



Research Paper

## Transformation of Vice into Virtue in the Select Short Stories of Ruskin Bond

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Received 12 July, 2017; Accepted 14 July, 2017 © The author(s) 2017. Published with open access at [www.questjournals.org](http://www.questjournals.org)

**ABSTRACT:** *Ruskin Bond is a name which takes us to the realms of 'Nature' through the spectacle of a 'Child'. We can find nature everywhere in his works at the same time children play central role in most of his writings. On one hand Ruskin Bond is discussed on ecological perspectives and on the other he is considered as one of the major contributors to children's literature. No doubt that he is primarily recognized as children's writer but his works are equally enjoyed by adults. There is array of topics in his writing- there are stories about our day to day life, stories for children, ghost stories, semi-autobiographical stories, and so on. His characters belong to various strata of society. His short stories, novellas, poetry and essays provide us an insight into the human psyche. The distinctive feature of his writing lies in the fact that he not only writes about good aspect of human face but also depicts the darker side of human nature. Moreover his protagonists are thief, wicked person or a mischievous boy. By depicting the darker side of human life he teaches his readers fraternity, parenting, attachment, love, care and after all humanity. In the present investigation the attempts have been made to find out how Ruskin Bond demystifies good from the shackles of wickedness and replaces vice into virtue. For this study three short stories- "The Blue Umbrella", "The Thief" and "Chachi's Funeral" have been selected.*

**Keywords:** demystify, vice, virtue

### I. INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond craftsmanship lies in the handling of malice; he touches evil in such a way that readers remain unaware that they are being exposed to it. His characters belong to the different strata of society; especially lower class of society. He is basically concerned as a children's writer; though his short stories are enjoyed by children as well as by adults. The short stories that are selected for the present study have the children characters from the age group of ten to twenty. 'Binya' from "The Blue Umbrella" is a little girl of ten years. 'Sunil' and 'Madhu' from "Chachi's Funeral" are ten and twelve years respectively. In the short story "The Thief" 'Deepak', the thief of fifteen years old and 'Arun' is of twenty years old. So we can say that most of his characters are adolescents. He prefers the most perceptive and delicate years of his characters' life. In the 'Preamble, Prelude, Prologue' what he calls to his memoir, 'Scenes from a writer's life', he wrote, "I was still a pimply adolescent when I decided I wanted to be a writer."<sup>[1]</sup> It means that he prefers to look and react from the perspective of an adolescent.<sup>1</sup>

### II. BRIEF NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruskin Bond, Indian author of British descent; was born on 19 May 1935 at Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh. He was raised at Jamnagar (Gujrat), Shimla and Dehradun. He was honored with the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992, the Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014 by the Republic of India. Close study of the short-stories and novels of Ruskin Bond reveals that he is a real master of child psychology. Each story is skillfully crafted with the inner working of his characters. In the beginning of his stories Bond disguises good in the face of evil and as the story progresses and ends he frees moral and exposes the very essence of humanity.

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### III. ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT STORY “THE BLUE UMBRELLA”

In the short story “The Blue Umbrella”, Binya, a small girl from the village Garhwal roams through the forest of Himalaya to take her cows for grazing. She has no fear for the thick forest in Himalaya. Ruskin Bond in this regard writes, “Dark forests and lonely hilltops held no terrors for her. It was only when she was in the market-town, jostled by the crowds in the bazaar, that she felt rather nervous and lost.”<sup>[2]</sup> Here Bond contrasts nature with the hustle and bustle of human life. Garhwal is one of the picnic places in India. One day Binya comes across some picnicker who were enjoying the beauty of nature at Garhwal and while observing them she finds a lady from that group; holding a pretty blue umbrella. Binya gets attracted to that umbrella and desires to have it at any cost, as a child of ten can get easily attracted to a new thing; it does not matter whether it is useful or not. That lady also gets attracted to Binya for the leopard’s claw pendant which she wore. That picnicker lady asks Binya to give her pendant for twelve rupees but Binya refuses to her. Binya exchanges her pendant only when that lady let her beautiful umbrella. After getting the blue umbrella Binya gets on the seventh heaven of happiness, she wanders through the streets of Garhwal, through the jungle, and everywhere she possesses her blue umbrella. People from the village; especially Ram Bharosa, a rich shop keeper get jealous of Binya’s lovely umbrella. Everybody thinks that how a poor girl can have such a costly umbrella. Adults start to criticize Binya for possessing umbrella but children admires the blue umbrella. Here Bond contradicts the innocence of children with materialistic approach of adults; “Unlike the adults, the children didn’t have to pretend. They were full of praise for the umbrella.”<sup>[3]</sup>

Everybody wants to possess Binya’s blue umbrella. Ram Bharosa decides to have that umbrella by hook or crook and so he permits his servant Rajaram to steal it. Rajaram steals that umbrella but he is caught by Binya’s brother Bijju. After the tussle Rajaram tells the name of Ram Bharosa. Hence everybody from the village discarded Ram Bharosa for his mal intention to steal umbrella as a result his business gets affected and he becomes clumsy. He feels repentance but of no use. He thinks that somehow he should be pardoned by Binya and by villagers. Though jealousy, hatred, possessiveness was there in the attitude of Ram Bharosa; but it was tertiary. His evil mindedness has been transformed into a good one. Binya realizes this change in Ram Bharosa’s attitude and so instead of cursing him, she gives her priceless umbrella to him; for nothing in return. Here Bond emphasizes the value of sacrifice through the character of Binya. Ram Bharosa feeling ashamed gives her a bear’s claw pendant to wear. And once again in Garhwal amenity is restored.

### IV. ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT STORY “THE THIEF”

Similarly in the short story ‘The Thief’ we can see the transformation of a thief into a most trusted and reliable person. In this story there are only two characters Arun and Deepak. Arun is a generous young boy of twenty and Deepak who is a thief only at the age of fifteen. We cannot imagine that a boy of fifteen can be a thief, but it may be due the situation or atmosphere or to satiate the basic needs one has to tread on wrong path. Ruskin Bond presents Deepak who is lonely. Through the story we come to know that though Deepak is a thief but still he is noble at heart. It may be because he is lonely in the world; there is nobody to look after a boy of fifteen and so he might get into the profession of thieving. Ruskin Bond doesn’t go into the details of the background of his characters; he just presents a character into the present and lets it develop by itself on the canvas of plot. Though there is not much description about the background of Deepak and there are no references about his family; still we can comprehend that he is alone. Deepak finds that it is easy to rob Arun only through his gestures. Deepak says, ‘...and he looked kind and simple enough for my purpose.’<sup>[4]</sup> Deepak requests Arun to give some work so that he can live with him. Arun though initially hesitates but finally gives access to Deepak into his house. Though Deepak does not know how to cook but still he starts to cook for Arun. However afterwards Arun teaches Deepak to cook and writing. Deepak also goes to market to get vegetables and grocery in which he tricks Arun by telling him that everything was costly actually he brings it with some margin. Arun knows all these things but he does not bother about it. Arun is a kind of happy go lucky fellow who does not care much about money. Deepak says about Arun That, “He was the most trusting person I had ever met. And that was why I couldn’t make up my mind to rob him”<sup>[5]</sup>. He believes that, “It’s easy to rob a greedy man because he deserves to be robbed. It’s easy to rob a rich man because he can afford to be robbed. But it’s difficult to rob a poor man, even one who really doesn’t care if he’s robbed. A rich man or a greedy man or a careful man wouldn’t keep his money under a pillow or mattress. He’d lock it up in a safe place.”<sup>[6]</sup>

One day Deepak observes secretly that Arun brought a bundle of notes and keeps it under his mattress. Deepak decides to exploit the opportunity. In the night when Arun is asleep, Deepak goes quietly to the mattress where the money is kept and steals skillfully without alarming Arun. After getting the money Deepak runs away from the room to catch the Amritsar express which is at 10:30pm. While walking through the streets of market a strange feeling does not allow Deepak to leave away. His mind is filled with confusion. When Deepak reaches to the railway station the train is leaving the platform, he could easily catch the train but he doesn’t. He begins thinking about Arun; what would happen when Arun will come to know about the theft. There will be, “...only

a terrible sadness not for the loss of the money but for my having betrayed his trust.”<sup>[7]</sup> Feeling of deceiving a noble person like Arun made him depressed. Attachment, intimacy, love and trust which he experienced in the company of Arun made him nervous. He changes his mind and decides to replace the money in the mattress. Suddenly rain starts and the bundle of notes gets wet. Deepak goes back to the room to return the money. Put the money in the mattress and falls asleep. In the morning Arun makes tea and gives a five rupees note to Deepak and says that he will be paid regularly. Bundle of wet notes already makes Arun known about the last night theft; but still he doesn't blame Deepak. Here lies the greatness of Arun; though he realizes that Deepak is a thief but still he treats him with full of love. Here Bond gives us a message 'love conquers.' In the process of parenting every parent goes on telling their children don't do this and that; but it is the love and affection that conquers the evil.

## V. ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT STORY “CHACHI’S FUNERAL”

In the short story “Chachi’s Funeral” Ruskin Bond beautifully applies psychological therapy to alleviate hatred from the minds of a handsome boy called ‘Sunil’ and his Chachi. Sunil is a very attractive boy of ten. He is a normal child with very attractive gestures. Though he is gorgeous; still he is disliked by his Chachi, a middle aged woman; holding the power and complete control over family. Sunil is disliked by Chachi not for any fault but her children are not as much attractive and beautiful as Sunil. Sunil knows it and so he also maintains moderate distance with Chachi. Children can easily recognize the eyes that love or hate them. There is another character named Madhu, one of the daughters of Chachi. She is also only twelve years old. In the later part of the story we can see that Madhu is a very mouthpiece of Ruskin bond. The character of Chachi represents the typical women character which craves only for the betterment of herself and her children. Actually every mother wants her child should be the best; but one cannot fight against the natural traits of anyone’s personality. For jealousy about children we have references from Indian Epics ‘Ramayana’ and ‘Mahabharata’; those typical women characters striving for power and dominance by way of getting their children to the throne. Though living in the same family and holding power and respect; Chachi cannot tolerate the virtues present in Sunil. Chachi’s jealousy for Sunil is described in these lines- “He was a little brighter than her own sons, more sensitive and inclined to resent a scolding or a cuff across the head. He was better looking than her own children. All this in addition to the fact that she resented having to cook for the boy, while both his parents went out to office jobs, led her to grumble at him a little more than was really necessary.”<sup>[8]</sup>

On one evening an incident happens; Sunil feeling very much hungry goes into the kitchen; and starts to find out something to eat. He finds a glass jar full of honey, so without thinking about anything he tries to get that jar. He is a boy of ten and so he is not tall enough to get the honey which is at top shelf; somehow he touches the jar; tries to pull it with his fingers but suddenly it falls on the ground and shattered into pieces. Hearing this crash Chachi comes to the kitchen and finds the jar is broken and Sunil standing frightened. Chachi without considering anything scolds Sunil fiercely. She doesn't stop merely scolding him but slaps Sunil with her slipper. Sunil stands still- without uttering a single word but mumbles something and starts to go to his secret place where he has hidden something for his purpose. Chachi does not think for a single moment that why the boy came to the kitchen; he might be hungry but rebukes Sunil. The sensitive boy gets deeply insulted and so he decides to take revenge upon Chachi. He goes to his secret place where he laid hidden a knife. He takes knife out and utters, ‘I’ll kill her!’ he whispered fiercely, ‘I’ll kill her, I’ll kill her!’<sup>[9]</sup>

Madhu, twelve years old girl listens to these words of Sunil. In this story the character of Madhu works as a catalyst. She is a daughter of Chachi and cousin to Sunil. She is an intelligent girl and she knows the psychology of Sunil. Madhu follows Sunil to his secret place and watches him stabbing a wooden frame with his knife. Madhu then asks him, ‘Who are you going to kill, Sunil?’, Sunil without any hesitation says ‘Chachi’. Madhu knows the unhealthy relationship between her mother and Sunil. She says if he killed Chachi then the CID would come and would take Sunil into the boarding school. Sunil does not want to go to boarding school. So Sunil asks Madhu what he should do. Then Madhu reveals that she has another plan to kill Chachi. She draws a sketch of her mother and asks Sunil to stab her. Sunil puts the picture on the wooden frame and stabs thrice. He feels satisfied, Chachi is killed and the revenge is taken. Then Madhu suggests Sunil to cremate her dead body. She takes the torn paper and crumpled it with her palm. After that she brought out a matchbox from Sunil’s hiding and set the paper into ablaze. It burns down and turns into a heap of ashes. Madhu then asks Sunil to put the ashes into a river. Though Sunil does not understand anything but still he is doing whatever Madhu says to him. But somewhere the tragic death of his Chachi makes him nervous. He starts feeling that he has done something wrong. He realizes his mistake. Perhaps he should not have done it. The sensitive boy starts weeping. “Big tears were rolling down Sunil’s cheeks. ‘What are you crying for?’ asked Madhu. ‘Chachi. I didn’t hate her so much.’ ‘Then why did you want to kill her?’ ‘Oh, that was different.’<sup>[10]</sup> Sunil undergoes a kind of psychological therapy in the hands of Madhu. Madhu then takes Sunil to Chachi, after seeing Chachi Sunil becomes happy he rushes to her and tries to get his arms around her and he says Chachi, “... I love you so much. Please don’t leave us.”<sup>[11]</sup> Chachi finds it strange, “But she was reassured by the look of genuine affection

that she saw in his eyes.”<sup>[12]</sup> Chachi’s anger is also melts away, she thinks, ‘Perhaps he does care for me, after all.’<sup>[13]</sup> In this way a complete transformation on the part of Sunil and Chachi is seen in this story.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

So after analyzing these short stories of Ruskin Bond we can say that he handles malice in human nature in the most constructive way. Transformation of vice into virtue is done through the development of interpersonal relationship in the most delightful way. He does not criticize the vice present in his characters but cleans it up with the faith and love shown by other characters. It will not be exaggeration if we say that after reading and understanding the works of Ruskin Bond we can understand human nature in a better way.

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\* Dr. S. N. Kombe. "Transformation of Vice into Virtue in the Select Short Stories of Ruskin Bond." *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science* 5.7 (2017): 39-42.