



DEPICTION OF ADOLESCENTS IN RUSKIN BOND'S CHACHI'S FUNERAL

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Abstract

Short story writing is a unique art that depicts a different world in a limited space as well as characterisation. Ruskin Bond's *Chachi's Funeral* is such a short fiction introducing innocent world of the juvenile characters Sunil and his cousin Madhu. The story shows how adolescents live in their own world and governed by instincts like anger, fear, love etc. Here Bond gives a universal message "Anger is temporary; love is permanent." Here Sunil, a young boy is governed first by sense of revenge, hatred toward his aunt and then the sense of regret. An adolescent has no control over his/her impulse. On the other hand, Madhu, a little elder sister of Sunil shows sense of maturity. She handles the entire issue of Sunil's rage for his aunt cleverly. Some times adults may behave foolishly while the teen ages may show extra-ordinary understanding power and maturity.



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Introduction:

Ruskin Bond is considered as a master of short story writing technique. His stories reflect the same world as we live in. He does not romanticize the stories or characters. Rather his scenes are from the day-to-day life. His narrative style creates a verbal picture of human relationships. He is most probably present in most of the scenes. His stories seem mixture of fact and fiction. Anuradha Basu observes:

Ruskin Bond's short stories are like photographs. They give us a picture of an instant, almost like the flash of a camera. With Bond, each story is also an experience. There are two ways in which these experiences have been unfolded; firstly through the experiences of Bond as and secondly through his experiences as an adult. The experiences could be of some passing incident of life uniquely remembered though; or it could be just a

vision, a glimpse, a happening or a psiing relationship. 1

Bond's short fiction introduces a variety of themes and human sketches. Undoubtedly, like R.K.Narayan, in his writing the locale most probably remains the same, the foothill of the Himalayan especially surrounding Dehradun. However, he does not restrict himself to this territory only. As per the pattern of the story, setting in his stories extends upto many other places far from Dehradun. He reflects the life of various places of North Indian region. On the other hand, Narayan's characters hardly step out from Malgudi. Bond's depiction of adolescents is wonderful. It is unique phase of life. It the duration of confidence and confusion, immaturity and innocence and various instincts. S.P.Chaube throws more light on this term adolescence:

“Period of life from puberty to adulthood (roughly ages 12-20) characterized by marked physiological changes, development of sexual feelings, efforts towards the construction of identity, and a progression from concrete to abstract thought. Adolescence is sometimes viewed as a transitional state, during which youths begin to separate themselves from their parents but still lack a clearly defined role in society. It is generally regarded as an emotionally intense and often stressful period.” 2

Depiction of adolescents:

Ruskin Bond's stories highlight the life of the valleys of Uttarakhand, the Himalayan foothills. They show life as it is without romanticizing or exaggerating it. 'Chachi's Funeral' is one of the best specimens which indicate Bond's understanding of the child and growing up's psychology in a better way. His child and growing up characters behave in the same way as everywhere. Anger is temporary and love is permanent, is the central idea of this story. It deals with three main characters, Sunil, a boy of ten, his cousin Madhu, a dark slim girl of twelve and their relative Chachi who is chachi for Sunil and 'Mammi' for Madhu. The story begins with a very interesting declaration that Chachi died at 6 pm on 5th April and

came to life again exactly twenty minutes later. The entire story narrates how it happens. This statement invites the readers to go through the story and see how adolescents react in particular situation.

A ten year boy Sunil is a mischievous boy like most of the boys of his age. His parents do jobs in office and the boy is left with his chichi. She is a fairly tolerant, easy going person. She manages the house-hold responsibilities well including bringing up her own small sons, daughters, nephews and nieces. She is a simple woman and can not understand the growing boy Sunil. He is an additional burden for her. She has also to cook for him while his parents go to office.

Moreover, Sunil troubles her more. He does mischievous things to annoy her. An incident creates strong sense of hatred in Sunil's heart for his chichi. One day, he feels intensely hungry. He fails to have anything in the kitchen to satisfy his hunger. He ultimately traces honey on the top of the shelf. He tries his best to reach the honey bottle. But, by chance the bottle falls on the ground with a crash. His chichi appears to the scene of accident before the boy can sleep away. The angry woman deals him three or four blows of her sleeper across the head and shoulders. She begins to weep after this incident while the boy's proud is hurt.

This is a kind of routine incident. But the reaction of young boy Sunil is astonishing. He steps to the roof and goes to his secret place where he hides his treasure in the form of marbles, kites, kite-string, tops and a clasp-knife. He collects the knife and whispers fiercely: 'I will kill her!, I will kill her!, I will kill her!'

As soon as he whispers, his cousin Madhu appears to the scene and listens to this remark. Madhu is just two years elder than Sunil but she is very mature. She inquires everything behind his hostile feeling for his chichi. She handles the situation as if she were an adult and experienced human being. Bond presents this conversation between these two youngsters which proves the girl's mental and intellectual growth:

'Who are you going to kill, Sunil?'

'Chachi', said Sunil, 'She hates me, I know. Well I hate her too. This time I'll kill her.'

'How are you going to do it?'

'I'll stab with this', he shows her the knife.

'Three times, in the heart.'

'But you'll be caught. The C.I.D. are very clever. Do you want to go to jail?'

‘Won’t they hang me?’

‘They don’t hang small boys. They send them to boarding-schools.’

‘I don’t want to go to a boarding-school.’ 3

The above conversation indicates certain unexpected reaction of the young. Sunil has decided to kill his chichi on not a very serious reason. She, as a reaction of crashing the jar of honey in her kitchen beats the mischievous boy. But the boy’s determination to kill her with his clasp-knife is unpredictable. Moreover, Madhu’s knowlwdge about law at the age of twelve is also surprising. She informs the boy that he will not be hanged but sent to boarding-school because he is a young boy. Bond astonishes the readers here by such knowledge about law of a mere twelve year girl. Bond also satirizes here on the institute of the boarding-school when the boy is ready to be hanged but fears to go to the boarding-school for killing his Chichi. The last part of their conversation shows this ill-feeling of the boy: ‘I don’t want to go to a boarding-school.’

As we have noted above, Madhu is a wise girl who find out an excellent idea to calm the boy’s fury. She makes a rough drawing of Chachi with the help of pencil and paper. She sketches a big heart in the region of Chachi’s stomach on the paper. Then, she asks the boy to stab the Chachi to death. The boy’s eyes shines with excitement. He finds a great newgame. He plunges his knife three times into Chachi’s pastel breast. Madhu declares that he has killed her. The next action shows how youngsters imitate the adult’s world minutely. They decide to cremate her dead body. They set fire to the paper. In a few minutes all that remains of Chachi are a few ashes. The girl here lets out the rage from the boy’s heart using her fruitful mind. She says that poor Chachi is dead now. The story doesn’t end here. They talk to put her sacred ashes in the river, but decide to put it in the drain. Madhu collects the ashes and throws the ashes downward from the balcony. Some the ashes settle on the tree and a few reach the drain and are carried away by a sudden rush of the kitchen-water.

For most of the readers the story is over here. But, Bond produces a moving scene at the climax of the story. When the ashes are thrown, Madhu turns to Sunil. What she finds is like the anti-climax of the story. She sees big tears on the boy’s cheeks. Bond narrates very touching picture in words:

‘What are you crying for?’

‘Chachi. I didn’t hate her so much.’

‘Then why did you want to kill her?’

‘Oh, that was different.’

‘Come on, let’s go down. I have to do my home work.’ 4

As they come down the steps from the roof, Chachi emerges from the kitchen. Sunil rushes to her and tries to get her arms around her waist. He tells her that he loves her so much and requests her not to leave them. She observes a genuine affection in his eyes. She kindly takes him back to the kitchen.

Conclusion:

The story presents the innocent world of the growing ups. Bond indicates how temporary the young boy’s anger may be. Sunil stabs his Chachi but soon repents for his act. This sense of guilt is the strength of the adolescents. Sunil is too sensitive here while Madhu’s presence of mind wins readers’ admiration. She tackles the situation like a wise person and controls it. Their decision to cremate the deadbody after murder of Chachi and to put the sacred ashes in to river demonstrates how the adolescents observe the adult world, traditions, customs, rituals and many more things and their wish to behave like the elders. This story highlights how the twelve year boy, Sunil feels so sorry and sad after his temporary anger for his aunt subsides.

References

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