

## **Ruskin Bond as an Observer of the Colonial, Post & Colonial and Post-Independence Phases of India**

<sup>1</sup>Aditi Saini, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Rahul Mene, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Tarlochan Kaur Sandhu

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor & Head, <sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor

<sup>1,3</sup>Department of English, Govt. V.Y. T. PG Autonomous College, Durg (C.G.)

<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Shri Shankaracharya Mahavidyalaya, Junwani, Bhilai (C.G.)

### **Abstract**

This research paper explores Ruskin Bond as a keen observer of Indian society across three major historical phases—Colonial, Postcolonial, and Post Independence India. Bond's writings, though simple in style, provide deep insights into the sociocultural transformations of India- His narratives reflect the everyday lives of common people, especially in small towns and hill stations, capturing subtle shifts in identity, belongingness, and sociopolitical realities- The study adopts a literary sociological approach to examine how Bond's works mirror continuity and change in Indian society.

### **Introduction**

Literature often serves as a mirror to society, and few writers have portrayed India's evolving landscape as delicately and authentically as Ruskin Bond- Born in 1934 during British colonial rule, Bond witnessed India's transition from a colonized nation to an independent and modern state- His works are not overtly political; instead, they quietly capture the lived experiences of individuals navigating changing times.

This paper aims to analyse Bond's writings as a form of social documentation, focusing on how he observes and represents three significant phases of Indian history:

- 1- Colonial India
- 2- Postcolonial India
- 3- Post Independence India

Through this lens, Bond emerges not just as a storyteller but as a subtle chronicler of sociocultural transformation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To examine Ruskin Bond's portrayal of colonial India.
- To analyse his depiction of postcolonial transitions.
- To explore how post-independence realities are reflected in his works.
- To understand his narrative style as a form of social observation.

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative and analytical in nature- It is based on close reading of selected works of Ruskin Bond such as *The Room on the Roof*, *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, *Rusty*, *the Boy from the Hills*] and various short stories. Secondary sources such as literary criticism and historical context are also used.

### **1- Ruskin Bond and Colonial India**

Ruskin Bond's early life was shaped by the colonial environment- His first novel *The Room on the Roof* reflects the psychological and cultural tensions of a young Anglo-Indian boy, *Rusty*, who struggles with identity and belonging-

#### **1-1 Anglo-Indian Identity Crisis**

During colonial rule, Anglo-Indians occupied an ambiguous social position- Through *Rusty*, Bond highlights:

- Alienation from both British and Indian communities
- Cultural confusion

- Desire for acceptance

Rusty's escape from his guardian's rigid colonial household symbolizes a rejection of imposed colonial values.

## **1-2 Representation of Colonial Authority**

Bond subtly critiques colonial authority:

- Strict discipline and emotional detachment
- Superiority compels of British guardians
- Lack of cultural sensitivity

Instead of direct political criticism] Bond uses personal experiences to reveal the limitations of colonial ideology-

## **2- Transition to Postcolonial India**

The postcolonial phase marks a shift from foreign rule to self-governance- Bond captures this transition through changes in social relationships and environments-

### **2-1 Changing Social Structures**

Bond's stories reflect:

- Decline of colonial institutions
- Rise of Indian middle class
- Increased social mobility

Characters in his works begin to redefine their identities beyond colonial hierarchies-

### **2-2 Nostalgia and Loss**

A recurring theme in Bond's writing is nostalgia:

- Disappearance of old lifestyles

- Transformation of small towns
- Emotional attachment to the past

In *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, Bond reflects on the loss of childhood innocence and changing landscapes.

### **3- Post Independence India in Bond's Works**

After independence, India underwent rapid modernization- Bond's writings portray this phase with a focus on continuity and subtle change rather than dramatic transformation.

#### **3-1 Simplicity of Everyday Life**

Unlike many contemporary writers, Bond does not focus on political turmoil- Instead, he highlights:

- Daily lives of ordinary people
- Human relationships
- Connection with nature

His stories emphasize that despite modernization, the essence of human life remains unchanged.

#### **3-2 Urbanization and Change**

Bond observes gradual urbanization:

- Expansion of towns
- Impact on environment
- Changing aspirations of youth

However, he often contrasts this with the peaceful life of hill stations, suggesting a critique of uncontrolled development.

## **4- Nature as a Constant Across Phases**

One of the most distinctive features of Bond's writing is his deep connection with nature.

### **4-1 Nature in Colonial and Postcolonial Content's**

Nature serves as

- A refuge from social tensions
- A symbol of continuity amidst change
- A space for personal reflection

### **4-2 Environmental Consciousness**

Bond's works subtly promote environmental awareness:

- Respect for forests and wildlife
- Criticism of deforestation
- Emphasis on harmony between humans and nature

## **5- Narrative Style as Observation**

Bond's narrative style is simple] yet deeply observational.

### **5-1 Realism and Minimalism**

His writing is characterized by:

- Simple language
- Detailed descriptions
- Emotional depth

This style allows readers to connect easily with characters and situations.

### **5-2 Childlike Perspective**

Many stories are told from a child's perspective:

- Innocence and curiosity
- Honest observation of society
- Lack of bias

This perspective enhances the authenticity of his social commentary.

## **6- Themes Across Historical Phases**

### **6-1 Identity and Belonging**

From colonial to post independence India, Bond explores:

- Search for identity
- Sense of belonging
- Cultural integration

### **6-2 Loneliness and Companionship**

Characters often experienced loneliness but find solace in:

- Friendships
- Nature
- Simple joys

### **6-3 Continuity and Change**

Bond's works emphasize that while society changes:

- Human emotions remain constant
- Relationships continue to shape lives
- Nature provides stability

## **7- Sociological Significance of Bond's Works**

From a sociological perspective, Bond's writings offer valuable insights:

- Microlevel understanding of social change
- Representation of marginalized identities (Anglo&Indians, rural communities)
- Documentation of cultural transitions

His works can be seen as ethnographic narratives capturing everyday life.

## **8- Critical Evaluation**

### **8-1 Strengths**

- Authentic portrayal of Indian life
- Emotional depth and simplicity
- Rich description of nature

### **8-2 Limitations**

- Lack of direct political engagement
- Limited focus on large-scale social conflicts
- Idealized portrayal of rural life

However, these limitations also define Bond's unique literary identity.

## **Conclusion**

Ruskin Bond stands as a silent observer of India's journey through colonial, postcolonial, and post-independence phases. His writings do not rely on grand narratives or political discourse; instead, they focus on the ordinary lives of people and their interactions with changing environments.

Through his gentle storytelling, Bond captures the essence of Indian society—its continuity, resilience, and quiet transformations. His works remind us that history

is not only shaped by major events but also by everyday experiences and personal stories.

Thus, Ruskin Bond's literature serves as both a literary treasure and a sociological document, offering timeless insights into the evolving identity of India-

### **References**

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