

The Recollections of Childhood's Sentimentality and the voice of eco-criticism in the stories of Ruskin Bond.

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Abstract

Many years ago, a well-intentioned critic observed that my stories were not, technically speaking, short stories, as they were plot-less, lacking in formal structure. In those days everything - play, film, and short story - had to have a "plot", even if life itself was totally devoid of one. My critic did, however, concede that my stories were really character sketches, or portraits of people he had known, and in this he was right. This paper analyses the above comments made by Ruskin Bond about his short stories and goes on to prove that there is indeed a formal structure that is specific to his works and also that the plots of his stories are as interesting as any other masterpieces in this genre. In this attempt, the paper highlights the elements of nostalgia and its significance as a recurrent theme in Ruskin Bond's stories.

Keywords: autobiography, nostalgia, sentiments, periodicals, prestigious awards, representation, Ruskin Bond etc.

Ruskin Bond is one of the finest Indian authors of the English language. His magnanimous range of short stories and other forms like novels, articles in newspapers and periodicals have encouraged many young and talented writers for the past six decades. Though he is renowned as a children's story writer, he continues experimenting on different areas of literature. They have come in the form of ghost stories to nature and love stories. He received status, due to noteworthy contribution to literature and it fetch him prestigious awards, namely Padma Shri in 1999, the Sahitya Academy Award in the year 1992 and Padma Bhushan in 2014. Ruskin Bond is an Indian writer of British lineage writes short stories under the influence of nostalgia and it is exemplified as an autobiographical theme in most of his stories. Bond created an enormous variety of characters from his observation of life but some of them stand as an example of his remarkable imagination. This paper analyses the writer's autobiographical

representations in his works. I have chosen following five short stories for the analysis of Bond's recollections of Childhood's Sentimentality as the major theme in his five wonderful stories.

“*Copperfield in the Jungle*”

. “*Love Is A Sad Song*”

. “*My Father's Trees IN Dehra*”

“*A Guardian Angel*”

. “*The Funeral*”

Bond's short story “*Copperfield in the Jungle*” is an autobiographical story and It reveals young Ruskin aspirations and wishes to the reader. Bond never interested in killing of animals and due to this he doesn't follow his uncle Henry. Through the boy the writer explains his notion that Killing animals for food can be justified to some extent but slaying just for the entertainment could not be acceptable. The present story also re-enacts the forest atmosphere. Though he inherited hunting as a skill from his grandfather, slowly the gory sounds of Guns Started devastating his wish. The author didn't mention name of the boy and he generalized it to brilliantly. So, from this story we can understand the moods of a small boy for the innocent animals, and even we can see the humanity of the child.

“*Love is a Sad Song*” is another poignant short story written by Ruskin bond. He sketches his associations in his stories realistically. The writer met some girls in life and he portrayed them in his autobiographical stories. As he lived in post-colonial period, he has seen some girls moving freely with people and portrayed it through Sushila in the story “*Love is a sad song*”. The passionate relationship of the story reveals his apprehension to the reader. However, all these stories are autobiographical and the quality of writing is so intense that the stories ring true. The story is an authentic narration from his magazine. In the story Sushila and her soul mate Arun experiences all the eternity in life. In spite of such action, Sushila leaves him without any assurance but the poor lover remains in the fragrance of their intimacy. Bond's opinion is very simple, if a person senses excellence in a temporary relationship, why should person remain for years expecting inseparability which never happens in life. Here we can link the author's pessimistic experience of life that he experienced when his mother divorced and married another Punjabi person Bond has not created a single couple enjoying happy conjugal life in his stories. Perhaps, the trauma of his parent's separation does not allow him to

conceive of a pair of lovers living in blissful matrimony (Amita Aggarwal, Fictional World of Ruskin Bond: 30).

“*My Father’s Trees in Dehra*” is an example of Bond’s reminiscence. In this story narrator express wishes for liabilities inherent in their arboreal experiences among imminent readers. He probes in his past and finds distinctive links with the place Dehra where he and his father planted the trees on one occasion. His father tried to inculcate in his mind a sense of belonging to England. Bond like his father, sensed that trees performed as if they saw him before and that they are trying to touch him. The narrator emotionally feels his Dehra as a pleasant place to trees because of its fertile atmosphere. He was sent to boarding school after the death of his father and when he returned, he was the only one member of the family in the country. But his profound love and longing for the country drive him to the same place. Moreover, the nostalgia associated with the trees and their embracing quality all around when he returned after one year to the same place were cherished by Bond.

The trees seem to know me. They whisper among themselves and beckon me nearer. And looking around, I find that other trees and wild plants and grasses have sprung up under the protection of the trees we planted (Bond: 1988: 146).

The writer expresses his fulfilment at the end of the story and states:

They have multiplied. They are moving in this small forgotten corner of world, my father’s dreams are coming true, and the trees are moving again. (Bond: 1988 :146)

Bond recalls his childhood memories with Mariam who is a guardian in the story “*A Guardian Angel*”. He says:

She was a joyous, bubbling creature - force of nature rather than a woman – and every time I think of her, I am tempted to put down on paper some aspect of her conversation, or her gestures, or her magnificent physique (Bond: 1988: 84).

She takes care of him as if he is the whole thing in her life, but she does not show any dominance on her nephew and pass away gently. But her image had left a great impression on the mind of the boy and when he became matured, he entitled her with a name ‘guardian angel’. Adored Mariam in the story really signifies the humanity and Bond states:

Love is undying. The love that gives protection, even as you may guardian Angel, gave me protection long after you have gone and continue to give this Very day ...and love beyond death – a love that makes life alive. (Aggarwal: 2005: 39)

Bond through his stories continuously probe in to his past and exposes his relationship with father. The present story *“The Funeral”* also reinforces the relationship of the boy and his departed father. Though the story is genuine, he somehow merged imaginary situations for the journals. The small boy used to share a wonderful relation with his father but now silence is haunting around the house. The boy not able to take consoling words of the people and he feels remote in the midst of total hill-station.

Such a tragedy! Only forty...No one realized how serious it was ...devoted to the Child ... (Bond: 1994:77).

Bond questions the society through the little boy about their dishonest deeds in life.

God has need of your father... in those words a well - meaning missionary had tried to console him. And had god, in the same way, laid claim to the thousands of men, women and children who had been put to rest here in these and serried rows? (Bond: 1994:79)

The boy stood silent like a stranger in the graveyard until the last foot had gone but scared a little to go adjacent the coffin of his father. In one situation he feels as if he is in darkness in the world but his father’s image reinforces him and fills heart with strong determination and willpower. At the final segment the boy stubbornly says: *“He’ll find a way out, the boy said fiercely to himself. He’ll get out somehow (Bond: 1994: 80).*

Autobiographical style of writing makes Ruskin Bond an Indian Charles Lamb. Through his fiction Bond states his pains and troubles in life. The responsible nature of his father, who took care of his son and inculcated love for nature, is clearly exhibited by Bond in his stories. The unavoidable presence of a father figure in almost all the stories selected and the constant longing to spend time on the mother land whenever he undertook foreign travels indicate the love for his roots. Thus the nostalgic elements of his life – walking through the woods alongside his father, yearning to smell the earth before monsoons, embracing and conversing with the trees that grew with him in his villa and village are indicative of his love and attachment to his father that are brought about as recurrent themes in the selected short stories. These elements have indeed given a unique thematic style and formal structure to his short stories.

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