

Simplicity, Humour and Wisdom in 'The Blue Umbrella' by Ruskin Bond

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Abstract

Ruskin bond is a writer whose name is not unknown to the readers. He is the one whose stories need no introduction. He pens down his stories in a very lucid and fantastic manner covering the touched and untouched areas of human life and aspirations ranging from themes such as child psychology, environment, friendship, love of nature, innocence, wisdom and also the personal experience of the author. He has been writing for over sixty years and has now over 120 titles in print- novels, collections of short stories, poetry, essays, anthologies and books for children. His novel '*The Blue Umbrella*' (1980) deeply studies the human psychology and gives us valuable lessons for life. This short and humorous novel captures life in a hilly village of Garhwal, where ordinary characters become extraordinary, heroic and others find opportunities to redeem themselves. Ruskin Bond writes his stories in a very witty yet simplistic manner that everybody reads and enjoys them without much difficulty. His writing reflects a genuine simplicity and has a deep and everlasting impact on the readers minds. '*The Blue Umbrella*' is a good source of amusement loaded with wisdom and a perennial fountain of knowledge. This paper will focus on the basic and significant virtues presented by Ruskin Bond through his novel the '*The Blue Umbrella*' that can help the people to become good human beings.

Keywords: Wisdom, Child Psychology, Innocence, Nature, Perennial.

Discussion

Stories are as old as humanity. They have been a perpetual fountain of delight and instruction to humanity since the time immemorial. The stories teach and instruct in a very delightful and pleasant manner having a deep and long lasting impressions on the mind and soul of an individual. Sometimes they teach us, make us laugh, move us with the feelings of pity, gives happiness to us. Sometimes they overjoy and thrill us and also have the power to change our minds by giving us wisdom that enable us to lead a happy , sympathetic and contented life. Ruskin Bond is a stand out among us as the most famous and well known writers of India. His first novel "*The Room on the Roof*"(1956) received the prestigious John Llewellyn Rhys award in 1957 . He is a prolific author who is an

Indian despite of his British descent, is highly influential in the development of literature among children in India. His stories cover almost all sorts of subjects that deals with children and environment, optimism, heartwarming characters, descriptions of nature and the beautiful Indian countryside .His stories are simple yet interesting and highly rich in thought provoking ideas. Ruskin Bond has a simple and interesting style of writing that quickly attracts the readers. His writing style is easy enough such that the children and layman can understand his works easily. Ruskin Bond was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014 for his contribution to literature. In 2012, the Delhi government gave him its lifetime achievement award. The unique feature of Ruskin Bond's stories is that he projects the life in such a manner that it makes clear to us that simple things can make a big difference in our lives. We do not need a luxurious life to be happy in our life. Ruskin Bond teaches the moral lesson in a delightful way. His characters are so realistic and they are invented in such a way that the readers feel as they are conversing with them in real life. His works are the fountains of vast knowledge that he shares with his readers in a very amusing way. He covers the vast range of human emotions that has a deep impact on the readers minds and souls.

'The Blue Umbrella' is a 1980 Indian novel written by Ruskin Bond. It was adapted into 2005 Hindi film by the same name, which later won the National Film Award for Best Children's Film .In 2012, the novel was adapted into a comic by *Amar Chitra Katha* publications, titled, *'The Blue Umbrella'* – Stories by Ruskin Bond, and included another story, *Angry River*. This story appeared in Bond's collection of short stories, *'Children's Omnibus'*. In *'The Blue Umbrella'* Ruskin Bond acquaints the readers with a young girl Binya and her family who lives in a small village of Tehri, Garhwal. Binya is a simple and innocent girl who belongs to a poor family. She does not have anything precious except a leopard claw necklace which symbolizes good luck according to her mother. One day while doing her chorus, Binya sees a beautiful blue umbrella owned by an English woman who has come to enjoy her holidays in the hills of Garhwal with her comrades. The blue umbrella fascinates Binya.

”This was the first time Binya had seen such a small dainty colourful umbrella and she fell in love with it. The umbrella was like a flower a great blue flower that had sprung up on the dry brown hillside.”

She wants to own it and thus, she exchanges her bear claw necklace, a lucky charm with the blue umbrella owned by an English woman. Her happiness is at Zenith after getting her favourite blue umbrella. She sings and takes utmost care of it. She gets emotionally attached to her newly got gift. It is a human nature that the people get attached to the things or person they like the most and Binya is no exception at all.

”She seldom closed the blue umbrella. Even when she had it in the house, she left it lying open in a corner of the room. Bijju snapped it shut, complaining that it got in the way. She would open it again little later. It wasn’t beautiful when it was closed.”

Binya’s blue umbrella fades with the passage of time but still it is the most beautiful umbrella and the centre of attraction in the whole village. The shopkeeper of Binya’s locality Ram Bharosa, sees the blue umbrella and tries to own it. He goes to the extent of stealing it with the help of Rajaram but fails. This act of Ram Bharosa shocks the villagers and they ostracize and stop visiting his shop. Ram Bharosa learns a lesson from his wrong doing and he tries to be a better person .Binya is moved by the plight of Ram Bharosa. She wants to make the things right because she realizes that Ram Bharosa is experiencing a sense of guilt and shame. She feels may be she is responsible for his misery. She decides to donate her favourite possession, her blue umbrella to Ram Bharosa. When Ram Bharosa says her that it’s a pretty umbrella and best in the village. Binya replies

“I know but an umbrella isn’t everything. You keep it .i don’t need it”.

Here, she is beautifully stating the importance of renunciation and giving importance to humans rather than the material possessions. In return, Ram Bharosa gifts her a pendent with a bear’s claw in it which is considered even more lucky then the leopard claw. People forgets the stealing episode of Ram Bharosa and everything get normalized .There is a sudden change in the behavior of Ram Bharosa after this episode. Binya experiences that she has a family, beautiful nature and her amazing surroundings to make her happy. Materialistic things or their fascination cannot keep a person happy for a long period of time. Good people, family, nature and small happy moments are enough to lead a satisfying and happy life. Money, luxurious objects and materialistic possessions give us happiness that is temporary and short lived. Helping people, showing kindness, sympathy, empathy, forgiveness, love of nature are the ingredients that make one’s life worth living. Binya is the epitome of kindness innocence and forgiveness with no feelings of ill will against the one who tries to separate her from her favourite blue umbrella. On the other hand, the character of Ram Bharosa proves that selfishness and materialism are very pernicious for humanity. A ten years old Binya teaches a big lesson to Ram Bharosa that kindness and selflessness are the true human values and assets. This small girl changes the mind of a middle aged person and helps him to be a better individual in future. The story amuses and teaches in a very simple manner. It clearly states that only age factor does not make a person mature and wise. A small child can act more maturely and wisely. A young girl of just ten years displays much maturity and wisdom then middle aged man. She is the one who teaches Ram Bharosa, the lessons of benevolence, cordiality, honesty and alturism. Binya wears the ornaments of virtues like compassion, kindness, forgiveness, sacrifice and boldness that differentiates her from the crowd. Ruskin Bond

through this novel presents the idea that the virtues possessed by Binya are much needed in this world where everyone thinks about their own selfish motives and are engaged in fulfilling their greedy desires. The world needs people like her to disseminate the message of affection, humanity and love for nature. The writer has depicted in *'The Blue Umbrella'* that selfish and greed are harmful to the society while showing the benefits of friendship and generosity. It is not wrong to say that Ruskin Bond's works are human experiences. They give us a sense of pleasure, tranquility, happiness, an insight and understanding in a witty, humorous and straight forward way. He transports his readers to a world of nostalgia, charming natural beauty and people that leave a long lasting impression on the readers.

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