

## Assortment in the Themes of Ruskin Bond's Short Stories: A Critical Study

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### 1. Introduction

Ruskin Bond is a presumed and famous Indian English writer who can be regarded as a Living Legend. He has been continuously presenting the picture of life and experience in different forms of literature. Ruskin Bond resides in Mussoorie which is one of the most beautiful hill stations of North India. He has been portraying a variety of life and experiences for the last forty-six years. He has adopted a son whose name is Prem. His son's family has been very important in his personal life. Prem's family is an integral part of his Personal Life. He gets emotional security of a happy home without getting married.

There is a variety in the themes of Ruskin Bond's short stories. His Themes are quite surprising. He has selected his plots from love, pets, animals, orphans and abnormal children. He also deals with Indian-ness, nature and contemporary life. There is simplicity of art in the world created by Bond. His world is as simple as life. Concerning theme and technique, he has experimented a lot in every short story. It is very easy to classify his short stories into various groups keeping in mind themes in those stories. Objective assessment of his experiences that have been depicted in his stories is the key to understanding of his themes.

Landscape and depiction of society of the region and experiences in his early years provides thematic base to Bond. Bond's vision is the outcome of his personal experiences. He has gifted Indian English literature with beautiful descriptions of landscapes, rapid and vivid sketches which are throbbing with life. He depicts landscape as a part of the lives of his characters. We can't see them separate as they are closely related with the lives of Bond's Characters. These landscapes have no significance without his characters. A very close correlation is found between the nature and human beings. The scenes of landscape and atmosphere are unique in Bond's short stories.

Bond's short stories are woven around human relationships. His theme centers round even whatever human relationships symbolize. He depicts multi-faceted relationships among his characters which are the demand of milieu. According to Bond, family relationship plays a significant role in life. He does not only depict the family keeping in mind only his personal experiences. He presents his wide observation. In his short stories, we can see the reflection of deep understanding of human situations. His view of life is fragmentary as there is no reflection of the vision and imagination of the whole life.

His stories are didactic in nature. The didactic element is predominant in his stories *Fancy Tales* is the collection of the stories which is full of logical and enchanting atmosphere.

Nature is the most important theme in Bond's short stories. He depicts a close connection between trees and men. In his description, his genuine feeling for nature gets reflected. It is not just a narrative technique. His approach is like that of Wordsworth's.

Bond sees nature as an integral part of the world of human beings. He finds nature benevolent but also remembers autumn, flood, drought, heat and storm - the furious side of Mother Nature. He describes his character struggling for existence. According to Bond's belief life is a struggle but man wins finally.

Bond's view of Love includes men and beasts both. Love is need of life. It is a fact that not only human beings but even beasts, birds, flowers and trees respond to love. He has depicted love at different stages through some of his characters like Rusty in *The Room on the Roof* the sensualist in *The Sensualist*, the writer in *Delhi is not far*, Sushila in *Love is Sad Song* and Sunil in *Death of a familiar*.

The most favourite among Bond's themes are childhood and boyhood. He has written many stories based on this theme. He depicts ... mood concerning events of boyhood and childhood. His observation of the young world really amazes readers. This makes Bond one of the most admirable writers.

Bond's goal is to spread love and understanding everywhere. He believes that children receive love very actively. Children are friendlier. Very trivial objects like a flower or a marble or even a coin become a medium of establishing relationship among children. Children's innocence makes them friends easily.

Ruskin Bond is in love with India. He loves goodwill and humour of common people, their tolerance for various customs. He appreciates how philosophically people of India accept hardships. He also finds love and affection in children interesting. He has woven his stories around the rural or middle urban class. He depicts farmers, small shopkeepers, grass cutters, postmen, Tonga-drivers, school teachers and retired officers etc. All these characters present Love and fraternity found in India. India's Simplicity and peace have not been affected by the western culture.

Bond also describes authentic pictures of Indian villages with it's a string cot, Lord Ganesha found in every corner of the house and all the streets.

Ruskin Bond's characterization is highly impressive. We can say that it is his strength. He has portrayed a variety of characters that play central part in his stories. He has depicted both men and women of different levels. His characters are simple and common. He has portrayed characters like servants, shopkeepers, gardeners, wrestlers, beggars, thieves, school teachers, drivers, farmers, soldiers, school boys and so on. His characters belong to either the poor class or the middle class. His characters are original and natural. They are the characters who appear to be living in reality. He depicts various moods of his character like anger, hunger, foolishness etc. His characters appear to be real living human beings.

Bond's observation is very sharp and it gets reflected in his description. He depicts the joys and sorrows of common people. He is very kind in his treatment to the characters. Bond is really an impressive storyteller. His characters do not remain static. They grow or deteriorate. His understanding of human nature, psychology is reflected in the portrayal of his characters.

He has also described characters that have split personality. In his depiction of dilemma faced by human being, his deep understanding of psychology gets reflected. His simple hearted and good characters undergo tough tests of life. There are rare characters representing wickedness.

Bond has portrayal women characters very carefully. His women characters are not victimized by male dominance. They are describes busy with domestic chores. His women characters are living, caring and they possess wonderful common sense and observation. Bond described thinking, feelings, likes, dislikes, suffering and disappointed of his female characters minutely. Some of his impressive female characters are granny, kaki, Aunt-Mariam, Kusum, Madhu, Sushila, Miss Mackenzie, Sita, Kamla, Ula, Binya, Pooja etc.

Ruskin Bond is a master craftsman. In his art, there is a combination of two essentials – detail and loving care concerning work. He is like Hemingway in this aspect. He believes in simplicity of thought and clarity of expression. He does not like to mar the beauty of the story by being obscure in narration.

Bond avoids using symbols but he uses them as a part of his narrative art. Symbols bring together man to man, to God and to nature. He doesn't believe in any particular school of symbolism. He uses symbols with a view to achieving intensity and compactness of theme. The simple and innocent world of Bond symbolizes life around him. They stand for the union with nature. It helps bringing young and old on the common ground. It also reaffirms faith. In the story 'The Thief', the thief gives a sweet and innocent smile to win Arun's trust.

According to Ruskin Bond Art lies in hiding it. So Bond's Stories are rich with embellished narration and sublimity of vision. His world is quite innocent and simple. There is no cut-throat competition for progress among men. Characters of Bond are not disillusioned by struggle or weariness. Characters are lively and throbbing with life. Bond believes in living in present. He rejoices in ceremony of innocence which seems to be struggling against materialistic society.

## 2. Conclusion

To conclude, we may say that, humanism is the only religion which has evolved out of his serious study of Indian Culture and life. Unlike Marxists, Bond is not political or social. He is not a mystic like saints. He trusts the creative vision of man. That's why for Bond goodness and dignity of human is the most important. Even his common characters are not disgraceful. Bond's approach to life is positive. He is not sarcastic towards life or people. He doesn't moralize. He gives solutions for the problems like, irregularity and untouchability. In his story *Untouchable* he joins the sweeper boy and behaves friendly with him on a stormy night. Bond believes in action and not criticism. He appears to be a saint who has realized the truth of life.

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