

An Analytical Study of Child Psychology in Ruskin Bond's Stories

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ABSTRACT

Child psychology is the study of subconscious and conscious childhood development. It observes how a child interacts with their parents, themselves, and the world. The child psychology is very interesting to study for the mankind. The children are most creative and most natural in thinking and they live in their own world. Ruskin Bond is considered as a pioneer of children literature in India. Ruskin Bond is an Indian author of British descent. Ruskin Bond was born on the 19th of May 1934 in Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh. He is the eldest son of Aubrey Alexander Bond, who was a British flying officer in the Royal Air force in India. His mother's name was Agnet Clark. When Bond was eight years old, his mother separated from his father and married a Punjabi Hindu, Hari. Ellen lived in Ludhiana until she died in 2014. The Indian Council for Child Education has recognized his role in the growth of children's literature in India. He got the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, for his published work in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014. His popular novel for children *The Blue Umbrella* displayed the goodness of learning to give. It was made into a film by

Bollywood director Vishal Bhardwaj and the film won the National Award for the best Children's film in the year 2007.

Key Words: Child Psychology, Adolescent

1. Introduction

Ruskin Bond is considered a pioneer of children literature in India. Ruskin Bond came close to children's literature. Since Ruskin Bond liked his boyhood very much therefore all his children stories whether autobiographical or semi-autobiographical expressed his longing for a happy childhood. Ruskin Bond likes children because they are more frank, open minded and emotional. According to Ruskin Bond two children can become good friends merely by exchanging a piece of marble, a coin, a doll and bangles. Children do not like the restraints put on them by their elders. Ruskin Bond loves children because they are not deceptive. All children love freedom, jumping in pools, climbing on trees, and are always curious to know about their surroundings so Ruskin Bond is more close to children of the world.

Bond spent his early childhood in Jamnagar and Shimla. At the age of ten, Ruskin went to live at his grandmother's house in Dehradun after his father's death that year from jaundice. Ruskin was raised by his mother and stepfather. He did his schooling from Bishop Cotton School in Shimla, from where he graduated in 1950 after winning several writing competitions in the school including the Irwin Divinity Prize and the Hailey Literature Prize. He wrote one of his first short stories, "Untouchable", at the age of sixteen in 1951.

Following his high school education he went to his aunt's place in the Channel Islands (U.K.) in 1951 for better prospects and stayed there for two years. In London, he started writing his first novel, *The Room on the Roof*, the semi-autobiographical story of the orphaned Anglo-Indian boy named Rusty; he did various jobs for a living. It won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, (1957) awarded to a British Commonwealth writer under 30. He moved to London and worked

in a photo studio while searching for a publisher. After getting it published, Bond used the advance money to pay the sea passage to Bombay and settle in Dehradun. Ruskin Bond has written for over 40 years now in almost all the genres but has not been taken seriously. Ruskin Bond deserves full attention and appreciation for his handling of the sensitive issue of 'growing up'. Young people are the future of any nation. In order to give guidance and direction to youth, their aspirations and frustrations must be understood. Bond's literature soothingly comforts his readers, but instead of lulling them to sleep, it awakens them to the realities of the world without being pessimistic. Ruskin Bond's major novels are about adolescents. The first novel by Bond, *The Room on the Roof* is a novel by an adolescent about adolescents.

In order that we can better analyze his novels, it is important to understand the nature of adolescence.

The term 'adolescent' has a specific meaning in psychology. It should not be confused with the word 'teenager', although the periods of adolescence and teenage are almost the same. Teenage is the period between thirteen and nineteen. When a boy or a girl enters the age of thirteen, he or she is called a teenager and continues to be called so till the age of nineteen. The period of adolescence covers the years from thirteen to twenty and according to some psychologists up to twenty one.

If we look at the characters of Ruskin Bond, all the important characters such as Rusty, Somi, Ranbir, Sudheer, Kishen, Ruth and Suri are in their early adolescence.

The term 'adolescence' is derived from the Latin word 'adolescere' which means 'to grow up'. According to Lester D. Crow and Alice Crow, "The period of transition from childhood to adulthood or from dependence on adult direction or

protection to self direction is referred to as adolescence, adolescent age or adolescent period of development."

Since adolescence is primarily the stage of development, psychologists have specified the following areas:

1. Physical Development: - It consists of growth of tissues, muscle, bone and skeleton in totality. Besides, there is growth in strength and various skills and physical deviation.
2. Intellectual Development: - with the enlargement of the brain, there is mental growth. The adolescents begin to show their intellectual abilities and intellectual -cultural interests.
3. Emotional Development: - emotion is a response to some kind of stimulus. It is an experience that affects an individual's vital processes, stimulating him to greater activity than is normal. Emotional growth of an adolescent leads him to act with greater drive. His self emerges and he begins to assert his independence and thus there is the development of personality.
4. Social Development:-The seeds of social development are sown in the family and the primary school. But at a later stage, extra -curricular activities lead the adolescents to have contact with people of all age groups. It is at this stage that boys and girls develop friendship and choose their future careers.
5. Moral Development: - Children do not take religion seriously nor are they sufficiently conscious of the feelings of others. In adolescence, young boys and girls begin to think about religion seriously. The do's and don'ts of the society and ethical principles. They accept community influences sometimes without question and sometimes with a grain of salt. It is at this stage that adolescents think of their goal of life. According to Cole and Hall the main goals of the adolescents are: Control of emotions by reason, Social adjustment, Independent adulthood, Financial independence, Choosing a career.
6. While pursuing these goals, the adolescent faces a number of

problems. It is the responsibility of society to help the adolescent achieve his goals and be responsible citizen of his country.

2. Ruskin Bond and Child's Stories

Ruskin Bond is a well known Indian Writer in English. He has written more than hundred short-stories, six novels, three collections of verse and over thirty books for children.

The first novel entitled Room on the Roof evaluates the award winning first novel of Ruskin Bond. The novel has lot of autobiographical overtones, yet is much more than an autobiography or a diary. The section traces the journey of adolescent protagonist Rusty from dependence to "independence, and diffidence to confidence. In the process, several adolescent concerns have been explored. The second novel entitled Vagrants in the Valley describes the sequel of the first novel. Here the homelessness of adolescents is celebrated. In spite of trials and tribulations, the adolescent optimism and zest for life comes out victorious at the end of the novel. Almost all the characters of the novel are adolescents. The third novel Delhi is not Far completes the trilogy. The novel discusses the restlessness of adolescents and their concern for career. This novel also discusses the impact of milieu on man through the comparison of life in Pipalnagar and New Delhi. Middlesence which also is a part of 'adolescence' is understood here. The fourth novel A Flight of Pigeons discusses the perception of the adult world as seen through the eyes of an adolescent girl Ruth.

3. Treatment of the Juvenile in Bond's Novels

"Growing up has always been a difficult process for me and I gave up trying many years ago. I decided that there was little point in becoming an adult if I could remain a child and make a living. I think I have remained young because I have always had children around me. Not just children in my own family but

other children too. I love to watch them grow. Adolescence is a fascinating period and I keep going back to it again and again in my fiction."— Ruskin Bond in *The Rain In The Mountains*. Popular aphorisms like "The child is the father of man" document our belief in the importance of childhood experiences to the personality development and behavioural pattern of mature individuals. George G. Thompson has rightly remarked, "The principles of psychoanalysis, criminology and psychosomatic medicine emphasize the importance of childhood experiences".' Ruskin Bond is among the few Anglo-Indian writers who has delved deep into the child psychology and has taken childhood and adolescent experiences as the essence and theme of most of his moving short stories. It specially aims at highlighting the traumas of his beleaguered children for whom childhood becomes a curse, who grow surmounting terrible adversities but gaining valuable experience. Bond's children are spontaneous, natural and trusting. But with "earthly freight", their childhood innocence wanes. Their journey from innocence to awareness is often so rapid that it leaves them baffled and bewildered. In his proletarian stories like "The Dust In The Mountains" and "The Untouchable", Bond dwells on the predicament of children belonging to the underprivileged and working class. Caught in the fierce struggle to eke out a living for themselves and for their impoverished families, his harassed youngsters are cheated out of their childhood and catapulted to premature adulthood. "The Dust In The Mountains" is a comprehensive account of pain, suffering and struggle punctuated by rare moments of hope and relief. The focal point of the story is young Bishnu and the pathos of his situation is sustained by Bond's

emphasis on the young lad's utter helplessness against the merciless rhythm of society. Besides Bishnu, the story also narrates the harrowing experiences of two other young boys in the hands of different exploiters. The oppressors change but the oppressed remain the same till Bishnu meets a saviour in Pritam Singh, an old truck driver and his outlook towards life changes. Bishnu's

nightmare begins when acute poverty compels him to abandon his native hills and seek employment at a tea-stall in a cinema hall in Mussoorie. His subsequent experiences turn the tea-stall into a veritable hell where he is condemned to a sub-human existence. He becomes the butt of vulgar jokes and horrid humiliations by unsympathetic customers.

Bali and Chittru, the other two youngsters working at the tea-stall fare no better. Bali tries to supplement his meagre earnings by sticking posters all over the city at night, after the closure of the tea-stall. Homeless, the young lads take shelter in the foyer of the cinema hall, where they are exposed to the inclement weather of the hills. The utter hopelessness of their situation is evident in the lines : "The cinema hall is carefully locked up after the last show so that they (the young lads) could not settle down in the expensive seats as they would have liked ! By now Bishnu is acutely conscious of the sinister workings of the class system. He realizes the root cause of his misery and humiliation is his poverty. He is overwhelmed by the humanity of the old Silch who transcends the master-servant divide and treats him as his equal. For the first time in his life, Bishnu comes in contact with a compassionate employer. It fills him with a new gusto for work. His buoyant juvenile spirit now being reawakened. From Bishnu's behaviour it is apparent that dignity and nobility are not the monopoly of the rich. The poor have their greatness as well. By making a poor, deprived child like Bishnu the hero of his story. Bond's children often become the victims of this hydra-headed monster.

"The Untouchable" written when Bond was only sixteen years old, records a day in the life of a young sweeper boy, vividly projecting the pathos of his situation. It presents the picture of degradation and helplessness while emphasizing on the need for redemption and change. For the ten year old Bond, cocooned in his shell of loneliness due to his father's hospitalization, "solitude is no bliss". Yet he does not dare to flout the social norms and seek the companionship of the sweeper boy. The warnings of his neighbours ring loud

and clear in his ears : "Don't play with the sweeper boy. He is unclean. Don't touch him. Remember he is a servant".

Talking about Bond himself as a child, In Bond's hands the father becomes the pivot round whom the entire life of his children revolves. The mother is only a distant, hazy figure lurking in the background. The father becomes an epitome of virtue and goodness. Unlike Paul in D. H. Lawrence's 'Sons And Lovers', his children do not have any mother fixation. Like Bond, they are closely attached to the father and shower him with unremitted love and affection. For them, he becomes a mini divinity whom they place on a pedestal. They revere him and worship the very ground he treads on. The stepfather, on the other hand, is the very antithesis of the father. He is an apathetic individual, devoid of finer feelings and sentiments. He is unimaginative, and heartless. He is responsible for separating a mother from her child and wrecking their home and happiness. He pales into insignificance when compared with the benign and benevolent father. This antipathy for the stepfather is evident in " A Job Well Done". Forced to stay with his mother and stepfather after his father's death, the young protagonist observes:

"He was quite unlike my father. My father had always given me books to read. The Major said I would become a dreamer if I read too much and took my books away. I hated him and did not think much about my mother for marrying him."^ The child's unsalubrious attitude towards his stepfather manifests itself in a highly strange and unconventional behaviour. Displaced from a carefree and idyllic atmosphere following his father's death, his transformation is startling and tragic.

4. Significance of Study of Child's Psychology

Instead of only concentrating on description of child behaviour in terms of derived norms, child psychologists have accepted the four fold objectives of

observation, prediction, guidance and control of child behaviour and development. These of course, presuppose a thorough understanding of the developmental trends and norms.

- It helps one to observe child behaviour
- It helps one to predict child behaviour
- It helps one to guide child behaviour
- It helps one to control child behaviour.

Further, an understanding of the child psychology is necessary because it contributes to later development of personality and behaviour. 'The child is the father of MAN' and 'as the twig is bent so grows the tree' are the popular proverbs which explain and emphasize the practical importance of studying child psychology.

5. Solutions to child's psychology related Issues and Problems

1. The Children require healthy environment in family so parents should be happy and healthy themselves first.
2. Children feel better when they feel understood.
3. Teach your child how they can “survive” difficult or unpleasant feelings.
4. Minimizing School Pressure.
5. Guiding properly and in considerable manner to the children
6. Encourage your child to think, plan, and reassess before acting.
7. Applaud your child's strengths and focus on positive outcomes.
8. All-round development by identifying the skills of the child and motivating them.

6. Conclusion

Ruskin Bond has very nicely related the child's behaviour and expectations in his short stories. If they are seriously read by the young children they will get better understanding of the problems and the parents will be benefited by these stories. The Stories are very interesting and are widely accepted and read. The Paper is decent contribution to the child's psychology and how we can relate the stories of Ruskin bond with this important issue of the children. The Stories can be best way to educate the children in major issues faced in this young age. The world of children is different from the adults. The Children are more imaginative, creative and most natural in behaviour. These qualities when utilized in best way they can become better citizens of the world.

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