genuine. Arun's character contrasts with the fascinated readers, who are merely the audience.

"The Garlands on His Brow"

"The Garlands on His Brow" is told from the perspective of a first-person narrator who comes back to Dehra after living abroad at the age of twenty-one. Upon his return, he finds that the town has not changed much. While visiting the local market, he spots a poor beggar and recognizes him as Hasan, a once-famous wrestler who had been a favourite during his childhood. Though he immediately knows who it is, he decides not to tell others about it. As the story progresses, the narrator remembers Hasan's past, including his connection with a Rani who admired him and became his companion. After the Rani's death, Hasan lost his support and was forced to return to his hometown, where his life slowly fell into decline. The narrator never finds out the exact reason for Hasan's fall from grace. A few days later, he learns that a body found in a drain belongs to Hasan. Even then, he does not go forward to identify him, thinking that doing so might bring more shame to the former wrestler. Through this moving story, Bond reflects on the fleeting nature of fame, the ups and downs of human fortune, compassion, memory, and the quiet dignity of those who are forgotten by society.

A Guardian Angel:

The narrative also honors Mariam, the narrator's close relative and a rare gatekeeper and lucky messenger from his childhood. It is a re-telling of the narrator's story, including his transfer to a comprehensive school, legal issues concerning his authority, and his father's family's belief that Aunt Mariam was not suitable to act as the child's gatekeeper. Mariam was a woman of simple virtue, which is why. The narrator himself sees the visits of questionable people and men of different kinds during the night. Bond was influenced by this when he wrote his often-quoted line: "These people were fleeting creatures, small ships that sail through the night."

The Kitemaker:

"The Kitemaker" is one of Ruskin Bond's most admired short stories, depicting the life of Mehmood, an old kite maker who recalls his past glory through memories and his warm relationship with his grandson, Ali. Once respected for his extraordinary skill and supported by the local Nawaz, Mehmood was known for making stunning kites, including his famous Dragon Kite. However, as time goes on, his craft and reputation slowly fade, leaving him with only memories of his successful career and the affection of his grandson. Bond uses Mahmood's life to represent the passage of time and the decline of traditional arts in a rapidly changing society. The story also draws a meaningful parallel between the life cycle of trees and humans, highlighting growth, aging, memory, and death. Although the story ends with Mehmood's death, its message celebrates nostalgia, family bonds, cultural heritage, and the dignity of ordinary

people, offering a heartfelt reflection on the lasting value of love, memory, and tradition.

CONCLUSION:

Ruskin Bond occupies a unique position in Indian English literature because of his simple yet deeply meaningful portrayal of nature, childhood, and human relationships. His writings reveal a profound love for the Himalayan landscape, where mountains, forests, rivers, birds, and changing seasons become an essential part of his storytelling. Rather than concentrating on political conflicts or social controversies, Bond celebrates the beauty of ordinary life and emphasizes the emotional connection between people and nature. His stories also express concern for environmental conservation, encouraging readers to respect and protect the natural world while preserving values such as kindness, compassion, and simplicity.

Another important feature of Bond's fiction is his realistic depiction of childhood and personal growth. Many of his young protagonists gain maturity through experiences of friendship, love, loss, and self-discovery. In works such as *The Room on the Roof*, Bond presents the emotional and cultural journey of a young boy as he learns to understand life and society. His characters often find peace and belonging in the hills rather than in the crowded and materialistic environment of cities, reflecting the author's belief that nature offers emotional healing and inner harmony.

Overall, Ruskin Bond's literary works continue to inspire readers because of their warmth, optimism, and universal human values. His ability to combine vivid descriptions of nature with realistic characters and meaningful life experiences has made his fiction timeless. Through his stories, Bond reminds readers of the importance of preserving nature, valuing relationships, and finding happiness in the simple moments of everyday life, ensuring his lasting contribution to Indian English literature.

REFERENCES

1. Bentley, G.E, editor, William Blake: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Sons, 1975.
2. Blake William. Poems of William Blake (1905), edited by W.B. Yeats. Routledge & Sons, 1979.
3. Bond, Ruskin. Complete Short Stories and Novels. Viking, 1996.
4. Khorana, Meena G. The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond. Praeger, 2003.
5. Mayo, Rober. "The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads". Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America. CUP, 1954, pp. 486-522.
6. Naik, M.K. A History of Indian English Literature. Sahitya Akademi, 1982.
7. Richardson, Alan. Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Readings as Social Practice, 1780-1832. CUP, 1994.
8. Saili, Ganesh. Ruskin: Our Enduring Bond. Roli Books, 2004.
9. Singh, Prabhat K, editor, The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond, Pencraft, 1995.
10. - - -. The Book of Nature. Penguin-Viking, 2004.
11. - - -. The Road to the Bazaar. Julia MacRae, 1980.
12. Compton-Rickett, Arthur. A History of English Literature. UBS, 2006.
13. Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. "Mother Holle". The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales, Pantheon Books, 1944, pp. 50-57.
14. Hunt, Peter. Children's Literature. Blackwell, 2001.