

HUMAN TOUCH IN THE SELECT WORKS OF RUSKIN BOND: A STUDY ON 'THE GUARDIAN ANGEL' AND 'THE KITE MAKER'

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Abstract: Human touch is an amalgamation of kindness and sympathy that defines human relations. According to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 'human touch' means a friendly and pleasant way of treating other people that makes them feel relaxed. In the world of technology and urbanization, people naturally focus on monetary gains. There is no place for values, morals, affections, relations etc. The kinds of relations that are found in the world are just commercial connections. Blood relations are no exceptions. When we read newspapers, we come across many articles related to inhuman nature of man. It is the need of the hour to think of ways and means to set right the present situation and to channelize the energies of youth into the right paths. In olden days especially in joint families, grandchildren had the privilege of listening to stories of grandparents and other blood relatives and learnt many things like adaptability, discipline, responsibility, sharing, and affection. In the process, they managed to learn how to face crisis situations and have all round development. But, now-a-days, the key point is missing and the upbringing of children in a proper manner is a hard task for parents especially in nuclear families and it only appears to be a mirage.

Ruskin Bond, Indian author of British descent is considered a great sage of Uttarakhand (Just Books). He dominated the world of English literature for the past six decades and won several prizes like Irwin Divinity Prize and Hailey Literary Prize. He was also awarded Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Sahitya Academy award for his pioneering works in children's literature. Ruskin Bond reflects his own experiences in his works. He produced his debut novel, 'The Room on the Roof', which is a semi-autobiographical novel of love and the lost love of Indo-Anglian orphan boy when he was just seventeen years. It enabled him to get the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. The present paper entitled, Human Touch in the Select works of Ruskin Bond: A Study on 'The Guardian Angel' and 'The Kite Maker' throws light on how human values melt into thin air in the present day society. This also examines how Ruskin Bond observes society, portrays his feelings through the caricature of varied characters.

Keywords: human touch, values, relations, energy of youth, upbringing, mirage

Ruskin Bond, a favorite for the readers of all age groups especially for children has been writing incessantly since his adolescence. He lost his childhood comfort and enjoyment and was obsessed with loneliness owing to the estrangement of his parents. In an article, Ruskin Bond himself mentioned 'My Writings Reflect my Lonely Childhood' (Indian Express)

"That early feeling of insecurity was never to leave me, and in adult life, when I witnessed quarrels between people who were close to me, I was always deeply disturbed-more for the children, whose lives were bound to be affected by such emotional discord" (Life with Father).

In the works of Ruskin Bond, we can observe him portraying the caricature of varied characters. Sometimes he elevates them to heights or drops them to the lowest ebb. He reveals how the characters suffer and also provides solution in some works like 'Blue Umbrella' and 'The Parrot who would not Talk'. In both the works, the writer shows solution through one small tribal girl and a small boy respectively. For *Human Touch in the Select works of Ruskin Bond*, I have taken up 'The Guardian Angel'

and 'The Kite Maker'. 'The Guardian Angel' is all about a care taker who looked after a boy for one and half years when he lost his parents though her financial position was very bad. He realizes her greatness, accepts the woman as his benefactress and guardian angel. When he becomes a matured man, he analyzes the depth of her character and goes to her tomb to pay tribute. 'The Kite Maker' is all about the relation between a grandfather and a grandson.

He writes about his own experience which is reflected through other characters. He alters the dull and unexciting things into strange and interesting ones which draws our attention and makes us enjoy his works. His characters are all common folk with distinctive qualities. He yearns to have care and warmth which was denied in his lifetime. He develops his characters and sees that they enjoy the warmth which he missed. In the present study of 'Human Touch in the works of Ruskin Bond', 'Guardian Angel' and 'Kite Maker' reveal the characters that exhibit all human traits of love, affection, anger, sympathy, understanding, sharing etc. He understands human tendency better than anyone else. Though the themes taken up by Ruskin

Bond are 'culture, nature, love, childhood, natural calamities', etc, the present study is limited to 'human touch'.

'Guardian Angel' by Ruskin Bond is a master piece of reminiscences of a man about his boyhood days. Aunt Mariam, a strong and charming lady with happy and gleaming face comforted an orphan boy with her warmth, and carefree chatter when he was abandoned owing to the sudden demise of his parents. She celebrates the occasion of the arrival of the boy in her topsy-turvy house. Since then, Dilaram Bazaar, Mariam's street was a favorite haunt for the boy for one and half years. Her acquaintances were dubious of the kinship of the two (Mariam and boy) due to their contrasting hues, but Aunt Mariam never cared to explain things. The boy habituated to the new chaotic but cozy environment, cheered the short stay. When the boy curled into a ball beside her, she in turn lulled him to sleep by showering pure love.

The boy overheard contemptible remarks against Aunt Mariam which forfended her to be his guardian. So, she decided to relinquish him by allowing other relatives to take up his responsibility of sending him to boarding school. Though the woman was an illiterate, unmarried and had no income to survive except from the frequent visits of her (night time) nocturnal visitors, was not able to take it light. It lead to a pathetic farewell where Aunt Mariam broke down. But, the boy was only six years. He was able to adjust to new environment though isolated from her physically and mentally with the passage of time. After several years, when the boy turned to be full-fledged man, he learnt of Aunt Mariam's death. He visited the Dilaram Bazaar which grew into a city. He went there to find her grave surmounted by a sculptured angel in the suburbs of the town to pay his last tribute. The boy accepted the woman as his benefactress and guardian angel.

The story indicates that love knows no bounds. After he grew up, the man was able to know how Aunt Mariam earned her living. Still, his love and affection towards her didn't fade away. As women are gifted with instinct of motherhood, Mariam touched the heart of orphan nephew with her love, became stone hearted to safeguard his career and not to have a smudge on his character. That is the greatness of both the characters in the story. The child canonized her 'Guardian Angel' who represents the soul of 'Mother Mary' when he grew up. Bond says:

*"Love is undying. The love that gives protection, even as you
my guardian angel, gave me protection long after you
have gone -
and continue to give this very day.....A love beyond
death -
a love that makes life alive."-----*

(The fictional World of Ruskin Bond-Ruskin Bond's Vision of Life. Pg. 39)

Ruskin Bond might have thought of his father as 'God Father' who had been his guiding force, inspirational figure to read books in multitude when he was referring to 'Guardian Angel'. He was the source of his knowledge. He was often nostalgic about his father who made him collect postal stamps and trample along the roadside after planting saplings. Ruskin might be rummaging for the same love, affectionate hands and eyes even after many decades passed by. He sees the reflection of his father in Aunt Mariam, Guardian Angel. In our lives also, we have either our father or mother or both would be our guardian angels.

In the second work, 'Kite Maker', Ruskin Bond portrays the intimacy and strong bondage prevailing between a grandfather and grandson. There was a banyan tree in Gali Ram Nathan street where little Ali's kite was stuck. The boy with torn shirt and bare foot ran towards his grandfather to inform him about his kite. The appearance of boy shows their financial condition. They are poor in financial matters but not in human relations. The grandfather prepared a new pink coloured kite and gifted him after chiding him for not knowing the way of flying a kite. The boy gave a kiss and went away to play with the new kite. It is a rare scene as many are nuclear families now-a-days.

The grandfather reflected on reminiscences of his golden days where there was much patronage for his kites from Nawabs. In his prime time, kings and normal folk gave him much importance and everyone enquired about him when his health deteriorated. He prepared special 'Dragon' and 'Musical' kites for them. But in his old age, he felt that everyone was in hurry and in the heat of distress, delicate things like kites and day dreams were trampled underfoot. There were great battles, betting and money frequently changed hands for kites. It was one of the recreations for children. But contrary to that, children spend a lot of time before video games, T.V. etc. and are becoming cumbersome machines without proper physical and mental exercises.

Mehmood, the grandfather distressed that he and the banyan tree were alike as they were fixtures and his hands and fingers were gnarled and twisted. People are given importance as long as there is benefit from them. The grandfather watched his grandson playing happily in the winter sun shine and compared him to little mimosa and sapling which would become strong in a few years. This is the common feeling of any parent. He wanted to make wonderful kites for his grandson as he can't leave any other legacy

behind him. The writer compares the flying kite to Garuda, Lord Vishnu's steed.

Grandfather heard Ali's voice from distance and wondered if he were going to sleep or dream when he was unable to decipher his grandson's words. The boy was asking about his mother as she had not returned from bazaar. The boy came closer as he hadn't got any reply from his grandfather and observed a small butterfly on his white beard and heard a faint sound. Ali kept his hand on his grandfather, got frightened and ran down the street yelling for his mother. Ruskin Bond compares the old man having his last breath with a flown butterfly and

the torn kite flying into the unknown heights of sky. It is the symbolical representation of loss of life.

In 'Kite Maker', yearning of grandparents to have their grandchildren with them and enjoying every minute of their presence is seen here. Mehmood felt happy by looking at his grandson flying kites. He felt that his grandson's happiness was his own.

In the hands of this Octogenarian, the style of writing has been increasing the fervor, enthusiasm and captivating power to have abundance of collections of works of novels, short stories, travelogues, essays, articles etc. to more than 500 works. The diction is simple. The style of writing is quite picturesque, endearing and easy to comprehend.

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