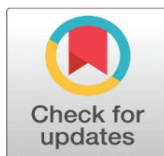
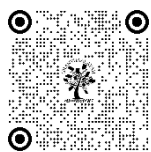


# PRESCRIPTION OF ANIMALS IN THE WRITINGS OF RUSKIN BOND

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## ABSTRACT

Nobody knows the source or person who showered a hidden blessing on mankind by introducing the art of story-telling. The age-old traditions of tell tales served various purposes simultaneously. At one side tales were the source of entertainment, sharing and exchanging of thoughts at another side tell tale became the medium of spread of education, morality and cultural heritage, which prevailed from time to time. Thus people made this form of expression widely popular and made its reach from door to door, from villages to towns, from town to cities. Later on this tell tale became a variety of literature. From Chaucer's Canterbury Tales or rather age before than that to modern times the role of stories has become very prominent, significant and popular.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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Ruskin Bond is a prolific writer of short stories and undoubtedly he is the pioneer of modern children literature in India. His stories are based on his memories of childhood. His stories are a type of fable. His sensibility and observation of the young world is really amazing. He crafts his stories around such themes as discovery, adventure, nature, ghosts, pets and animals- all that may hold a child's imagination. His stories depict his friendship with the trees, pets and his love for them.

Bond skillfully handles the issues of man's harmony with his environment including animals. In his stories, he portrays this passion for pets and animals and related adventures. The story *Animals on His Track* present hilarious adventures of a family travelling in a train with their unusual pets: a tiger, a squirrel, a parrot and a mischievous python. The python stealthily enters the Tiffin basket and gulps down all the food. Then the squirrel shares its nuts with the young hero who thanks it for its little act of endearment.

"Thanks", I said. "If you keep bringing me peanuts all the night, I might last until morning"<sup>1</sup>

In the story *Panther's Moon*, the presence of a man-eater in the forest becomes a battle for the survival for a young boy Bisnu. The panther emerges as a personal adversary because Bisnu is unable to attend the school and is confronted with the possibility of failing in the final exams. Bisnu determines to continue his schooling and ultimately succeeds in forcing the animal to the territory.

The stories like *The Tunnel*, *Tiger-Tiger Burning Bright*, *Tiger in the House*, *A Crow for All Seasons* and *The Leopard* are based upon his conviction that animals should be treated as timothy. It suggests a better relationship among creatures of this earth. Bond describes the behavior of birds, animals in such a way that sometimes they seem human. As in the story *The Banyan Tree*, he writes:

"My first friend was a small gray squirrel. Arching his back and sniffing into the air, he seemed at first to resent my invasion of his privacy. But when he found that I did not arm myself with catapult or air gun, he became friendly"

Sometimes Bond discloses a feeling of ingratitude that creeps over his heart that somehow humans are not trustworthy for the animals, he further writes:

"He was a young squirrel and his relatives and friends probably thought him foolish and headstrong for trusting a human"<sup>3</sup>

Bond provides a living expression to his every scene either that a common pet fight or about a classic drama legend like the fight of a cobra and a mongoose. In the story *The Banyan Tree* he describes that fight in such a way that readers feel themselves being compelled to read the entire story.

"I was feeling drowsy myself, wondering if I should go to the pond and have a swim with Ramu and his buffaloes, when I saw a huge black cobra gliding out of a clump of cactus. At the same time a mongoose emerged from the bushes and went straight for the cobra"<sup>4</sup>

Besides it, Bond is perfectly familiar with the animal's behavior and in his stories we realize this fact. As in the story, *Grandpa fights an Ostrich*, he provides a general as well as scientific account of animal behavior:

"To take this shortcut it was necessary to cross an ostrich camp or farm. To venture across these 'camps' in the breeding season especially on foot, can be dangerous for during this time the male birds are extremely ferocious"<sup>5</sup>

The description of animals' encounter with humans is very exciting and thrilling in such a way that it seems we are a part of it. As he further describes:

"Believing discretion to be better part of valour, I turned and run towards the fence. But it is an unequal race. What were my steps of two or three feet against the creature's great strides of sixteen to twenty feet?"<sup>6</sup>

In *Tiger-Tiger Burning Bright*, the beast symbolizes nobility. It represents the soul of India. Tiger safeguards the jungle and the villagers against infiltration of the outsiders. It protects their rights and cultural heritage. Therefore when the last tiger shot they feel themselves unprotected, unguarded. They feel:

"Something had gone out of their lives as long as the tiger had been there, and the villagers had heard it roar at night, they had known that they were secure but now the tiger had gone it was as though a protector had gone, leaving the forest open and vulnerable easily destroyable"

Snakes have a distinct place in Indian life and mythology. They are worshipped because they are very close to Lord Shiva. They are also the incarnation of late forefathers in present form. Rani in *The Room of Many Colours* gets hysterical when the boy talks of some snake seen in the garden. She tells a new story of the reptile

Princes, when they die, are born again as snakes. 'All princes?' No, only those, who died before the marriage. Did your prince die, before he could marry you? Yes, and he returned to this garden in the form of a beautiful snake"<sup>8</sup>.

Here Bond's narration indicates his attitude of love and understanding towards other creatures. His treatment of animals and birds is so much interesting that it keeps joining us with the bent of mind of the author. Some beasts like panther, leopard, jackals, reptiles; lizards are suggestive to the particular mood. In the story, *Panther's Moon*, panther is an enigma:

"There are occasions when he provides himself to be most cunning animal under the sun and yet very next day he will walk into an obvious trap that no self-respecting jackal would ever go near"<sup>9</sup>

In one story, Bond combines many things together like excitement, thrill, action, suspense and amazement and narrates them in that way which is impossible to an ordinary author to mingle all these things with animals life. In the story, Grandpa Fights an Ostrich, he describes the behavior of an ostrich like this:

"I moved my hands from my face and there stood the ostrich with one foot raised, ready to rip me open! I could not move. Was the bird going to play with me like a cat with a mouse and prolong the agony?"

Sometimes Bond tries to represent the animals in a sacred form. As we know that in our Hindu religion the animals have been given a pious place for example- the Garuda, the Monkey, Blue jay, squirrel, cow, lion, and many more. In this way, Bond gives us a different outlook towards pets and animals. The story All Creatures Great and Small is a best example of it. He writes:

"Many birds are sacred," said Ramu..... He told me that both the bluejay and the god Shiva were called Nilkanth. Shiva had a blue throat like the bird because out of compassion for the human race he had swallowed a deadly poison which was intended to destroy the world. Keeping the poison in his throat, he did not let it go any further."11

Further he describes about the squirrels one thing is more realistic in this sense that the logic behind the myths seems quite natural as he describes:

"Lord Krishna loved squirrels" said Ramu. He would take them in his arms and stroke them with his long fingers. That is why they have four dark lines down their backs from head to tail. Krishna was very dark and the lines are the marks of his fingers"12

Ruskin Bond not only presents the religious point of view about the animals but the humanistic approach also and a great example of his humanism towards the animals, we find in the story The Monkey, where he writes about the monkeys:

"Never shoot a monkey. It's not only that they're sacred to Hindus but they are rather human"13

Bond's description of animals view is quite realistic and different from any other author. It seems that he has portrayed the real picture of animal before us, as he describes the monkeys in a story:

They were handsome creatures, their fur a silver- grey, their tails long and sinuous. They leapt gracefully from tree to tree and were very polite and dignified in their behavior towards each other- unlike the bold rather crude red monkeys of the plains some of the younger ones scampered about on the hill side playing and wrestling with each other like school boys"14

Besides it, Bond is quite worried about the future of the animals and their extinction in India. He wants to convey the message "save the animals." We should bother about the security and safety of the animals. He writes in the story The Leopard:

"The Leopard, like other members of the cat family, is nearing extinction in India and I was surprised to find one so close to Mussorie. Probably the deforestation that had been taking place in the surrounding hills had driven the deer into the green valley; and the leopard naturally had followed".15

Sometimes he raises the issue of the rights of the animals. In the story All Creatures Great and Small, he conveys this message:

"It is also important that we respect them, 'said Grandfather, 'We must acknowledge their rights. Everywhere birds and animals are finding it more difficult to survive because we are trying to destroy both them and their forests. They have to keep moving as the trees disappear",16

In this way we find that Bond is a perfect artist of the characters of birds and animals. He loves to write about them and no doubt they are one of the most important parts of his works. Now we can say that Bond's stories on pets, birds and animals have an immensely rich future. Its variety and vividness shall continue to grant it a recognized place and position in the world's literature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

None.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

## NOTES & REFERENCES

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