

## ORIGIN OF INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON RUSKIN BOND'S WRITINGS

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### ABSTRACT

Indian English fiction has always been responsive to the changes in material reality and theoretical perspectives that have impacted and governed its study since the time of its inception. Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. The interplay of a variety of material and philosophical developments marks a discernible shift in the nature and study of Indian English fiction. Consequently, Indian English fictional scene has become variegated, complex and thematically richer. The writers settled abroad and the ones who divide their time between India and abroad have contributed much to this rapidly developing sub-genre of English literature. Now Indian English literature no longer remains limited to the writings necessarily of the sons of the soil. It has broadened the scope of fictional concerns of these writers from purely Indian to the global and transnational. Today Indian English as well as Indian writing in English has got its own identity. A number of recent Indian novelists have produced significant novels, making a mark in the literary world. Ruskin Bond is the acclaimed author of over five hundred novellas, stories, essays and poetry, all of which has established him as one of the Indias most beloved writers. India gets an exquisite reflection in his stores. This is not the sole point to entertain. His approach to his child characters, their activities, desire, feeling, and he like win our favour. Ruskin Bond is thus, in no way inferior to any of his contemporaries. His works are neither ambiguous nor theoretical. As a very simple and ordinary man he shares with us the most intimate moments of his life and lives of those he has come in close contact with.

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Indian English fiction has always been responsive to the changes in material reality and theoretical perspectives that have impacted and governed its study since the time of its inception. At the earlier stage the fictional works of the writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao were mainly concerned with the down-trodden of the society, the Indian middle class life and the expression of traditional cultural ethos of India. At that time, even to a much later stage when writers like K. S. Venkataramani, Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Chaman Nahal, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, and Khushwant Singh wrote, Indian English fiction concentrated on the depiction of social reality of the times. And the study of these writings was largely based on realist ideology. The critical studies of their works were directed to explore how far they had been successful in giving expression to the reality around them. Much of the study was based on sociological and Marxist theoretical perspectives. Apart from the views related to the study of external reality, the psychological reality expressed through different characters formed another aspect of literary criticism.

The study of literary work is taken up to find how the writers have presented experiences of the colonized people. The variety of life that forms the subject matter of postcolonial creative and the critical writings also includes different forms of oppressed human existence even after the end of British Imperialism. It points out the colonialist nature of the native rulers and challenges the essentialist understanding that treats certain races as always the colonizers and the others as fundamentally free from such cultural traits. The postcolonial fictional writings often provide a revisiting to history and contest its existing interpretation. The fiction writers often mix fact and fiction to re-examine the earlier happenings, incidents, views and assumptions. Their major concern being the nature of reality that existed during the colonial period, these writers often concentrate on the political and social happenings with a view to contesting the academic or the accepted versions about them. In the process these writings use the historical facts and references to persons and places to subvert the earlier discourses. The fictional polemics in such writings is often premised on the ideas that treat history as something constructed, hence a kind of fiction. The major function of these writings is to expose and criticize the subjugation of man by man in all its forms. Therefore, the critical stance used by post colonialists turns extremely relevant in the works concentrating on the decolonization of the social groups oppressed in the name of class, caste, gender and race. Instead of objective and realistic, this kind of fiction tends to be

purposive and political as it involves the assertion of specific views in the name of giving voice to plurality, multiplicity and heterogeneity informing life.

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad. It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only part of Commonwealth literature, but also occupies a great significance in the World literature. Today, a number of Indian writers in English have contributed substantially to modern English literature. Ram Mohan Roy who heralded the Indian Renaissance and Macaulay who recommended English language education in India were probably aware of what was in store for the Indians in terms of literary awareness. Today it has won for itself international acclaim and distinction. Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks: "one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West." Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao whose emergence was the most remarkable event in the realm of Indian English fiction. They were the harbingers of the true Indo-English novel. These novelists began writing around the mid 1930s. Bhabani Bhattacharya was also a contemporary of these novelists by birth, but he started writing fiction just after Indian independence. The writing of these novelists moved the Indian English novel in the right direction. They discovered a whole new world in Indo- English fiction, and the Indian novel owes much to their efforts for gaining solid ground and achieving an identity of its own. They defined the area in which the

Indian novel was to operate, and brought the Indo- Anglian novel within hailing distance of the latest novels of the West. They established the suppositions, the manner, the concept of character, and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness. They laid the foundation for the genuine Indo-Anglian novel, each imparting to the Indian experience a dimension of individuality. The interplay of a variety of material and

philosophical developments marks a discernible shift in the nature and study of Indian English fiction. Consequently, Indian English fictional scene has become variegated, complex and thematically richer. The writers settled abroad and the ones who divide their time between India and abroad have contributed much to this rapidly developing sub-genre of English literature. Now Indian English literature no longer remains limited to the writings necessarily of the sons of the soil. It has broadened the scope of fictional concerns of these writers from purely Indian to the global and transnational.

Ruskin Bond is one of India's most celebrated writers of English literature. His works have a universal appeal, be it on the young or the old. He has mastered a unique style of writing which is quite simple and devoid of fatuous frills. Most of his stories are inspired by the natural splendor of his hometown, Mussoorie with its mountains, trees, birds and the simple hill folk who live in the place. He has written more than hundred short-stories, six novels, three collection of verse and over thirty books for children. Bond has written two autobiographies. The first, *Scenes from a Writer's Life*, covers the first twenty-one years of his life and the second book, *The Lamp is Lit*, narrates when Bond returned to India after a two-year stay in England. Ruskin Bond received Sahitya Academy Award for his book *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, 1992, and was honored with the title Padma Shree 1999, for his life time contribution to Indian literature in English. He has been writing for the last fifty years in different genres of literature. He occupies an outstanding position among the contemporary Indian English writers. He is not content to describe the things as they happened. He probes deep into how they happened and why they happened. He examines his characters from the inside and analyses how their minds work. His stories are well-finished and integrated works of art. His plots are not well constructed but his characters appear to be the living men and women. Most of his stories depend upon characters i.e. they are the short-stories of characters.

Unlike the contemporaries, Ruskin bond was not fascinated by the miracles of technological age. He never headed the affairs of political, economical or psychological rather he took interest in writing about the divine beauty of hills and dales of Garhwal Himalayas' and natural scenery.

This attachment was due to hills, long associations with Dehradun and Mussori. Ruskin Bond was deeply impressed by Rudyard Kipling, chiefly by his passionate adherence to the great Himalayas. Nature was the focus of his attention and he seems to be absorbed in the company of nature. Ruskin Bond's deep emotional attachment to his father is revealed by his fond memory of him whom he lost when he was quite young. Also he was deprived of his mother's love that she married an Indian called Hari and did not look after her son in a befitting manner. Bond spent his time in reading books, was a voracious reader and developed a broad outlook on life and it also enabled him to get introduced to other writers and this company of friends put an end to his loneliness.

Ruskin Bond's religion was his faith in humanism. The self-cultivated Ruskin Bond soon became mature and got no chance to enjoy his boyhood. He was a good observer of things around him. Despite all kinds of hardships that he encountered throughout his life he retained his optimism that was the greatest achievement of the man and the writer. He valued good health and peace of mind to all kinds of wealth. Like great writers namely Dickens, Chekhov, and Samuel Becket his fictional world reflects his own experiences. He could get plots for his stories in the world where he lived, a monkey, a bird, an ant could inspire him to write. Ruskin Bond's vision is different from other contemporary writers because he depended entirely on what he saw around him like a film's poster, trains on platform, and soft and silky flowers blooming over the hills which gave him a new perspective of life.

Ruskin Bond's love stories have a tragic end. It is pointed out that Ruskin Bond did not approve of married love, because he had experienced the bitterness of a broken family. To him marriage is first a restraint which results in unhappiness. Hence his love stories are unlike traditional love stories that end on a note of despair. Ruskin Bond highlights innocent love and sex which leads to absorption and is better than any compromise which is more encouraging. Ruskin Bond prefers friendship to all other relationships because to him friendship is neither demanding nor possessive and does not make any discrimination on the basis of cast and creed.

Ruskin Bond is a staunch believer in friendship because during his stay in England he became restless on account of his friends Somi, Krishna and others who lived in Dehradun. Nature offered Ruskin Bond the best companionship. In his solitude he used to talk with trees, played with wind and enjoyed the music of flowers. Ruskin Bond was aware of both the malignant and the beneficent aspects of nature and he also believed in the therapeutic influence that nature exercised upon human beings. Nature is the best guide, best friend and also a symbol of love for him.

Ruskin Bond considered India the best place to stay. His love for India is expressed in all his novels. He saw India at the time of revolution, displacement of colonial rule and found the future of British bleak here. Every British was concerned about his future and identity and Ruskin Bond shared this thought with them. His attachment to India was inborn in him, he also tried to pursue his career in New Jersey but he soon realized that he would not be able to adjust himself to the post-war Britain. He could not forget the warmth and affection he found among the Indians. The memory of hills, mountains, rivers, flowers, and the smell of mangoes in the air always remained with him, so he returned to India whose native he was.

Renowned writers like Kipling, Forster, Myers, and John Marston expected to find India in the palace of maharajas, in sadhus, hermits and mythologies of folk songs or in gods and goddesses, but Ruskin found India among villagers, farmers, vendors, coolies, school boys Tonga drivers, old people and among hills. He enjoyed the stories related by grandmothers and loved to take a bath in Ganga and in exploring the streets leading to the Temples, Mosques, Churches, and Gurudwaras. He discovered Indianness in everything. He respected all religions reflected through the characters of his stories they belong to different sects, culture, and religions. Ruskin Bond regarded India and Indians superior to western civilized individuals. Many of his stories are direct satire on western culture and civilization. In India he found humanism whereas western people have become only a machine of amassing wealth. India is the land of fables because here in India children are fond of listening to stories related by their grandparents before going to sleep. Ruskin Bond is considered a pioneer of children literature in India. Since Ruskin Bond liked his boyhood very much therefore all his children stories whether autobiographical or

semiautobiographical 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 curios to know about their surroundings so Ruskin Bond is more close to children of the world. It is noted that Ruskin Bond does not like the traditional children stories of India but he prefers stories like “Maugli” by Rudyard Kipling. Ruskin Bond’s art of characterization is unique and different from others although many critics find fault with him for being autobiographical and subjective. Ruskin Bond like Maugham chose characters from his own surroundings neither abstract nor based on his imagination. The rich and poor, small and grown up, vendor, trader, schoolboy, gardener, all portray their respective way of living. Some of his characters resemble his father, Somi, Mr. Kapoor, Meena, caricatures like Rusty, Kishan, and some others are adjusted in the fictional world.

Ruskin Bond’s female characters are also admired by the readers like Ula and Maureen two prominent female characters presented by Ruskin Bond reflect the norms of western culture while Indian female characters like Sita, Binya, Meena, are male- dominated characters and are more domesticated women. Also his female characters exhibit love, affection, and responsibility toward others. They are loveable daughters, faithful wives and affectionate mothers. They give priority to their family life above everything else.

Bond claims to have read about fifteen thousand books so far and much of them were done during Boarding School at Simla. He stuffed his mind with all types of writers known or unknown such as – Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Mugham, H.G. Wells, William Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, Louis Carol, A. G. Gardiner, Mark Twain, John Masters, Walter De La Mare, Robert Lynd and even Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan. The book preferred most was Charles Dickens' David Copperfield. Obviously, he felt in David's story his own tale narrated. He established a close affinity with the triumphs and tribulations of David Copperfield – loss of parents, sense of insecurity and struggle for a meaningful life. Accordingly Bond's ambition of

being a writer was flared up by and large. Intellectual nourishment and stimulation are important for a writer in embryo and fortunately Bond was profusely supplied with them. In an interview to The Times of India, he reveals;

Most of his education came from second hand bookshops and not from school and colleges. Books have always been a great stand by.. (*The Times of India, July 28, 1998*).

The natural symbols as vocation, seasons, flora, fauna, are used by him. The second type is worldly symbols like kite, umbrella, characters, speeches, gestures, plots etc. He loves hills and mountains which inspire him to write. These are symbols of eternity, trees and greenery, flowers are symbols of eternal beauty and they are always ready to share happiness joy and sorrow of human beings. His symbols reflect his personal likes and dislikes. He never liked to live in a flat in a metropolitan area; instead he prefers to live in a home on hills with a little garden blooming with flowers and the fragrance of his own choice which gives him satisfaction. Narrative technique used by Ruskin Bond is full of simplicity and has depth of meaning. He is the master of short-story writing. He uses impressionistic technique, flashbacks, narration within narration, first person narration, and third person narration, myths, symbols, soliloquies, and poetic overflows in narration. His stories are usually written in the form of an allegory, but all his stories whether love stories, ghost stories, Himalayan stories appeal to the reader on account of their simple style of narration. Ruskin Bond has command over language and knows the perfect use of words and the Fictional World of Ruskin Bond is a critical study of different aspects of Ruskin Bond's life and experiences.

A study of contemporary fictional works and their analysis based on different theoretical perspectives certainly points out how contemporary creative writings and their studies have moved ahead to explore uncharted lands.



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