



Walk with Ruskin Bond

KEYWORDS

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Sometimes Nostalgia for childhood days becomes keen. Scraping together time from the mundane routine of daily life and oddities, we love to fondle the memories of those days. Somewhere down the memory lane, the glimpse of few moments get embedded in our soul, mind and heart which send us back to a world full of fantasy, magic and helps us to fill the void created by discrimination, hostility and political tensions coupled with our time and space. At this point, come to our rescue, a group of writers, in the light of whose writing we find the inkling of the by-gone days. Ruskin Bond, the Padma Shri is such a great weaver of memoirs who caters to the needs and expectation of ours. His stories are the authentic portrayal of love, loss, achievement, pain and struggle. The harmonious blend of the occurrences and innocence of childhood makes us nostalgic. He does it by revealing the candor and precociousness of children; by unfolding the memoirs of the bygone days; by narrating the obdurate spirit and shattered dreams of the neglected. His world is enriched with dreams and aspirations of ordinary people and their simplicity. He accepts the world as it is and loves human beings as he sees them without imploring moral qualities on them. His characters are commoners like us. They stay alive and lighten up the spirit in us, that's why it becomes easy for us to walk with them side by side.

Bond's stories are replete with nature and life. The dew-drops in the morning, the sensuous glee of bright daylight, the bliss of silent night, the joys and sorrows of children, the bizarre situation enthrall us. The sincerity in his writing is most alluring. With great enthusiasm and deep insight he narrates the story - peepul, banyan, neem, cherry, oak, deodar and sal trees in their grandeur, a rain-drop on a blade of grass, a lizard on the rock and on the wall, the scent of wet earth after the first rain, a hidden pool behind the rocky mountain and grass land, barefoot boys riding bicycles, a tea shop in a bazaar, a dhaba on the road. He is genuinely compassionate in his portrayal of the ordinary people like orphans, beggars, tonga and truck drivers, thieves and others. His believes that, man being a very imperfect creation motivates us towards the total acceptance of life.

Ruskin Bond is considered as the pioneer of modern children literature in India. The breakdown of the traditional family set-up and the birth of nuclear family brought renaissance in modern children literature. The locale of Ruskin Bond's narration is traditional as well as modern and captivates the minds of all ages. The colorful memories of his childhood in pre-independence India and his understanding of these two set-ups helped him to understand the spirit of Indian family life. Before the emergence of this prolific writer, the boys and girls of Famous Five or Secret Seven were the sole reasons for the obsession of a fasci-

nating and unknown world. But with Ruskin Bond we set off our journey to a familiar and amazing world of Indian sensibility. Though his writing centers round the children world, but the readers of all ages can associate themselves with his characters since his children are drawn from natural milieu and presented with vigor and life that awakens the child in us, that always makes us ready to leap forward to share their world with us. Ruskin Bond started writing stories for the children in his late thirties. In his stories the childhood is always venerated and glorified, their vivaciousness and exuberance draw our attention; their innocence and vivacity gives us bliss.

Ruskin Bond's fabricated landscape is woven thread by thread using natural atmosphere for the children to enjoy, fight, play, wander and also vacillate between the world of innocence and the world of experience, finally discovering the truth about their persona. There is a consciousness of self. He delves deep into their mind and brings out the very essence of their sensible imagination as well as vulnerability. This lucidity and graceful appeal to his readers have carved out a special position for him in Indian literature in English. The wonderful portrait of the pensive world of Binya, Sita, Arun, Romi, Rakesh and Mani attract us by their innocence, purity, mischievousness and their never ending pranks. They escalate with tomfoolery, are repentant on being scolded, twist the fact on being caught, quickly get involved in squabbles, are effortless to win as a friend, they amaze us by their precociousness and eccentricity, by riding bicycles down the abrupt hilly region, by exploring river and mountain paths, by climbing mango and litchi trees, by taking nap under shady trees without any fear of wrongdoings and by enjoying on being nomadic in and around nature.

With the emergence of his characters from the Himalayan soil, especially from the neighboring villages and towns of Dehradun and hill stations of Mussoorie, Bond reconstructs the everyday experiences of the life and the problems that we face for survival. Making a living to sustain, looking forward to better life and our belief of long-lasting love and friendship befool us, with the course of time we make new connections and attachments, we gradually grow old, but at times our heart aches for the distant friendship and old love of childhood days wishing to travel back in time and picking up the threads. This is the time when we meet these characters who holding our hands with theirs helps to discover our childhood hidden beneath the layers of maturity so long. His short story collections like Funny Side up, Book of Humour, Treasury of Stories for Children, Ruskin Bond's Complete Stories and Novels, When Darkness Falls and Other Stories and Friends in Small Places along with his omnibus like Classical Indian Love Stories and Lyrics, Indian Railway Stories, Indian Ghost Stories and Rain

in the Mountains, Lamp is Lit, Book of Nature Tales and Legends from India, The India I Love and Roads to Mussoorie depict the tales of little adventures and the discovery of new vistas of life. We always feel rejuvenated in the company of these characters. Unlike us they are unassuming, easy – going and full of inexorable spirit of innocence. His stories “are always of discovery; adventure, exploring train tunnels, climbing guava trees, making a zoo of rabbits and lizards, learning to get along. Yes, there is a shrewdness and innocence in his work” (Marquand, The Christian Monitor).

Bond is skillful in dealing with the human psychology. “The Blue Umbrella” is the most poignant story of basic human instincts - desire, possession, envy greed and compassion. The story “Thief” talks about the conversion of a thief who, being compelled by his habitual instinct of theft, robs his friend Arun. But Arun hardly gives importance to it. Instead he finds himself being robbed of his own trust and confidence in Arun. “The Hidden Pool” is the story of three friends Laurie, Anil and Kamal. Laurie is the son of a British engineer in India and Anil and Kamal are his Indian friends who introduce him to the festival and traditions of India. Laurie finds out a hidden pool in the mountains which lacquers their friendship evermore. These characters have a naïveté of mind. They are eager to cross all the barriers laid down by others. The story The Flute Player, Kamla who lives in England with her parents comes to meet her grandmother in Jaipur. Amidst the vast stretch of cornfield, she meets Romi, an innocent village boy, who is not bother on getting stained in mud rather feels ecstatic in swimming in canals, whose piece of music upon the flute makes us thrilled along with Kamla. The story How Far is the River is crammed with the spirit of wild fervor peculiar to the young minds.