

# Asian Resonance

## Reflection of Adolescence in the Works of R K Narayan and Ruskin Bond

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Adolescence is always compared with Puberty i.e. the cycle of physical growth and changes. It generally refers to the period of age group 11 to 19. This is the time period in which adolescent is more attached to the friends as compared to the parents. We call it as ambiguous period between childhood and adulthood or a transitional stage of physical and psychological development. R. K. Narayan delineates the youngsters in his fictitious works. Swami, Mani, Balu, Iswaran and Ramu are memorable adolescent characters Narayan has ever portrayed. By looking at these characters we can think so that Narayan interest remains in the male adolescents. Like his most of works are male dominant. His young protagonists are ordinary human being and in many cases, they are unable to face adversities. Ultimately, they prefer to run away from these problems that show they lack fighting spirit. In stories of R.K. Narayan we find that his literary world of adolescents is different from other Indian writers. His world of youngsters is very much close to Indian social reality. He has portrayed the picture of childhood and early boyhood with full of realism. Ruskin Bond is an extraordinary analyzer and explorer of the human relations. He explores many layers of the human relations through his short stories. By choosing his characters from hilly areas around Dehradun, Bond conveys his belief that people living in the lap of nature are simple, innocent and free from ill-will. The characters of his short stories are free from the feelings of hatred, conspiracy, and crookedness that have become the common features of human life. In his stories, he deals with inner psychology of adolescents. Bond describes a world of common people and their day to day lives.

**Keywords:** Adolescent, Psychological Growth, Physical growth, Grown- up, Youth.

### Introduction

The internal and external growth of an adolescent is affected by geographical conditions, weather, socio-economic status, cultural aspects, and many other factors of the society he is member of. Both the writers attracted adolescence in their writings and portrayed mostly adolescent characters in their works. The works of R K Narayan and Ruskin Bond will unlock their hearts to discuss their personal matters, confusion, and misunderstanding with elders for proper guidance. R.K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond gave lots of weightage to the children as a protagonists and antagonists in their works. Their way of writing stories and projecting child characters and adolescence is quite different from others. Adolescence term is highlighted by many literary person in the almost all the forms of literature in fiction as well as non-fiction. Adolescence may be defined as the period between the onset of puberty and the phase of physical development roughly form 11 to 19 years of age. Adolescents always lie between being children and being adults. They are responding to the physiologic changes their bodies are undergoing and are working to recognise a sexual identification and to use these changes for their personal benefit and for the welfare of the society.

Narayan's literary style is simple with a natural element of humor about it. It focuses on ordinary people and their routine lives. Unlike his national contemporaries, he was able to write about the intricacies of Indian society without having to modify his characteristic simplicity to confirm to trends and fashions in fiction writing. He also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose with gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characters. Narayan is one of the lucky writers who succeeded highly with the publication of the very first book; his first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) was a mega success and then he never looked back. *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Financial Expert* (1952), *Guide* (1958), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) and some other novels were published subsequently

The characters we come across in Narayan's novels are most realistic. They are mostly common men. It is truly commented that most of Narayan's heroes are 'unheroic heroes'. Swami in *Swami and Friends*, Chandran in *The Bachelor of*

Arts or Mali in *The Vendor of Sweets* are the main characters without having heroic qualities. They do not possess inner strength to face difficulties and they run away

from their home; they are escapists. Moreover, the stories are male dominated like Indian society.

There is very significant role of woman in few novels like Rosie in *The Guide* or Savitri in *The Dark Room*. The researcher also observed that there is hardly any Muslim character in the literary world of Narayan. Most of his fiction depicts Hindu culture. Narayan's characters range from young boy Swami (*Swami and Friends*) to old man Jagan (*The Vendor of Sweets*).

R.K.Narayan's writing is not limited to novels only; he is a widely read story teller. His most famous story is *Malgudi Days* which consists of memorable stories like *An Astrologer's Day*, *The Missing Mail*, *The Blind Dog* and many other stories. These stories written with Narayan's simple style and characteristic, mild satire and portray day to day Indian Life. He enjoyed writing short stories than novels.

The short stories of Bond are the nice gallery of the relationship maintained by the adolescents among the adolescents. These relations talk a lot about the nature and characteristics of the adolescents. Some of the short stories of Ruskin Bond narrate the internal pangs and sufferings of the adolescents. It seems that Bond has a world of plots to write many short stories about the different concepts related to the lives of the adolescents. He has offered many short stories that solely talk about the feelings of the adolescents. The story *The Night Train at Deoli* presents one side relations of the narrator with an unknown girl of *Deoli*. The love expressed in the story can be called a platonic love. As a matter of fact the story is semi autobiographical in nature and it portrays the relationship between a young girl who sells basket at the railway station of Deoli and a traveler. It is difficult to give any name to the sort of relationship which is found in this story. The bond between the narrator and the girl is strong enough to keep themselves alive in each other's memories long after. The story depicts nothing else than the love at the first sight. Deoli railway station seems to be fictitious one or it may have existed when Ruskin Bond was young. However, we are not concerned with the existence of Deoli in our real world; it is a place enveloped by romance and mystery. The story begins with a description of the station,

### Objectives of the Study

The present research paper aims at the reflection of adolescence found in the two famous writers of India R.K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond's writings.. The objectives for selection of adolescent stage is to study Psychology of adolescents and their behaviour of adolescents with friends and strangers like children and adolescent, adolescent(male-female) and adolescents with elder people.

### Research Methodology

The analytical and interpretative method has been used for the present research paper. The

research is based on original works of R K Narayan and Ruskin Bond. Some critical study has taken for research. It is library and internet based research.

### Latest Review of Literature

V. Chandra says in his research article-"Depiction of Challenging World of Youth in R. K. Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*" that through the character of Chandran, R.K.Narayan clearly draw some phases in the life of youth. The immediate youth stage after the childhood offers independence with responsibilities. R. K. Narayan exposes the behaviours of the youth, their responses to certain situations and handling of human beings. R. K. Narayan progressively sketches the phases of a youth, which commences with a care free college life, continues with a happy family, develops with friendship, renounces with love failure and returns back to the life with complete comprehension. (2021: 414)

Alexander McCall Smith admires R. K. Narayan's novels are like a box of Indian sweets: a highly-colored container conceals a range of delectable treats, all different in a subtle way, but each one clearly from the same place. There are fourteen novels in the oeuvre – enough to create a world. Enthusiasts of his work will read them all and return to them time and again. The busy, or the less committed, may open the box and take out one at random – it does not really matter which order one reads them in. But be warned: the consumption of one leads to a strong craving for more. (A.M: Pdf)

Revathy M states in her research article-"Portrait of Adolescence in the Novels of Ruskin Bond" that the autobiographical part in Bond's novels realistically expresses the growth of an individual from childhood to adolescence. The novels of Bond have two layers, one which explores everyday life and the other which actually reveals the human psyche. Bond cleverly noted in his novels that adolescents help each other when they are growing up also the help they get from other characters acclaimed in their future. Bond novels serve readers to understand the nature of adolescence.(2021: 1132)

Dr. T. Jeevan Kumar in his research article admires- "EXPERIENCES OF AN ADOLESCENT IN RUSKIN BOND'S THE ROOM ON THE ROOF" that Ruskin Bond is a prolific and successful writer who has created rich literature for the young reader in India, appealed to their imagination, the mind and the heart, and inspired many young writers to take up a career in writing for the adolescent children.(2015:62)

Prema Srinivasan aptly says about Ruskin Bond presents the myriad shades of the relations among the young adolescents and grown-ups through a major section of his short stories. The adolescent characters portrayed by Bond are very friendly in nature and it is only in a few short stories that one finds hostility between them, which later gives way to friendship.(1998:102)

R.K. Narayan belongs to the group of leading writers who succeeded enormously with the publication of the very first novel and achieved recognition and acceptance. His *Swami and Friends* is the first novel by him and it is considered as the classic Indian English novel. The novel is set in

pre-independence era and revolves around a pre-adolescent boy Swaminathan living in Narayan's fictitious town Malgudi. The novel describes the life of boys in South Indian schools, and highlights much of R.K. Narayan's personal experience of his childhood. A reader gets a vivid portrayal of the thoughts, emotions and activities of school boys. The story of the novel revolves around Swami by his family and friends, the hero, and his fast friends Mani, Shanker and Somu.

*Naga* is a story about an adolescent boy who resides in Malgudi with his father, by profession a snake charmer. They are very poor and their livelihood depends on the snake Naga. The main character of this story, the boy who doesn't get opportunity for schooling and the child is grown up in slum locality. He is forced to support his father at very young age. He loses all enjoyments of childhood. Unfortunately, the boy's father goes away one early morning leaving the boy alone to face adversities of life. The boy has already lost his mother at early stage of life and now his father. He has stepped from boyhood to adulthood. It makes an important difference that an adolescent is brought up in the selfish society in the absence of father and mother. R.K. Narayan introduces in this story a pitiable condition of a growing up boy whose mother has died and father's negative and irresponsible towards him. This story depicts that an adolescent boy has longing for parent's affection. The boy struggles for his daily needs and finally manages himself to live the life of independence. Adverse circumstances and unfavourable situations make him mature and self-reliant.

*Iswaran* is a story of a student of Intermediate class. R.K. Narayan shows in the story the inner conflict on in the mind of Iswaran, an adolescent boy. The story depicts that the stress in the school age develops from madness to the death. It is very common that in today's world there is a lot of stress of education and of the relations in their lives. In this story the main character feels ashamed due to the constant failures in intermediate exams. The last few words of Iswaran's suicide note disclosed a harsh reality of our education system as well as society's approach towards average students. Society and his own family members declared him as a failure, a dull student. Finally, he himself confirmed that he is not good in studies, even if he worked hard still he just thinking of passing marks. It shows that how the negativity, failure and frustration ruins the life of an adolescents students.

A *shadow* is a story of an adolescent boy Sambhu living with his widow mother. R.K. Narayan creates a strange situation in this story and presents two different reactions to the given situation. *Sambu*, feels thrilled to watch on the film screen his dead father after the Six months of his death. The writer displays the working mind stages of two different stages of life. Sambhu, an adolescent boy is excited to see his father in the theatre screen, while his mother, a widow tries to avoid seeing her husband alive again in the film. Sambhu being an adolescent is unable to read his mother's mind. For Sambhu, his mother gets ready to go for the film but while watching movie, she faints. When

the show stops, he curses the interruption. But when he comes to know that his own mother has fainted, he rushes to her. Sambu, suddenly turned to mature person. He has already lost his father and fears that he may lose his mother too. He controls the situation and leaves the theatre with his mother. Through this story, R.K. Narayan depicts how a school boy enters into adulthood.

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The story *The Night Train at Deoli* presents one side relations of the narrator with an unknown girl of *Deoli*. The love expressed in the story can be called a platonic love. As a matter of fact the story is semi autobiographical in nature and it portrays the relationship between a young girl who sells basket at the railway station of Deoli and a traveler. It is difficult to give any name to the sort of relationship which is found in this story. The bond between the narrator and the girl is strong enough to keep themselves alive in each other's memories long after. The story depicts nothing else than the love at the first sight. Deoli railway station seems to be fictitious one or it may have existed when Ruskin Bond was young. He makes a comment about his dilemma of not getting down at *Deoli* railway station,

Somehow, I couldn't bring myself to break journey at Deoli and spend a day there. (If it was all fiction or film, I reflected I would have got down and cleaned up the mystery and reached a suitable ending for the whole thing.) I think I was afraid to do this. I was afraid of discovering what really happened to the girl. Perhaps, she was no longer in Deoli, perhaps she was married, perhaps she had fallen ill....(1988:55)

In the story *The Thief* the relationship between Anil and the narrator is of mutual trust and faith. It narrates a conversion of a young adolescent thief into a good human being. The narrator is a thief and he approaches Anil to start a conversation with him, and later asks him for a job at his house. Although Anil does not need a servant, he obliges the narrator on his insistence. Anil is a very simple person and he makes money by fits and starts. Within a fortnight, the narrator establishes a good relationship with Anil and gains his trust. Anil treats the narrator as his equal and never interrogates him for the expenses, which he makes in purchasing the household materials

*The Story of Madhu* is a tragic story. It can be compared with Rabindranath Tagore's *Home coming*. In Tagore's short story the adolescent finds it impossible to adjust himself in the artificial environment of Calcutta and longs for going home to his mother. When he is not allowed, he runs away, gets drenched in rain, suffers from

pneumonia and dies leaving his mother, brother and maternal uncle sad. Here, too, Madhu is unable to bear the separation, hence suffers from an inexplicable disease and subsequently dies.

The narrator recalls the days when he was in his late twenties and living in a town near the Himalayan foothills. At that time his outlook of life was still quite romantic. He liked the solitude of the little town, which he did not find in the cities. He recollects,

I preferred the solitude of the small district town to the kind of social life I might have found in the cities; and in my books, my writing and the surrounding hills. There was enough for my pleasure and occupation.

He used to sit under an old mango tree, with a notebook or a sketch pad on his knees. One morning, he sees a young adolescent girl wearing torn clothes but very active in play. Slowly, an association grows between both of them. The narrator develops a close affinity for the girl whose name is Madhu and this is because he loves children. Madhu lives with an old woman whom she calls grandmother. As a matter of fact, she is an orphan whom the poor old woman adopted as her grand-daughter. They live in poverty.

The narrator feels compassion and begins to help her in many ways. He wants her to stand on her own feet and, so, teaches her reading and writing and provides the reading and writing materials. When she reaches the age of thirteen, she remains unaware of the physical changes in her but the narrator, being an adult, knows that some distance has to be maintained.

The story *Time Stops at Shamli* projects a different shade of rapport between an adolescent girl and a grown-up man, and grown-up man and grown-up woman. When the narrator is traveling to pay a visit to one of his relatives, Dehra Express reaches *Shamli* at five in the morning. He decides to break his journey and spend a day in *Shamli*. He reaches a hotel where he meets a group of eccentric characters like Major Robert, Miss Deeds, Mr. Lin, Satish Dayal, Dayaram, and Kiran; amongst them, he finds Sushila, who has been his love years ago.

The story *My Neighbour's Wife* projects the relationship which is susceptible to change its dimension in the course of time. At the beginning of the story, one observes that Leela entertains Arun as brother, whereas, in the latter part she accepts his marriage proposal, although she herself is of the opinion that a man should never marry a woman who is senior to him. The plot of the story has been developed with care and psychological thinking suggests the practical solution to the problem. Bond seems to suggest that man woman relationship is subjective to changes as the humans are the puppets in the hands of fate and chance.

In the story *Tribute to a Dead Friend*, Bond shows that a bond of friendship is established between the narrator and Thanh, although neither of them is interested in the development of any such relationship. Thanh is of the opinion that only a pure British can be a perfect friend and his expectations are hurt when he comes to know that

the narrator is not a pure British, but an Indian of British descent. On the other hand, the narrator dislikes the eccentric behaviour of Thanh and is not interested in him. Anyhow, both of them develop a friendly tie and they like, as well as, dislike each other at the same time.

#### Conclusion

The research paper reflects the adolescent characters in the selected works of the writers R K Narayan and Ruskin Bond. The research paper shows that how the issues of adolescents are related to the society. Bond introduces young characters of all sages of adolescence like pre-adolescence, middle-adolescence and late adolescence, Rusty, a seventeen year boy, the narrator of the story *The Night Train at Deoli* is eighteen year old. Many of them are homeless and the world is home for them. The characters we come across in Narayan's novels are most realistic. They are mostly common men. They do not possess inner strength to face difficulties and they run away from their home; they are escapists. Moreover, the stories are male dominated like Indian society.

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