

## A PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF THE CHARACTERS IN RUSKIN BOND'S "THE ROOM ON THE ROOF"

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### ABSTRACT:

This paper attempts to study the protagonist and other major characters in light of Psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a way of examining the characters' anxiety or desire influencing one's action and behavior. Ruskin Bond is familiar with his unique character formation. Through the characters, a keen understanding of human nature is depicted. The purpose of the study is to analyze the characters in terms of Freud's Theory of Personality. This is an effort to interpret the characters according to Freud's "the id, the ego and the superego". This paper delineates the human psyche and the unconscious motive of the protagonists in the novel.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Ruskin Bond, Sigmund Freud, characters, human behaviour

### Introduction:

Bond is an Indian writer and environmentalist. He is well known for the local elements of Himalayas, deceptively simple writing style and ardent love for nature and children. Ruskin Bond had established his esteem as a writer through the novel "The Room on the Roof" published in 1956. Since then he has become a great contributor to children's literature and Indian Writing in English. Apart from writing for nature and children, his novels and short stories are exposed to a lovely childhood and lacked parental care due to his parents' divorce and mother's remarriage. His novels and short stories is plotted on an exquisite platform of India. Bond has created an inner world for almost every character. To study the inner world of the characters, Freud's "Personality Structure" (*Introductory lectures on psycho-analysis, 1917*) that comprises the three elements id, ego and superego is used to analyze the characters.

### Literature Review:

Sigmund Freud introduces Psychoanalysis in his "*Introductory lectures on psycho-analysis (1917)*" that deals with human behavior particularly the unconscious mind of the human. The data kept in the conscious mind is easily available with the free will of an individual, the other part of unattainable data will be in the unconscious mind. Basically, Freud frames a theory comparing an image of an iceberg with the human mind pointing unconscious is a vast area including the

preconscious mind and conscious mind. In 1920, Freud points out the conscious has its little contribution to the unconscious data by the image of the triangle. Later, it develops as “The Theory of Personality” which implying the meaning and explanation of the three elements Id, Ego and Superego. In “The Theory of Personality” (1933), Freud states that the three elements are used to explore the human’s unconscious desire, feeling and passion. The Id has no rules and time being towards human behavior. The Ego is the mediator reacting with the possibilities to satisfy what the Id wants in the reality anxiety way of the world. The Superego deals with the human psyche in a highly moralistic way. Freud describes the entire role of Id, Ego and Super ego in his “The Theory of Personality” (*Introductory lectures on psycho-analysis*, 1933).

Ruskin Bond is the writer of subjectivity who has caught different genres of readers for his writing. Dr. P. Balamurugan has published an article entitled “*Adolescent Sensibility in Ruskin Bond’s The Room on the Roof*” that tells about the fundamental problem of adolescent Rusty who never thinks of being a British citizen. Here, Rusty serves as an example of transforming from dependency to responsibility. This novel is represented by the two male adolescents’ perspective Rusty and Kishen. The irresponsible behavior of Mrs. Kapoor has led Kishen into a thief. Rusty’s love for Kishen changed him as a good man. According to the grown-up, adolescents are meant to be treated as a child, but the bodily changes tend them to think differently.

### **Methodology:**

This study focuses on the analysis of major characters in the novel “The Room on the Roof” in light of Freud’s “The Theory of Personality” (*Introductory lectures on psycho-analysis*). The psyche of these major characters was put into psychoanalytic analysis according to the three elements Id, Ego and Superego.

### **Psychoanalytic Theory:**

The founder of the Psychoanalytic school Sigmund Freud distinguished conscious from the unconscious. He stated that the conscious mind is aware of present perceptions, thoughts and dreams which simply consist of a small part of the psyche, whereas the unconscious mind covers a major part of the psyche that is not easily available to awareness. Thereafter, the Freudian theory of personality is based on the deep longing or desires and strong inner force that influence human behavior through the unconscious mind. The Freudian theory of personality includes the three elements such as id – it is the basis of one’s unconscious desire that has no rules and ethics to follow which leads the human psyche according to the pleasure principle.

Ego – is the most protective and conscious part of the mind. Moreover, it serves as a bridge between id and superego. Ego balances the meet the requirements of the world, obey the restrictions of superego and fulfills the libido of id. The unreasonable urge and desire of the id are controlled by ego according to the reality principle.

Superego- strongly represents the morality principle. It strictly meets the social requirements and contrast with the id. Having certain prohibitions, rules and partly dominates ego to fulfill the desire in a highly ethical way.

### **The characterization in Bond's Novels:**

Bond's novels are concerned with the love for basic humanity. The characters in the novels of Bond are attempted to discover their identity. Bond's adolescent protagonists are an optimist who finds the spirit of life in despair. Bond takes the first-person narrative for all his novels and novellas as the character reveals at least a few incidents of his life. The unique characteristics of his characters are patience, lovable, hopeful, respecting friendships, knows the values of relationships, face challenges with aspiration. The readers cannot find the protagonists achieved grand triumph throughout the novel or at the end of the novel but do not lose hope. Bond novels are of subjectivity, he chooses to write always on it. Existence of Humanity is presented in all his novels and the depth of human nature is explored. His novels reveal not only the human psyche but a better understanding of reality which brings many readers to admire the author. Bond's psyche is the world of the characters in the novels. The autobiographical elements used in the novels helps to reveal the psyche of the protagonist. All his major characters put forth for psychological study to divulge the issue of human conflicts, psyche and their unconscious motive. He deals with the characters of different age groups and stages. The protagonist of the novels emerges to find a platform of living, usually, adolescents receive the mental ability and financial foundation from their parents and grandparents, here the external and internal factors of development struck to maintain its continuity.

Particularly, "The Room on the Roof" portrays the characteristics of adolescence. Rusty, the protagonist of the novel "The Room on the Roof" is in the middle adolescence stage. The protagonist's quest for identity makes them unique from other characters of the novel. The characters in the novels are given situations as the plot moves ahead to reveal the human behavior and causes behind it. Bond not only tries to concentrate on the behavior but also on the human psychology that provides the reason behind every human action. His mere childhood was confused, obliged, helpless, lonely and sad. But the positivism and the spirit inspired him to make mental makeup. The protagonists of all his novels are in the boyhood or adult stage. The reach he has got now is a plum of many years of struggles, failures, hopelessness and tragedies. Besides, he is the holder of a strong and deep human psyche that influenced him to write on realistic images.

### **Discussion:**

"The Room on the Roof" is Ruskin Bond's first novel written in 1956. The novel moves around Dehradun where the narrator was born. The course of the novel is about a seventeen-year teenage boy who has brought up by his guardian and finds Indian friends in his life journey. Due to the uncertainty in his life, he encounters many complications though experiences life with such a passionate vision.

Analyzing the inside lives and psyche of all the characters helps to examine the novel psychologically. The protagonist of the novel Rusty is taken for psychoanalysis. As the adolescent lives under the control of his guardian Mr. Harrison, his parentage remains unknown. His guardian Mr. Harrison is European, thus he was born and brought up in Europe and settled in India. The attitude of Mr. Harrison towards Indians posing a superior complex that constraints him from uniting with Indians. Since Rusty is unaware of parental care and warmth, he lives under the surveillance and dominance of his guardian. He doesn't sense the house of his guardian as his own. The alienation and rootlessness in the place affected his psyche to be lazy and quiet. Mrs. Harrison is kind to Rusty thinking that he may be worried about the behavior of Mr. Harrison. Rusty was restricted to talk Indians as per his guardian's instruction. According to Mr. Harrison, Indians are not fit in the level of Europeans. Being in wide India, not having companions with his limited circle impacted an effect on his psyche. The description of Rusty's appearance is

“He was a pale boy, with blue-grey eyes and fair hair; his face was rough and marked, and the lower lip hung loose and heavy. He had his hands in his pockets and his head down, which was the way he always walked and which gave him a deceptively tired appearance. He was a lazy but not a tired person

A European boy was no longer a common sight in Dehra” (p.3)

Henceforth, he is far away from thinking actively and clearly. While walking around, Somi a boy about seventeen years initiates the friendship with him, later it has extended with many peer members forming a good friendship.

According to Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, human nature has different characteristics that form the uniqueness of each individual known by a deeper understanding. Human nature is not constant at every stage of development, the conflict between biological, cultural, social and psychological drive is constructed in moving from one stage of life to another. As reported by Sigmund Freud in *Introductory lectures on psycho-analysis (1917)*, human behavior is influenced by biological factors. Desire is the simulating factor of arising physical changes and emotional disturbance, satisfying desire brings back the regular stage of physical and emotional drive.

Rusty's desire for family relationships, friendship and romantic relationships has been lacking due to constraint guardianship and social barriers of a European boy. Psychologically, he is in the position of nothing to lose. Subsequently, India was not his choice at the beginning of the novel, settled down because of the fate he undergone. The unconscious decision one makes is the fate of the individual. Rusty is not intended to leave India any further, so his conscious mind of decision making decides to live in India. Rusty plays the psyche of Ruskin Bond as this is the most autobiographical novel of Bond, they both have lost their parentage and passionate about writing, longing to get rid of the isolated ridge and in need of having companionship with a peer group.

But there is no sympathy lasted talking or remembering the moments with parents tend that Rusty has no nostalgia for their appearance or wistful affection in this novel. In the same way, Bond

hasn't given much detail about his mother who left her children in order of getting married to another man. In contrast, Bond is passionate to mention his father in many of his works. Rusty hardly remembers his fond memory, a few he had. Lack of parental care and cultural difference builds the personality that made him feel that he does not belong to India as well as England.

The protagonist in "the Room on the Roof" stands for a continuous struggle between id, ego and superego. Rusty seldom symbolizes the id, often ego and superego as the representation of Freud's theory of personality. Throughout the novel, Rusty has rules and ethics to follow even though he is psychologically dependent on his friends. He is the one always insisting not to steal, disgust others in form of demanding help and hurt others. As in the case of id, Rusty attends the Holi Festival knowing his guardian will not spare him for this. The consequences for this pleasure are in the conscious state of mind but the unconscious desire to attend the festival drives the individual to act upon the id. Again the id acts, getting caught by his guardian, he ran away from his guardian without thinking about the further need for food, shelter to survive and his financial dependency on his guardian. The unconscious mind is not aware of the fact, besides he thinks that he couldn't defend himself if he stays at his guardian home. He breaks protection from him implying that he would stay somewhere without his guardian's concern.

On the other hand, when Rusty falls in love with Mrs. Kapoor, it is ego, the conscious mind which hits him to think about the society before expressing it at first sight. The love relationship between Mrs. Kapoor and Rusty stays on the limit thinking about the family and society. Rusty displays protection in the scene where he is aware that he couldn't afford a family and not mutually ready to take responsibilities. Similarly, their love for each other does not fade. When Mrs. Kapoor died because of an accident she met, Rusty goes on to the dead end as he lost the only hope of his life. Recovering from the immense loss decides to go UK. On the way to town, he meets Kishen, son of Mrs. Kapoor, he has taken by his father and stepmother after the demise of Mrs. Kapoor. Now, the life of Kishen is miserable changed as a thief and hiding somewhere to save his life.

In the light of Superego, Rusty knows the money Kishen earns as a thief would be helpful to reach Dehra and to live there until they get a job to earn but his conscious mind alerts him not to do such things in the cost of getting a decent life. With the money he has, meeting the meal for a day is not possible. Rusty changed Kishen's mind to lead a life in an ethical way to be fearless.

Finally, Rusty is given chance to move from India to UK but he wants to take responsibility for Kishen and decides to live in India. They return from Haridwar to Dehra for initiating a new life. As Freud stated in the lecture *The methods by which men strive to gain happiness and keep suffering away/Part A*, "The intoxicating substances influence our body and alter its chemistry", Rusty is finding solace in taking care of Kishen.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus Ruskin Bond has proved that many factors influence human behavior and psyche. It is an attempt to unravel the conscious and unconscious force in personalities that Ruskin Bond has

created. The id, ego and superego are interdependent, there is no element in personality. There should be the id and superego to make ego functioning properly. The Human psyche can choose the deep or unconscious state of mind to fulfill the unreasonable desire, dreams, feelings and emotions. Depending on the situation, the elements and their decision would be differentiated.

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