

## ADOLESCENT CONDITIONS IN THE WORKS OF RUSKIN BOND

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### ABSTRACT

*India is the country of plenty of religions, hundreds of castes, traditions, different cultures of wide territories. This verity provides a flourishing raw material for literary practice especially for fiction writers. Many leading novelists of Indian writing in English like Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Rabindranath Tagore and many other have depicted Indian diverse life style in their fiction. They have voiced certain burning problems of our nation regarding political issues, social evils, modernization communal harmony, poverty, liberation of women etc. Ruskin Bond is one of very few writers who have focused more on the life of children and teenagers. 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. I few 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. Ruskin Bond has revealed in his novels the various facets of teenager's experience - their sense of belongingness, their career anxiety, their sexual explorations and frustrations, parent - child conflict, day dreaming, peer groups, sense of nostalgia and sense of adventures. Despite the fact that no radical resolution to the problems is offered by Bond, each protagonist tackles harsh realities head on, creating new patterns of rebellion and exploring ways of survival.*

**Keywords:** - Adolescence, Communal Harmony, Infatuations.

India is the country of plenty of religions, hundreds of castes, traditions, different cultures of wide territories. This verity provides a flourishing raw material for literary practice especially for fiction writers. Many leading novelists of Indian writing in English like Mulk Raj Anand, Arundhati Roy, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Rabindranath Tagore and many other have depicted Indian diverse life style in their fiction. They have voiced

certain burning problems of our nation regarding political issues, social evils, modernization communal harmony, poverty, liberation of women etc. Ruskin Bond is one of very few writers who have focused more on the life of children and teenagers. 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. I few 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." (4)

Friedenberg describes adolescence thus:

Adolescence is the period during which a young person learns who he is, and what he really feels. It is a time in which he differentiates himself from culture; though on the culture's terms. It is the age at which by becoming a person in his own right, he becomes capable of deeply felt relationships to other individuals, perceived clearly as such. (9)

His novels about the growing ups invite readers to peep into a different and interesting world. His novels at initial stage of his career developed upon the world of adolescents. Bond's growing ups are depicted with so many features of this sensitive phase of life. They have a great liking for wandering, mostly found with friends; increasing attraction for opposite sex, sense of rebellion, financial independence, thinking about career and many more characteristics can be observed in Bond's initial novels.

The Room on the Roof is the first novel by Bond. It is a novel by an adolescent about adolescents. There are so many fictions in which the depiction of the youngsters is found but in limited sphere. In fact, these stories are about the adults and the adolescents have little role in them. But, on the other hand, The Room on the Roof is a novel fully dealing with the life of the young people. This novel brings out in initial part the difference between the English colony and Indian society. Some Britishers like Mr. Harrison hold the opinion that the Britishers are superior to the Indians. The initial part of the novel gives idea how he treats the boy:

Mr. Harrison did not reply. He seldom answered the boy's questions, and his own were stated, not asked; he probed and suggested, sharply, quickly, without ever encouraging

loose conversation. He never talked about himself; he never argued: he would tolerate no argument. (Ruskin, The Room on the Roof)

Rusty's new world is free from the oppression of the colonial world; it is a world of freedom, of untranneled joy and trustful camaraderie. This is where the adolescents can develop their faculties in the desired way. Vagrants in the Valley are the sequel of The Room on the Roof. In fact, The Room on the Roof, Vagrants in the Valley and Delhi is not far from a trilogy. The Room on the Roof ends with Rusty and Kishen's march toward Dehradun. After crossing the river they enter a forest. Vagrants in the Valley begin with their adventure in the forest while proceeding to Dehradun. In this novel, Bond treats adolescence as a passing phase. The central characters of the novel are Rusty and Kishen. Rusty and Kishen have no roof for shelter, but the Himalayan valley in which they wander is very much a home for them. The novel Vagrants in the Valley peeps into the life of the growing up vagrant boys. The novel shows how the adolescent boys turn to be wanderers. Every human being desires for two fundamental elements: freedom and love. This is also applicable to the adolescents. Most of the boys in the novel have been deprived of freedom and love. Rusty's guardian fails to provide him affection and liberty. As a result, he seeks them somewhere else and runs away from home. The novel introduces a realistic world of the adolescents. The life story of struggling boys inspires other growing ups to cherish dreams like Rusty and make sincere efforts to fulfill them.

Chachi's Funeral is one of the best specimens which indicate Bond's understanding of the child and growing up's psychology in effective manner. His child and growing up characters behave in the same way as everywhere. Anger is temporary and love is permanent, is the central idea of this story. It deals with three main characters, Sunil, a boy of ten, his cousin Madhu, a dark slim girl of twelve and their relative Chachi who is chachi for Sunil and 'Mammi' for Madhu. The present story The Thief as the title suggests, peeps into the life of a thief. It is based on the recollection of a thief. Like many of Bond's stories, this is also told by first person singular. The narrator is an adolescent boy of fifteen. In the very first sentence of the story, he informs that he is a thief. Even at the age of fifteen, he is an experienced and fairly successful hand. Love at adolescent phase is very natural. It makes a growing up feel some strange feelings that has not been felt before. Love is a sad song may be the opinion of experienced people but for the juveniles it is heavenly joy. An adolescent falls in love very easily. The desire to love and to be loved is the strongest feeling at this stage.

The story Night Train at Deoli is a dream of love. Dipan Kushi remarks in this regard: Romanticism is defined by S.T. Coleridge. "as an addition of strangeness to beauty" and Ruskin Bond has wonderfully analyzed the term of illusive romanticism in The Night Train at Deoli. The story begins from infatuations but finally it

leads to an ardent love of the narrator towards the basket seller. It cannot be denied that adolescence is a period of storm, turbulence and finally it leads to conclusion.

Bond presents the struggle of a young boy for education in his thrilling short story Panther's Moon. Bisnu, an adolescent boy of twelve is the protagonist, proves to be a real hero of this breathtaking tale. He takes pain of walking ten miles per day to attend school that is five miles away from his isolated village. Even his life is in danger because of a man-eater panther in and surrounding his village, Manjari, he wishes to go to school. Bond creates here the thrill of the encounter of a man-eater panther with Bisnu and other villagers. The panther endangers the life of the surrounding hilly area of Manjari. The story also depicts a twelve year boy's struggle to handle the family responsibility. transit. (Kulsi)

Love is always fascinating for the adolescents. They always like to love and to be loved. Ruskin Bond makes a fantastic use of this strong impulse among the growing ups in many of his short stories. Love is a Sad Song is a different kind of story as it presents an unusual bond between a thirty year adult the narrator and a teenage girl of sixteen, Sushila. From structural point of view, this is a different kind of short story that is long and consists of twenty eight pages. Here, Bond resembles D.H.Lawrence, Thomas Hardy and such other short fiction writers who are some short stories are not short. For example, Hardy's Three Strangers is a very long short story consisting more than forty pages.

A Flight of Pigeons discusses the perception of the adult world as seen through the eyes of an adolescent girl Ruth. The novel although dealing with the 1857 mutiny, focuses more on humanism of Indian people. The novel also throws light on women characters of Bond. Thus, the second chapter throws light on the portrayal of adolescents in the novels of Bond. Ruskin Bond has a unique place because Bond has taken up a unique theme of 'adolescence'. Meena Khorana writes:

The interplay between Ruskin Bond's personal experiences and their artistic expression in a variety of children's books allows him to weave his literary works in a harmonious pattern. From the material of his life, Bond has fashioned two worlds: the secure and joyous world of the younger child, and the harsher realities faced by the adolescents.  
(115)

Thus, Ruskin Bond has revealed in his novels the various facets of teenager's experience - their sense of belongingness, their career anxiety, their sexual explorations and frustrations, parent - child conflict, day

dreaming, peer groups, sense of nostalgia and sense of adventures. Despite the fact that no radical resolution to the problems is offered by Bond, each protagonist tackles harsh realities head on, creating new patterns of rebellion and exploring ways of survival. Fictive experience of these characters in tackling these problems enables us vicarious participation and leads us to the better understanding of problems.

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