



## MUSIC OF LIFE: A QUEST OF HIDDEN RUDIMENTS IN THE WRITINGS OF RUSKIN BOND

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### ABSTRACT

A chance of smile in the life full of hassles may work as a tonic to anyone. Every person seeks amusement according to his or her instincts. A party- animal gets it in a party, a fitness- freak, in Jim, a sportsman, in field, a fiction- monger, in gossips; the same book- lover gets it in the company of great writers. The writers cast their influence to control the emotions of readers, and keeping them in the world, insinuate them to the true picture of it. Sometimes authors coerce readers to be grave and thoughtful; and sometimes sprightly authors obligate to smile, presenting intricacies of the world. The reason may be differ and may be a subject of research to the particular author as a man and writer. Indo-English literature is enriched with a series of eminent writers, but Ruskin is the brightest star in the literary galaxy due to his sprightliness. His life-style, actions, struggles, views, and philanthropic attitude develop a literature of its kind that is apart from the doldrums and is near to delight. No doubt, Bond is the singer of the mind and heart. He shows a marked tendency to probe the human mind and has a genius for sounding the emotions of the human heart, but never seeks to analyse or over-refine; rather he looks over human weakness, laughs and passes on. That is the reason, his characters may be sinner but they are never mean. We never hate them; rather we love them, despite of their faults. The present paper is an endeavour to prove the facts that his literature has the capacity to relax the trio of the writer, the character, and the reader; and apart from the theory 'art for art's sake', he writes for the sake of life on the subjects belong to different aspect of human life as love, fear, friendship, humour, adventure, mystery, Nature, and human civilization.

Key Words: Life, Ruskin Bond, Music, Human

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It is very true that Indian Writing in English has stepped to the high level with the geniuses of God blessed series of authors such as – Ruth Jhabwala, Jhumpa Lahri, V.S. Naipal, Arundhati Roy, Bharti Mukharjee, Manohar Malgoankar, Salman Rushdie and Khuswant Singh. All these writers have been provoking about adults and the problems of adults, man-woman sex relationships, and about

personal affairs, but Ruskin, apart from discussing contemporary trends and unmasking post modern complexities, narrates vibrant aspects of life. His views personalize. “--- a smooth, round, colourful people, and that someone will pick me up, derive a little pleasure from holding me, and possibly even put me in his, or her, pocket.”(The Lamp xi) Ruskin is the true copy of the view of Tom Hallman, winner of

the Pulitzer prize-“If you are human, you are a story teller”. Bond’s stories look beyond the facts to the meaning behind them. When people read Bond, they discover things about their own lives. In fact, he has the unique gift of glimpsing inside the outer world, nearby to him. Ruskin writes to amuse his readers. He knows life fully, and with positive attitude he presents human values in his stories. A special kind of meaning of life celebrates with in his whole literature, and for conveying his message, he takes the medium of simple style; for he knows about his varied list of readers in which if there are grownups, there are small but smart kids also. Full of a sense of life, his stories make the readers feel fresh, tensionless and happy, and a fountain of positive attitude begins to flow spontaneously after they have read them.

From the starting of his carrier as a writer, there has been an urgency of a humane heart in Bond. He intends to create literature as an instrument that can bring in good and happiness to the humanity at large. The works of Bond are full of delight, for they are full of wisdom. He has reformative purpose instead of ridiculing and mocking at humanity. For instance, in the novel ‘A Flight of Pigeons’ Javed Khan is a gesture of awe to Labadoor’s family. But the same time, providing them food and shelter, he is munificent to them also. Although he wants to marry to Ruth Labadoor, but his instinct becomes obstructive to full fill his desires forcibly. ‘The Blue Umbrella’ is the story about the girl named Binya who hands over her umbrella to Ram Bharosa, the greedy seller and amazingly the scene changes as the event makes Ram Bharosa’s heart immaculate. Therein lies the constructive facet of his creativity. Perfection of the human personality is his chief ambition.

Social issues do not find more place in Ruskin’s literature, rather it is pregnant with simple tales of everyday life. It is largely auto-biographical, describing people whom he has met with and the relationships he has developed with them. A reviewer of his works, Soma Banerjee, states that Bond’s works are “internationally acclaimed due to his deep insight into human nature. They reveal his tolerant attitude and warm sympathy for people.”(78-9) For Ruskin, life stands for two basic

values – first and foremost, love of fellow-beings and the solidarity of mankind without distinction of race, caste, creed or nationality and second intellectual integrity. Ruskin’s literature urges to abolish all responsible factors which hamper the growth of mankind. He dreams to make a single world-wide society. He fixes his attention on this life and this world. He is concerned with the preservation and furtherance of moral values in all relations and sphere of life and with building up of a better and happier human community. Parental relationships that are between Kishen and Meena in ‘The Room on The Roof’, between Satish and his mother in ‘The Woman in Platform No. 8’, between Ruth Labadoor and her mother in the novella ‘The Flight of Pigeons’ can be classified under the mother-son relationship. There is a kind of sublime and emotional nature of mothers pointed out to their sons. The story ‘The Boy Who Broke the Bank’ presents the barbed remarks of common Indian couples like Mr. and Mrs. Bhusan use for each other. The relationship between Meena and Mr. Kapoor is not everlasting, if it has no sense of respect and peace. Relationship between Wangchei and his wife becomes a symbol of love and sacrifice in the story ‘The Most Potent Medicine of All”, when Wang’s wife sacrifices her life in the hope of perfect remedy for his disorder. All these stories show Bond’s power of apprehending the secret in various kinds of relationships.

Bond’s stories and poems provide a new outlook and understanding of life. We find there order and harmony and the beauty and artistry that are expressions of his innate joy. The poem ‘Don’t Be Afraid of the Dark’ is an annotated illustration of his inner expression-: Don’t be afraid of the dark little one/ The earth must rest when the day is done/ The sun may be harsh, but moonlight-never.(A Little 1) Bond looks the whole cycle of Nature-birth and death, bloom and decay with the discerning eye, and as a Wiseman advises us that it is not desire, but dispassion and selflessness which open up the gates of joy and bliss. ‘Woman on The Platform No.8’ is a story about two love deprived strangers who seek love with in each-other. Arun, the boy is blessed with unbound motherly love and the mysterious woman also dives into the waves of

parental affection, the love that is selfless and altruistic. The story 'A Guardian Angel' also narrates this selfless affair. Aunt Mariam devotes her life to her orphan nephew. After the death of her sister, in spite of being a disrespected woman among graceful relatives, she comes forward to rescue the boy. She loves her 'ladla' more than her life; but because of being a prostitute, she is proven unfit for bringing up the boy. She dies, leaving indelible impressions on the boy made in during one and half years that she and the boy had passed in each other's company. After twenty years, the boy gives her love a spiritual colour, calling her 'the very special guardian angel of my childhood.' The essential nature of Bond is joyful. He is blessed with self-consciousness and freedom, and therefore when he sings about the world, he goes to the root of the matter which is beauty and joy. Bond writes, "I have the temper of a child, and tendency to be mischievous. And I still retain a childlike trust in grownups. I think have remained young because I have always had children round me ----- . I have to watch them grow. Adolescence is a fascinating period and I keep back to it in my fiction." (Rain 257) The life is not an illusion, as some have thought it to be but it exists and is real to him. His literature is testimony of his special sight, seeing the whole of the world with little difference. In this sense, Amita Aggarwal's perspective is remarkable- "Sense of beauty, liberty and harmony are the cardinal points of his world." (23) Bond searches satisfaction in small proportions of life. The children play an important role in his progress, as he treads on the path to self-knowledge or self-realization. Complete and independent as Bond has been in his life, the same his children characters are ready to search life freely and adventurously. Friends have a special place in his life. He makes friends so easily that a child can do only. In his view, friendship is a medium to spread love and in his literature one can find out his this never fading commitment running through in his characters. Bond's own statement shows his attitude towards life- "--- love is undying --- I mean deep, abiding, harmonious love. The love that gives protection --- an ever present love, shattering the manacles it time space. A love beyond death, a love that brings life alive." (Scenes163)

Bond's conception of life is free from preconception and inhibitions; he wonders to look a beautiful flower, or a wild animal or a strange person, but never compares them with others, nor judges whether it is better or worse. There are no knots in his heart and mind; therefore friendliness springs spontaneously in his heart. This inner quality of his is reflected in his characters that are free of pride and rigid attitude. In the gallery of Bond's characters- Inspector Lal, Rani, Kamla Shushila, Dukhi, Binya, Somi, Rusty, Madhu, Sita, Susanna et.al are the portraits that spread light in the stories according to his innate. Sprit of selflessness shows in the character of inspector Lal who does not arrest the murderer of Rani and in doing so he loses the hope of promotion. Rusty is the allegorical hero of many of his stories and novellas such as - 'The Adventure of Rusty' and 'The Room on The Roof', Bond portrays him as his alter ego to share his joy, fear, hate, and shortcomings of life. In the story 'The Blue Umbrella', Binya, being sympathetic to Ram Bharosa's miserable condition, gifts her umbrella to him and virtues like forgiveness and tolerance dominate over the treachery of 'Trusty Umbrella Thief'. Ram Bharosa fits for his title 'Ram the trustworthy' again'. Ruskin leaves every ugly thing behind in transforming the world. Famous freelancer Sudhir Thaphyal entitles him 'Saint', and proving it just, Bond perceives the real nature of life and its purpose, and accepts love and service as the long way to happiness and peace, not only within but in the life of the outer world as well. That is why his stories, poems, novellas reflect in measure the inner light which is the nature of wisdom and love. Bond's literature shows his conception of the utopian world where everyone lives by sharing and supporting, and recognizes this universe holistic, interdependent and interconnected, for life is a cycle of co-ordinate movement in the totality of Nature to him. Bond uses the body and mind as the instrument for benefiting mankind; therefore he suggests not ignoring them. He, as an individual human being, has therefore to try to rise in consciousness above the body, and more important, above the separative mind which thinks that happiness lies in sensations and in passing things. Bond has learned through a long drawn process of

painful experiences that happiness does not lie that way but it is awakening or being egoless that leads the man to it. He makes the readers able to observe, watch, listen, contemplate and meditate, and gradually they begin to awaken to their true nature and to their true being as he himself opens his heart to a wider vision of life. To be egoless, Bond does not withdraw himself nor goes away from life in the work a day world; but being in its very midst, he discovers a deep and tender sense of 'Belonging' to it, touching and helping it to glow in goodness and beauty; and to convey his idea of benefitting others, he adopts the medium of thoughts and words.

Bond is a man of pure heart, so great sensitivity comes to him as a result of it. He is sensitive to the beauties of Nature and to the delicate harmony in which all life is meant to move on. Sensitivity makes him aware how his thoughts, words and actions affect others for good or for ill. Bond's life journey is full of optimistic thoughts, he never directs any thought of ill will and any word of disparagement in his real life; rather he gives society substantial improvement and strength, for his own life is full of positive helpful thoughts and words of encouragement. These are his thoughts-precise, richer, purer and powerful that radiate positive currents of peace, love and good cheer over larger area not only in his life but in his fiction also. This is the reason that his characters are free from all wanting, and being helpful to all, they live like a king. 'Vagrants in the Valley' gets its starting from this point where the two vagrants are shown celebrating adolescent vagrancy. Vagrancy of both is due to different reasons. Rusty finds himself unfit to join the old frightening tedious, boring and anodyne atmosphere, Kishen leaves his drunkard father's house, but he has many shelters as he has distant relatives, yet he decides to be his friend's side. Kishen prefers 'The risks and pleasures of vagrancy' to support his Anglo-Indian friend. Kishen once again relinquishes his good when he slips out of Mrs. Bhusan's house and joins Rusty in the abandoned church. Rusty is benefitted even by 'the lafunga' for whom crime is a fine art. Sudheer, the lafanga owes twenty rupees from Hustine, the dancing girl. Sudheer's impatience is revealed through his statement- "I am not borrowing for any

such reasons. A friend of mine has to leave Dehra urgently, and I must get the money for his train fare. I owe it to him" (Room 175) Sudheer tells a lie in this concern, for he never owes money to Rusty.

As a perfect musician of life, Bond makes such tunes that are melodious; and for it, he handles his instrument with such skill that it is difficult to pronounce what is better and more praising, his stories or he himself. Tone and temper of his every story are unique and simple events are alive with his artistic treatment. Though Ruskin is known for his autobiographical writings, yet different types of sound, he produces, in his literature, make him popular amongst his readers, His stories bring smile on faces, and sometimes tears in the eyes; sometimes, give voice to the subject which you have never imagined, thus Bond would amaze the literary world and his fans. 'Death of a Familiar' is one of many stories, in which oscillant theme oscillates readers. The story revolves around the character of Sunil, a young boy of spoiled career who has every vice except of one virtue that is the art of making friends. Though the narrator is not bound, yet he feels a compulsion to make him civilize. In spite of his uncountable faults, he is in the hope of his better future. So when his land- lady alerts him, he defends him, "He's only a boy', I said and he's taking longer than most boys to grow up. He does not realize the seriousness of what he does. He will learn as he grows older." (Dust 184) The narrator does not like that any person hurts his friend so he continues to fund him without the hope of any returns. Such is his literature in which his prime attitude and philosophy is shown and its originality brings respect to him, for these elements help in progress of society. Bond listens his inner music, recognizes it and engulfs it in his stories. Social issues, as equality in society; loyalty in human being; feeling of friendship; perception of compassion; to live in the living present, find more place in Ruskin's literature. As a cultured Person, he is ever thoughtful about the feelings of others, never defends himself by a mere retort, he has no ears for slander or gossip, he is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best, therefore in his literature, he submits to pain

because it is inevitable, to bereavement because it is irreparable, and to death because is destiny.

Art, whether it is in the form of handicraft, stone craft, and singing-dancing or in fine art, is a constructive action. As the soul is the root source of art, and Bond meditates deeply into his soul, this is why he leads himself towards perfection. A reader who reads his literature evokes within self a sweetness that generates a sort of melody in his life, and enables himself to avoid dryness. Ruskin knows that sweet personality helps to make friends and they make life savoury and pithy. Bond defines friendship- "a meeting of two minds or two people who have mutual sympathy. It is an instinctive feeling" (Aggarwal 167) Bond's self analysis originates a sensibility to feel others sufferings and sadness. In fact Bond is an endless explorer of the labyrinths of the mind and shows a marked tendency to probe the human mind. He has a genius for sounding the emotions of the human heart and in doing so; his methods are alike with Henry Fielding. Like Fielding, he looks human weakness, but laughs and passes on. He never seeks to analyse or over refine, and so his characters possess breath, humanity and attraction. He clarifies, "Themes of my stories develop from characters---"(Friends in Small Places viii) His characters are all human beings with common human weakness and virtue. They are neither saints or angels, nor unredeemed villains. His characters may have some faults. They may be sinner but they are never mean. Often they are the spokesmen of Bond himself and express his views on life. The lines of one of his poems sing the life-philosophy which is pervading him and his literature in musical tone.

Whether by accidents or design,  
We are here.  
Let's make the most of it, my friend.  
Make happiness our pursuit,  
Spread a little sun shine here and there.  
Enjoy the flowers, the breeze,  
Rivers, sea, and sky,  
Mountains and tall waving trees.  
Greet the children passing by,  
Talk to the old Folk. Be kind my friend.  
Hold on, in Times of pain and strife.  
Untill death comes, all is life.(Little 7)

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