



Nature and Supernatural Elements in the Short Stories of Ruskin Bond

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Introduction

Ruskin Bond (born 19 May 1934) is an Indian author of British descent. He is the only Indian writer in English to establish a reputation mainly on the basis of his achievement as a short story writer. He occupies an outstanding position among the contemporary Indian English writers. He is not happy to describe the things as they happened. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, his novel in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2004. The writings of Ruskin Bond, as discussed in the foregoing characters is indeed a harmonious combination of experience and ceremony of innocence. His short stories are well finished and are integrated works of art. He probes deep into how they happened and why they happened. He examines his characters from the inside and analyses how their minds work. He is a front ranking fiction writer oh Indian English

writing. Bond's short stories dive deep into human psyche and unfold human mind in relation to nature and environment. The incidents and situation depicted in his stories are not wholly fictional. He is an ardent lover of nature. He is not content to describe the things as they happened. His greatness can be seen in the originality and naturalness of these characters. In today's fast paced era of technological innovation and scientific intention and discovery, dwelling upon the paranormal activities that results into horror sensation and scary feelings appears a less unusual kind of task as to whether people in general are readily available to accommodate their open minds full of latest updates of world's smartest gadgets with those supernatural and mysterious kinds of elements. Ruskin Bond is the writer of hills and small towns. In his short stories we will find a lots of natural things such as hills, valley and mountains. Most of his characters are men, women and children of various is and class belong to the high hills and valleys of Garhwal. They are born in small tranquil villages and hamlets. They are the people of soil-farmers, traders, vendors, chawkidars and school teachers etc. His observation of adolescent psychology is unsurpassable. After R. K. Narayan, it is bond who has related himself so naturally to the innocent world of children. He loves them because they are as natural as nature itself.

Though Bond's range of characters are large. He is the most consummate author of hills and it is impossible to ignore the universal appeal of his characters. Like any man, they are greedy, kind, shy, sensuous, brave, stubborn, loving and friendly. Cold blooded murders are

also a part of Bond's gallery, he deals with them with equal felicity focusing upon the mysterious background of their being too. Some of Bond's creations have supernatural shade, they are normal human feelings, but placed in such circumstances, that enforce them to lie interpreted as weird creatures. They are alienated mysterious looking persons passing the ordeal of life. **Markham** in the story '**When Darkness Falls**' is a war veteran condemned to die for the world. In a tragic accident Markham has lost one of his eyes, part of his nose and flesh of his side face a ravaged physique sufficient to make and onlooker yelp out of fear. This is how a real flesh and body Markham lives in a cellar for many years without daylight and morning breeze. Darkness of supernatural implication devours Markham. In spite of suffering from utter sense of vacuum, Markham is not foolish dreamer and he tries hard to adjust with his horrible truth, "**but how long can a mind remain normal in such circumstances?**"¹⁰ Markham is a normal mind handicapped by physical abnormality. His desperate insistence to take him as a normal soul makes him highly pathetic. Overwrought Rani in the story "**The Room of Many Colours**", is also a product of circumstances. She appears insane, her discordant talks, obsession for bright glasses and dazzling jewellery in contrast to dark room where she sits, impart her a bizarre shade. She is nameless perhaps her state of being Rani has dwarfed her individual self.

The pall of mysteriousness surrounds her, being confined to her rooms situated at the top of the ruined places. It is further intensified by repeated references of ghost, snakes and lizards. Her

insistence to be treated as normal one is as pathetic as Markham's, "**Quite normal Mrs. Khanna... I' m quite normal.**"¹¹

Both Rani and Markham struggle to come out of their deceptive shells Markham yearns for a normal life and Rani for a normal womanhood. Whatever seems bizarre about her is only an illusion, or an escapade from a leaden force of circumstances. Her anxiety to protect snakes in the garden because they were princes who died unmarried, speak of the tragedy of a queen whose status denied her the natural bliss of matrimony. The story "**Susanna's Seven Husbands**", is about a vamp of obscure traits. **Susanna**, the lady of seven husbands, is a cynosure of city youth. She is sought after for her wealth and beauty. The list of her wooers is quite long. Seven out of them marry her to die within the year of their matrimony. The lady is generous in her bounties but rigorous towards her menials. Highly unpredictable Susanna becomes a prodigy of fear and fascination. Ruskin Bond portrays her character on three possible lines first, she kills her husband's for some bitter childhood impressions that prompt her to dominate the opposite sex, second, it is simply her nature to hunt for new adventures, third and sheer chance is responsible ultimately for deaths in succession. But for the people of her town she is an enigma, a lady of supernatural prowess. In the story "**Bus Stop, Pipalnagar**", Bond reveals the reality of life through Suraj's character.

Suraj is the central character in the story. He is an orphan and a refugee. He works as a helper in a tea shop, but when he starts having

epileptic fits, the shopkeepers ask him to leave. He has saved some money, and with it he buys a small stocks of combs, buttons, cheap perfumes, bangels, and converting himself into a mobile shop, goes from door to door selling his wares in the Pipalnagar. He loves his life. He sees positive attitude to life. He is ambitious and optimist.

In this way, Bond gives us philosophy of life through Suraj's dialogue; 'Let us go where there are no people at all.... I am a little tired of people. I see too many of them people'. **Vijay** in the story "**Sita and the River**" becomes a blue skinned God, Krishna, to save Sita from the angry river. He is by all means a normal village boy but his appearance on the scene when Sita is struggling hard for life, transforms him into God. For a girl, who grows with the stories of mythical Gods and Goddesses in her blood, it is quite natural to accept her protector as Godhead. Vijay not only saves Sita, but also introduces her to the real world that lies beyond her island. Melodies pouring out of his flute and lustrous blue of peacock feather fill her life with a lively spectrum of sound and colour. Besides these multi-dimensional characters, Bond has penned simple regional representatives who smile amidst the hardships of hill life. **Bisnu** in "**Panther's Moon**" is a small Garhwali boy, the only school going boy of the village Manjari. He covers almost ten miles daily to reach his school. His day begins after bowing before the image of lord Ganesh. He loves his pet, **Sheroo**, the people of his village, jungle and fields around.

Kishen Singh in the story "**The Tunnel**" who belongs to the rural class understands the forest and its creatures very well. He is scared of the city and its people because they bring havoc in his peaceful surroundings. The confidence, with which he drives away the dreadful panther from the tunnel, is a sign of his being in their close communion. But he feels uncomfortable to cope with the ways of 'civilized man'. His observation, it is safer in the jungle than in the town. No rascals out here.

A character is so much harmonized with his surroundings that they appear to share oneness. The lean and spindle legged Dukhi remains camouflaged in his garden. Dukhi is deeply rooted in the objects in the garden where he works. Life for him is not a matter of one year succeeding another, but of five seasons winter, spring, hot weather, monsoon and autumn arriving and departing. The old Kitemaker with hollow cheeks, mehendired beard is like a kite 'torn and stuck in the old banyan tree'. The maker dies and the 'stringless kite' too flits in the blue sky.

To be concluded, in the book *Friends in Small Places*, it is mentioned that Bond's characters are not the sort to make the headlines but are nonetheless, remarkable for their quiet heroism, their endearing idiosyncrasies, and their heartwarming ability to find happiness and contentment in everyday events. Ruskin Bond lays emphasis on characters rather than incident in short story. He can visualize a character by means of his sympathetic insight. The process of development is conspicuous in both young and old. They are gripping and tantalizing as individual human

beings, while representing their particular class to which they belong. It has always been interesting to trace the source of these creations. During his long walks, Bond meets many people and some of them get deeply imprinted in his memory. They become a part of his mental luggage. He revives them through stories. He can convince us by his knowledge and good analysis that the actions of his characters, which appear contradictory to us all, arise out of some deep motive.

In short, Ruskin Bond made his characters absolutely real. His men and women really appear to be the creatures of flesh and blood.

References.

1. Bond Ruskin; Children's Ommibus, Rupa & Co., New Delhi: 2001, p. 14
2. Bond Ruskin; When Darkness Falls and Other Stories, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2001, p. 16
3. Ibid, p. 125
4. Ibid, p. 207
5. Ibid, p. 206
6. Ibid, p. 124