



An Examination of The Portrayal of Children in Selected Stories

by Ruskin Bond

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines how children are portrayed in a few stories by well-known Indian author Ruskin Bond, who is praised for his moving accounts of childhood. This study examines how Bond portrays the complexity and intricacies of infancy through a qualitative analysis of representative tales, looking at themes like innocence, resilience, imagination, and the influence of environment on character development. The study explores Bond's narrative strategies and stylistic decisions that go into creating his unique representation of children through the use of a literary lens. Moreover, the study delves into the socio-cultural settings woven throughout Bond's narratives. Through a critical analysis of Bond's works, this study seeks to enhance comprehension of his literary skill while emphasising the timeless significance of his depiction of children in modern discourse.

Keywords: Children, Ruskin Bond, Portrayal, Stories, Childhood experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

A mainstay of modern Indian literature, Ruskin Bond has made a name for himself by vividly capturing infancy against the calm backdrop of the Himalayas. His writings capture the essence of wonder, innocence, and the difficulties of growing up, and they have a profound emotional impact on readers of all ages. Bond has painstakingly built narratives that shed light on the pleasures and difficulties of childhood via his wide collection of work, providing moving insights into the world as seen through the eyes of young protagonists.

The goal of this research study is to examine the complex ways that Ruskin Bond's stories depict children. This study looks at Bond's literary output, which includes multiple collections and novels, in an effort to identify the recurrent themes, narrative devices, and sociocultural settings that influence how Bond portrays childhood. Bond frequently sets his stories against the gorgeous Himalayas or charming towns in North India, creating a rich tapestry that his young characters use to navigate their individual paths.

Bond's ability to combine whimsy with realism to capture the ordinary adventures and reflective moments that characterise childhood experiences is fundamental to his portrayal of children. His characters, who range from daring orphans to reflective dreamers, represent a variety of personalities and situations and each presents a distinct viewpoint on the world. Bond delves into universal topics like friendship, family dynamics, grief, and time passing via these individuals, striking a chord with readers by drawing on their common experiences of childhood and nostalgia.

Bond's narrative style, which is distinguished by its clarity and simplicity, adds depth to his stories while making them more approachable. His clear yet frequently poetic style enables readers to enter the inner lives of his characters, thereby cultivating empathy and comprehension. This essay will examine how Bond creates the sensory and emotional landscapes of childhood through the use of language, imagery, and symbolism, which helps the reader get more fully immersed in his stories.

The sociocultural settings that Bond incorporates into his stories offer a crucial perspective for analysing how childhood in India is changing. Whether portraying the idyllic country life or the struggles experienced by urban adolescents, Bond's stories provide a comprehensive picture of the cultural traditions and socioeconomic realities that influence the identities and goals of his characters. This study attempts to clarify how Bond's storytelling functions as a reflection of larger society challenges and values as well as a kind of entertainment by examining various backgrounds.





2. REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN IN SELECTED STORIES OF RUSKIN BOND

A standout and distinctive position among the variety of children's authors is secured by Ruskin Bond. He is hailed as India's pioneer of contemporary children's literature. Young readers with an inquisitive, active, and precocious nature have a significant part to play in Bond's wonderful literary world. He uses captivating storytelling tactics and the deftness of a psychologist to distinguish his young heroes. With the express intent of captivating his young readers, he employs an absorbing and evocative narrative style to piece together his children's world, thread by thread. His remarkable understanding of kids and his personal upbringing aid in the validation of his children's literature. He ignores the prevalent didactic writing style in favour of focusing on the psychological and emotional requirements of young readers. The children are regarded as older and more knowledgeable rather than as the "other." They are made with self-awareness in mind. Bond delves more and further into children's secret and enigmatic world in order to comprehend their propensity for sensitivity.

Bond's contributions laid the groundwork for the growth of children's and young adult writing in India. His short stories demonstrate empathy for children, respect for their intelligence, and belief in their potential to influence the future. He places a high value on novels that are appropriate for young readers. Additionally, Bond has helped three generations of Indian schoolchildren become readers. His poetry, essays, and short tales are read in many classrooms and are frequently collected in educational textbooks. Bond faithfully captures the challenges the kids must overcome in order to survive. Bond bases his children's stories on a number of reoccurring themes, including running away, mischievous ghosts, love of animals and a variety of natural occurrences, and adventure and discovery. He is drawn to children's simple, carefree lives and their demonstration of an unbreakable spirit in the face of adversity. It appears that his affection for children stems from his own unhappy and lonely upbringing, from his desire for stability and happiness in his early years. His spirit was deeply scarred by the death of his beloved father, the difficulties of having a forced relationship with his mother and stepfather, and his lonely upbringing. He believes that writing for young readers enabled him to overcome his inner turmoil and escape himself. It also turned into a way for him to virtually satisfy his own wants and nostalgic longings for his early years, reshaping and reconstructing his unhappy and bereaved youth into a safe and joyous period. Bond is aware that youngsters are frequently ignored in this adult society. They are not taken seriously, nor are their opinions. Bond has observed that each youngster sees the world and the things in it in a unique way that inspires original thought. The following are some of his well-liked kid-friendly collections:

A collection of short stories called "The Road to the Bazaar" is based in Dehra and tells the entertaining tales of Suraj, Ranji, Koki, Amir, Teju, and their friends as they grow up in a little hillside town in North India. The regular events that mould these kids' lives are bonded to. Suraj's amazing train adventure, in which he smuggles himself into a goods train and forges an unlikely relationship; Koki's beetle race with Bhim and Ranji, which finishes with an unexpected winner; and Mukesh's amusing attempts to build his own zoo. Some of the stories are timeless, such as "Ranji's Wonderful Bat," "The Fight," "The Big Race," "Koki's Song," "The Boy Who Broke the Bank," and so on.

The collection of his timeless, universal stories set in the hills is called "Ruskin Bond's Children Omnibus." Popular stories about small town life in Northern India, such as "Grandfather's Private Zoo," "Angry River," "The Blue Umbrella," "The Ghost Trouble," and "Cricket for the Crocodile," are included in this anthology. The stories, which are written in Bond's clever and lighthearted style, emphasise the appeal of simple existence. His best children's stories are collected in "Ruskin Bond's Children's Companion." Some of the touching and humorous stories in it are "The School among the Pines," "The Night the Roof Blew Off," "My Failed Omelettes and Other Disasters," "Visitors from the Forest," "Adventures of Reading," "Four Feathers," and "The Parrot Who Wouldn't Talk." This book



is made much more magical by the inclusion of a selection of his endearing, quirky poems for young readers.

In "The Wind on the Haunted Hill," three children—Usha, Suresh, and Binya—find themselves stranded on the eerie hill and house due to an unexpected downpour of rain. The elderly home was frequently struck by lightning, killing the occupants as well as any youngsters that were within. Usha once had to seek cover from a thunderstorm in the ruins. She sits for a while at the ruins where lightning struck with the intention of moving after the rain stops. Subsequently, there was a burst of light unlike any other, briefly illuminating the entire ruin. When the opposite was illuminated, she noticed two little, possibly childlike creatures crouching in the abandoned fireplace. The spectral forms raised their heads and gazed back at Usha. After running away, she stumbles and screams onto her pals who had taken refuge there as well. They tremble with more horror after hearing their grandfather's eerie tales of the abandoned mansion and spirits on the hill. Once the rain has stopped, Usha turns to face a waving hand and listen to the wind bidding them farewell.

In this story, the three child protagonists are Usha, Suresh, and Binya. Usha, who was eleven or twelve, has rose-colored hair and a sweet face. Her younger brother, Suresh, is a plump boy with almond-shaped eyes. In this narrative, the children went to a haunted hill next to their town to wash and dry their clothes. Binya is a neighbour and friend of Usha's who is a little older. Usha has to get back before nightfall since she has plans to visit the bazaar and they are scared to cross the haunting ruins on the hill. Her grandfather also tells her of the ruins where two kids, a boy and his sister, were murdered in a rainstorm and are now playing at night beneath the full moon. Then Usha heads out to the market. However, the sun had already set when she returned after completing her duties. Overlooking the hill were the clouds. Abruptly, a profound rumble reverberated across the hills, and the rain spurted. She was in a panic, thinking she would not make it home before dark. In the lighting, the ruins were clearly visible to her. She chooses to take a nap in the house's corner where there is cover. All she could do was hope and pray that she wouldn't be struck by lightning. A stronger light illuminated the wall across from her, and she noticed two tiny, ghostly figures that turned to face Usha. Usha's lips were full of her heart. She had undoubtedly witnessed the ghosts of the two kids. She immediately raced outside, stumbled across someone, and let out a loud cry. She then realised it was Suresh when she heard a boy shout. Binya was also present. Now that they were together, they were content. An hour passed and the rain ceased. Usha felt a hand wave at her as they were leaving and turned to gaze back at the ruins. The voices in the wind, saying goodbye, were also audible to her.

The Blue Umbrella is the most amazing narrative that James Bond has ever penned. Binya is ageless. Both the narrative and the character never die. In the tale of Binya, a young child trades her claw jewellery for a blue umbrella from a mother. "She looked through the bright blue silk at the pulsating sun, turned the blue umbrella this way and that, and then, still keeping it open, turned and disappeared into the forest glade" is how she describes herself when she had it. Blue captures Binya's attention and turns it into a treasured possession. The locals are in awe of her newfound beauty as she shows it off to them. Even though the elderly tea vendor Ram Bharosa had his eye on it, he is unable to obtain the umbrella from her, not even with payment. She lived with the umbrella during the summer and on rainy days. It had withstood the trials of every season. The majority of individuals envied Binya for having a blue umbrella. Nobody had ever owned one such as this. When it rained heavily, most people consoled themselves by telling themselves that Binya's beautiful umbrella wouldn't block the rain; that it would shrivel in the sun; that it would collapse in a strong wind; that it would attract lightning if lightning fell near it; and that it would prove unlucky if there was any bad luck going around. Everyone loved it in secret. Binya continued to talk to herself rationalising that she had no control over other people's jealousy. Had her passion for the umbrella been too great? Had she given it greater importance than people? She couldn't help but believe that she was somewhat to blame for Ram Bharosa's dejected expression. She deliberately leaves it

in Ram Bharosa's shop one day. Even Nevertheless, Ram Bharosa later realised that it was useless to him, despite his first feelings of avarice. "You keep it," Binya responds as he calls out to her to remind her of her umbrella. I no longer require it. A canopy is not everything. The most exquisite young character that Bond has ever designed is Binya. She is ageless. In this tale, Binya is shown as someone who rises above the immaterialities of adulthood. A philosophical undertone is also present in the novel through Binya's character. Because Binya is so mature, she helps us understand the need to put an end to one's impulses. The narrative also portrays Binya as being enamoured with her blue umbrella, much like a child is mesmerised by a gift of a toy. Ultimately, though, she transcends these little pleasures and achieves the greater one. Of all the characters created by Bond, none is more developed than Binya.

A traveller gives Binya a priceless blue umbrella in return for a claw pendant. She shows off her newfound wealth to everyone in the hamlet, thrilled with it. She handles the umbrella as though it were her younger sister. The umbrella is robust enough to withstand any season's chances. She soon learns that everyone is envious of her and wishes they could have an umbrella similar to hers. In particular, the old Ram Bharosa. It was his obsession. It didn't seem like Binya's problem. But after a few days, she realises that she was the reason behind everyone's mental disruption. She tells Ram Bharosa one day that an umbrella isn't everything as she leaves the umbrella behind.

In the lovely story "Picnic at Fox-Burn," the narrator and three children spend the day at Fox Burn, a location rumoured to be haunted. Additionally, there was a dilapidated structure that had once belonged to Mrs. Williams. The building became a lonely place after her death. Rakesh, Mukesh, and Dolly, the children, are there because they hope to see ghosts. They are soon lost in their surroundings as they play. A black dog appeared out of nowhere and played with Rakesh and Mukesh before disappearing. Dolly was lost in the ancient house, so they look for her. She tells them when she gets back that she was playing with the two kids in the house. "I was playing in there in the old house," she says. Play hide and seek. A boy and a girl were the two children present. They were also having fun. She gives them a wave as she walks away. However, Rakesh, Mukesh, and the narrator could not see them.

The children in this story—12-year-old Rakesh, 6-year-old Mukesh, and 4-year-old Dolly—don't fear ghosts. They pick a picnic area that is haunted by spirits in the novel because they want to see ghosts. Here, Bond presents kids as audacious, inquisitive beings on the hunt for ghosts. Along with the narrator, the three kids depart for Fox-Burn. The narrator took a break beneath the chestnut tree as the kids soon started playing on the grass. The kids were undoubtedly looking for ghosts, and they even think a local woman is a ghost. They also try to determine whether a strange black dog they encounter is real or a ghost. When the time came, they discovered Dolly was missing from all locations. She appears from the neighbouring ruins after a few beautiful minutes. She explains to them that she was inside playing hide-and-seek with two kids. Dolly waves back at the ruins as they begin to depart, but no one else can see who she is waving to.

Bond does a great job of showing youngsters through his involvement, his willingness to get down on their level, and his identification with their chaotic lives. His shared topic has been given vitality by his unity with the kids. He temporarily assumes the role of a youngster rather than just describing one. His short stories and children reveal aspects of childhood and child psychology that are concealed beneath the layers of adults.

3. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND STYLISTIC CHOICES IN BOND'S PORTRAYAL OF CHILDREN

Ruskin Bond's use of unique narrative devices and artistic decisions is deeply ingrained in his portrayal of children, greatly enhancing the complexity and realism of his characters. One of Bond's most notable storytelling skills is his ability to evoke the spirit of infancy with rich sensory details and vivid visuals. His writing frequently reflects the intimate bond between his youthful heroes and their surroundings by conjuring up the sights, sounds, and scents of

the natural world. The child's perspective, which is based on immediateness and curiosity, is highlighted by this sensory richness, which also helps the reader get more fully immersed in the story.

Bond's storytelling is distinguished by its clarity and simplicity, which enables a close and direct interaction with the inner lives of his characters. Readers of different ages and origins can relate to his novels because he frequently uses simple language that speaks to universal feelings and experiences. By using this method, Bond is able to represent his young characters as complicated persons navigating the difficulties of growing up while also skillfully communicating their joys, anxieties, and dreams.

Bond also makes stylistic decisions in the pacing and structure of his stories, tailoring them to the emotional resonance and thematic focus of each one. Bond skillfully conveys the complex nature of childhood experiences, whether via reflective introspection that explores his characters' inner thoughts or episodic storytelling that mimics the episodic pattern of childhood activities. His stories frequently flow smoothly and slowly, providing the reader with opportunities for reflection and understanding that strengthen the reader's bond with the characters and their adventures.

This study aims to shed light on the ways in which Bond's narrative strategies and stylistic decisions support his nuanced representation of children. This study tries to identify recurrent themes, structural patterns, and language strategies that differentiate Bond's portrayal of childhood and strengthen its emotional impact on readers through close examination of certain stories.

4. SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHILD CHARACTERS IN BOND'S STORIES

Ruskin Bond's stories are masterful pieces of literature, but they also have strong sociocultural undertones that influence the experiences and lives of his young protagonists. Bond portrays a range of socioeconomic origins and cultural settings against which his dramas unfold, which is an important component of his storytelling. Bond's stories, whether they are set in the calm serenity of the Himalayan foothills or on the busy streets of small-town India, depict the diverse realities and difficulties that children from various socio-cultural backgrounds encounter.

Bond examines topics of modernity and tradition, emphasising the ways in which his youthful heroes are affected by societal shifts. Bond frequently explores the conflict between tradition and progress through his characters, looking at how family dynamics, cultural norms, and societal expectations shape children's choices and ambitions. This investigation highlights the intricacies of identity development and socialisation during childhood and gives his narratives more depth.

Bond gives visitors a glimpse into the rich fabric of Indian culture by portraying socio-cultural backgrounds that include local rituals and regional variation. His tales frequently honour regional holidays, customs, and folklore, offering a vibrant cultural context that heightens the realism and authenticity of his stories. Bond skillfully conveys the subtleties of his characters' problems and daily lives by placing them inside these socio-cultural frameworks, giving readers a clearer picture of the larger societal processes at work. This study attempts to clarify how socio-cultural settings that are woven throughout Bond's narratives affect the character development and characterization of his young heroes. This study aims to highlight the connection of literature and society in Bond's representation of children through a detailed examination of particular stories and theme explorations. It does this by providing insights into the narratives' ongoing significance in modern debate.

5. DISCUSSION

Ruskin With his deft use of storytelling devices and complex sociocultural settings, Bond's portrayal of children in his chosen stories stands out as a remarkable examination of childhood experiences. Bond's stories strike a deep chord with readers because they so eloquently capture the emotional and sensory landscapes of childhood. Bond immerses

readers in worlds against the backdrop of tranquil Himalayan landscapes or the charming charm of North Indian communities with his detailed words and emotive imagery. His writing is so immersive that it not only captures the reader's imagination but also allows them to feel a close connection to the lives and experiences of his characters.

Bond's sensitive and nuanced description of children's inner life is fundamental to how he presents them. Instead of treating his youthful heroes as simple caricatures, he presents them as real people attempting to navigate the challenges of growing up. Bond's characters depict a universal sense of reality when navigating issues such as the deep influence of personal discoveries, the difficulties of family dynamics, and the joys of childhood friendships. His storytelling approach, which is distinguished by its clarity and simplicity, guarantees accessibility while offering profound insights into the common feelings and experiences that characterise childhood.

Bond's storytelling are enhanced by the socio-cultural situations in which they are richly woven. He deftly blends themes of modernity and tradition, demonstrating how social changes impact children's lives and goals from a variety of backgrounds. In addition to adding to the ethnic authenticity of his books, Bond's celebration of regional traditions, holidays, and folklore gives readers a greater comprehension of the social forces that influence the lives of his characters.

Bond emphasises the tenacity and adaptation of kids in surviving in their surroundings by delving into the everyday struggles and diversity of his region. His tales challenge preconceptions and promote a nuanced knowledge of children's viewpoints by offering a heartbreakingly depiction of the changing dynamics of childhood in modern-day India. Readers who value the universal themes of innocence, wonder, and resilience find resonance in Bond's works because of his ability to convey the essence of childhood experiences across cultural boundaries.

Ruskin Beyond only narrating stories, Bond's contribution to children's literature reflects a deep investigation of society ideals and individual experiences. This study highlights Bond's works' continuing significance in today's discourse by critically examining his storytelling strategies and sociocultural settings. Bond's depiction of kids not only deepens our understanding of childhood, but it also emphasises the ageless traits of inventiveness, curiosity, and emotional fortitude that characterise childhood everywhere. via his timeless stories, he invites readers of all ages to rediscover the beauty and complexity of childhood via his literary skill.

6. CONCLUSION

Ruskin Bond's depiction of children in a few chosen stories has been thoroughly examined in this study work, demonstrating his skill in capturing the subtleties and complexity of childhood life. The study discovered recurrent themes including innocence, resiliency, inventiveness, and the significant impact of environment on character development through a qualitative examination of Bond's narratives. It was noted that Bond's distinctive storytelling techniques—which are marked by sensory descriptions, vivid imagery, and an easy-to-read prose style—were essential in crafting an immersive experience that appeals to readers of all ages. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that the sociocultural settings that Bond incorporated into his writings enhanced his depiction of young protagonists and provided insights into the various realities and difficulties that children in India confront from a variety of backgrounds. This presentation emphasised the continuing significance of Bond's narratives in reflecting larger societal challenges and values, while also providing a deeper comprehension of his portrayal of children through a critical engagement with his literary craftsmanship. In the end, Ruskin Bond's contribution to children's literature is demonstrated by his capacity to authentically and sympathetically capture the essence of infancy, which renders his writings ageless and universally relevant.

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