

# Treatment of Animals in the Short Stories of Ruskin Bond

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Nobody knows the source or person who showered a hidden blessing on mankind by introducing the art of storytelling. The age-old traditions of tell tales served various purposes simultaneously. At one side tales were the source of entertainment, sharing and exchange 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 towns 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.

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 The 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." \*1*

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 determined to continue his schooling and ultimately succeeds in forcing the animal to change 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". \*2*

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". \*3*

Bond provides a living expression to his every scene either that is a common pets fight or about a classic drama legend like the fight of a cobra and mongoose. In the story **The Banyan Tree** he describes this fight in such a way that readers feel their selves compelling to read the entire story:

*"I was feeling drowsy myself, wandering 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". \*4*

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. \*5*

The description of animal's encounters 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 the better part of valour, I turned and run towards the fence. But it was an unequal race. What were my steps of two or three feet against the creature's great strides of sixteen to twenty feet?" \*6*

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. The 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 were secure but the tiger had gone it was as though a protector had gone, leaving the forest open and vulnerable, easily destroyable.” \*7*

Snakes have a distinct plane 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 **The Room of Many Colours** got 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 snakes. ‘All princes?’ No, only 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.” \*8*

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 proves 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.” \*9*

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 a ordinary author to mingle all these things with animals life. In the story **Grandpa fights an Ostrich** he describes the motion of suspense 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?” \*10*

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.

## Bibliography

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