Indian Reality in the Fictional Works of Ruskin Bond

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Abstract
Ruskin Bond, a renowned and multifaceted literary figure, is primarily recognised for his fictional prowess, although he has also authored a handful of poems and non-fictional works. He resides permanently in Mussoorie with his adopted family. Despite his British lineage, he has wholeheartedly embraced Indian culture, beliefs, and traditions. Being born in India, he has been exposed to all aspects of Indian culture since his early years. He has developed a strong sense of connection and belonging to the land of India. Consequently, he is highly esteemed among authors who write in the Indo-Anglian literary tradition. The author's literary works are deeply immersed in the intricacies of Indian culture and its authentic representation.

Keywords: Indian Reality, Fictional Works, Ruskin Bond

Introduction
“For me India has always been an atmosphere, an emotional more than a geographical entity… I would say that India is really to be found in its villages, small towns – that is my India” (Ruskin Bond Times StocpsAt Shamli) STOPS

Ruskin Bond, aliving literary versatile genius is very well known for his fictional art, though he has also written a few poems and non-fictional works. He is permanently settled in Mussoorie with his adopted family. In spite of his British descent, he has identified himself with whatever is Indian, Indian culture, beliefs, traditions. As he was born in India, therefore, since his childhood he has seen all that what is Indian. He has identified with the soil of India. Therefore, he is a great name among Indo-Anglian authors. His fictional works are steeped in Indian life and its reality.

Ruskin Bond has an extreme love for India which is frequently reflected in his writings and makes him a great Indo-Anglian writer. Indian reality sketched by him is so effective that every Indian reader identifies with the setting. It is true that his parentage was English but his birth and upbringing is of India as he himself writes “India is where I was born and went to school and grew to manhood,” therefore Indian reality can’t be gainsaid from his works as the sights and smells of India that he paints in his writings are intensely real and recognizable. He was very well acquainted with the people and their outlook of watching every prospect of life. He has described things as they are without interfering the subject. Through his fictional and non-fictional writings Ruskin Bond exposes different types of Indian follies like caste, discrimination, jealousy untouchability, India before and after independence and many other. Ruskin’s these themes attract the readers for a change in the society. Bond is never harsh to describe these sensitive subjects but leaves it up to the readers to their opinion whether it is right or wrong.

Ruskin’s fictional writings are teemed with the glimpses of our real India that have been instrumental in shaping the existing reality of India. He has unconsciously imbibed the Indian concept of the four ashrams in a person’s life. Ruskin did not have an easy and secure childhood as his parents have broken up his mother had married. So, his life had been full of struggles and he tried to reflect it through his fictional works, showing a reality of Indian and its people. In his first literary major work “The Roomon the Roof” Ruskin paints out the story of his bookish hero Rusty who is brought up at Dehradun by the missionary. The boy was also forbidden to go to many places, particularly the to the picnic of Indian & natural surroundings to mix up with Indians. But when
he started you a picnic with his friends Somi, Kishan, Suri Kapoor and Heena be enjoyed almost all the Indian surroundings that shows. Bond's love for Indian real life that is through the part of Indian reality.

Ruskin in his novel ‘Vagrant in the Valley’ shows a picture of Indian social and economical life. In this novel Ruskin displays real Indian reality with the expression of the beginning of the day with daily routine of the Indians:-

“early morning the shops were just beginning to open. Vegetable vendors were busy freshening their stock with liberal sprinkling of water, calling their prices and their wares; children dawdled in the road on their way to school, playing hopscotch or marbles. Girls going to college chattered in the group like gay noisy parrots”.2

In the same novel Rusty tells about a real Indian vagrant Sudheer who was in the habit of extracting money in the guise of a fortune-teller and a well wisher of the people but the reality is that he is neither a real fortune-teller nor a well-wisher but a criminal. He always depends on others and also tries to cheat the rich and greedy man.

Ruskin's novel ‘AFlight of Pigeons’ highlights the munity in India at the time of partition and Ruskin has very clearly described the violence and the horror of the time. In this novel Ruskin mentions the life-like incident of his life about Indian reality at the time of British rule when Ruskin and his father went to St. Mary's the little church in Shahajahanpur. When Ruskin Bond and his father entered the church from the south porch where a number of people were already present; Ruskin, and his father meet a very peculiar scene which was is full of violence:-

“There were six or seven men on the porch. Their faces were covered up to their noses, and they wore tight loin clothes as though they were prepared for a wrestling bout; My father had his left hand against the door, and I rushed out from under it, and escaped into the church compound”.

Ruskin also expresses the benevolent nature and mutual co-operation of the Indian people in helping the British family in spite of knowing the fact that the British have always been very cruel to India that presents a reality of Indian people and the people who helped Ruskin's family, these people were Lala Ramjimal, Triloki and Chinta. These persons did all that was possible for him. But among these persons the most important co-operation to Ruskin's family was that of Lala Ramjimal who gave protection to Ruskin's family against all risk to his life. When Ruskin was wandering here and there is search of his family after watching the horrible scenery of his burning house, Lala Ramjimal came and said:-

“Don’t worry, my child; … mother, Granny and other are all safe come, I will take you to them …. He had held me on his knee… He led me to a hut some thirty yards from our old home. It was at mud house, facing the road, and it's door was closed. Lalaknocked on the … and whispered. ‘Missy- Baba is with me, open the door”.

Ruskin in the same novel has very beautifully sketched the house of Lala Ramjimal that presents a real picture of Indian rural house which can only be seen in beautifully scenery that we hang over house walls.

In the desorption of Indian reality Ruskin did not forget to paint the Tyranny of the British that was very prevalent in India at the time of the British Empire Ruskin writers:

“… As Juna Lula refused to part with any more he was tied hand and foot and suspended from a tree by his legs. At the Same Javed Khan seized all his accounts books and threw them into a well”.

Ruskin opens his views over India in his introduction for his collection of stories under the title “Time Stops At Shamli”. He writes:-

“Small town India that's my India … they are the heart of India, an untapped source of vast human potential largely ignored…..”

Like his novels Ruskin has very beautifully sketched Indian reality in his essays too; and these essays look actual with Indian setting as Indian surrounding look like and had been in the ancient times. Ruskin's essay.’ALittle World of Mud’ is about the Indian water pond. In it Ruskin points out that he had never imagined
that there would have been much to be found for writing, in the rain water pond that was behind his house in north India except for a large quantities of mud and sometimes a water-buffalo, it was Ruskin’s grandfather who introduced him to the pond’s diversity of life, so beautifully same benefit from the well-being of the mass. Ruskin tells about his first visit of the Indian pond:-

“When grandfather first showed me that pond world, he chase a dry place in the shade of an old peepal tree, where we sat for an hour, gazing steadily at the thin, green seam on the water. The buffaloes had not arrived for their afternoon dip, and the surface of the fond was still. (little world of mad).

In this essay Ruskin not only draws the picture of working style of the low-caste family boy of an Indian farmer but also his friendly behaviour with Ruskin.

“When the boy saw the starting at him, he smiled, showing gleaming white teeth in his dark, sun-burnished skin face. He invited me into the water for a swim”.⁸

Ruskin Bond in his fictional works also describes Indian birds and animals. The knowledge of which he gets from Ramy who comes from a low caste farmer’s family. He describes how Indians believes in the close association of the birds and animals with Gods and Goddesses for example the bird Neelkanth is related to Lord Shiva Neelkanth has blue throat because Lord Shiva and swallowed a deadly poison for the sake of human race out of compassion. Likewise there is description of squirrels which are associated with Lord Krishna. Ramu tells that the four dark lines on the back of the squirrels are the imprints of Lord Krishna’s finger when he tried to catch the squirrel in his hands. Thus, Ruskin Bond’s description of the Indian Gods and Goddesses and the faith of Indians in them speaks volumes of his love for India and thus adds a grace to his works with the description of Indian reality which makes him more and more Indian.

Ruskin Bond also mentions the real picture of rural India, its villages, its agriculture and rural Indian food. Once he happened to visit the village of Rai Singh, his milkman. He enjoys himself the travelling to his village and describes the food he taken there. He describes how the villagers take home made wine made with strawberries. He describes the Indian breakfast–

“Next morning breakfasted on curds, pickle and parathas and returned to the hill station with a milkcane full of strawberry wine I’d got my juices flowing again.”⁹

Ruskin in his fictional works also describes different type of Indian birds which also speaks of Indian reality in his works. He describes Bulbul, Tailor birds, Mynas, Parrots, Pigeons, Sparrows, Crows and Peacocks. He also mentions the life style and habits of these birds. He researches how these birds are associated closely with the human being. The different birds are found in different places, some of them only in forests, while others can be seen only in cities. Ruskin describes a big reality of Indians belief that the crows herald the arrival of some guests if they crow in the morning on some body’s house. In the essay “Bird Life InThe City” Ruskin does not forget to describe the peacock which is regarded national bird. He describes the beauty of peacock while dancing in the fields or sometimes on the roof–

“…. The peacock, perhaps the most popular bird in rural area as the Saras Crane a familiar sight round the jheels and river banks of northern India and Gujrat...”¹¹

Ruskin Bond has intense love and sympathy for the villagers, people from ordinary class and ordinary profession as peanut vendor, tanga wala and the sweater boy. He identifies himself with such people and thus tries to keep in to the reality of Indian life. Most part of his life is spent in Garhwal region and he has minutely observed the life of the people there and tries to give a realistic picture of Indian life in that region, it is a picture of Manjari village –

“Although thinly populated … most Garhwali cultivators are poor, some are very poor … and yet these are cheerful people … I am their guest for a few days.”¹²

Thus, the description of the poor class in India and his befriending with the men and women, boys and girls on one hand speaks of Ruskin Bond’s heartedness and on the other hand he tries to show that the true spirit of India really can be seen in these small village and towns. Thus, we find that right from his first novel “The Room on
The Roof” every work of his is teemed with the Indian reality Indian reality.He also uses the Hindi Terms to bring his work measure to Indian reality.

References