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## **Relationships in the Select Short Stories of Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das: Psychoanalytical Perspective**

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### **Abstract:**

The present paper attempts to analyse the select short stories of Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das from a psychoanalytical perspective to know how psychic mechanism influences the relationship established between or among the characters. Human beings create bondage among their associates to satisfy all sorts of their needs. In case of any failures or disappointments in that pursuit, human beings endure the psychic disturbance thus resulting in conflicts in the established relationship among them. However, their conscious mind represses the psychic frustration and confusion to avoid the unwanted problems that destroy the inner peace by applying defence mechanisms like rationalization, displacement, delusion etc. By doing so the relationship among human beings are conserved. Yet the defence mechanisms in some situations frustrate or confuse people and produce adverse results too. Thus this paper analyses the role played by the psychic mechanisms depicted in the select short stories of the select authors to identify whether these depicted mechanisms strengthen or weaken the relationship among the characters.

**Keywords:** Relationship- Short Stories- Ruskin Bond- Manoj Das- Psychoanalytical-Perspective.

Man as a social being establishes relationship with fellow beings to fulfil their needs. Unlike other organisms, human beings' mental faculty is developed and the developed mental state enables them to be attached with one another for their livelihood. For humans' sustenance they have to depend on each other and in this process a network of relationship is developed among human beings. In maintaining this relationship as good, strong and healthy, human psyche plays a vital role. The established relationship can be healthy or unhealthy

according to the psyche of the individual who is involved in it. As the temperament of the individual changes, the nature of the relationship also gets changed. This fact is very well projected in the literary works as literature deals with the life of the characters. Thus the present paper analyse the select short stories of Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das from psychoanalytical perspective to know how psyche of the characters act on moulding the relationship established among them.

It is a known fact that the established relationship among the individuals is a step forward to fulfil all the human needs; the needs include physiological, economical and emotional needs. In this process the individuals expect to be treated in the desired way by one another. In case of any failures in their expectations they get disappointed and as a result they become frustrated and their attitudes totally get changed. This disappointment makes them aggressive and even insane. And in that challenging situation Sigmund Freud's 'Defence Mechanisms' come into action to avoid the unfruitful frustration, wrath and pain in the characters' psyche.

Defence Mechanism is a psychic procedure to reduce unwanted scorn in human beings and restore their psychic balance. In the select authors' fictions both psychic symptoms and Defence Mechanisms are reflected through the behaviour and actions of the characters. Hence the paper deals with certain psychic mechanisms like aggression, frustration, confusion and defence mechanisms like displacement, delusion, projection, withdrawal and identification to overcome those psychic trauma that are embedded in their short fictions to know the effects of those mechanisms in shaping the relationship depicted among their characters.

Defence mechanisms function unconsciously to maintain the psychic balance by reducing the destructive wrath and erase the unfruitful confusion and depression. Displacement is an unconscious defence mechanism where the mind substitutes either a new aim or a new object for goals that are unachieved or felt in their original form to be dangerous or unacceptable. In case of displacement the unnecessary impulses are displaced from the original source of the anxiety to something that are powerless of a threat. Delusion, the other defence mechanism depicted in the select authors' works, is defined as a false belief which a person firmly holds despite the logical absurdity of that belief. Delusions are symptomatic of mental disorders and major depression; the intensity, extent and coherence of which vary according to the temperament of the personality. Identification is a psychological process

whereby a person's deep involvement with another human being or an object. The other mechanism, Projection is the psychological process where one represents the image of a particular thing or subject in another one. The psychological theory views this tendency as a defence mechanisms whereby an enviable or unpleasant traits, impulses or ideas that arise out of inability to acquire something may get vanished. Another defence mechanism withdrawal is a psychological term that refers to the tendency to escape from or avoid situations that may be experienced as emotionally or psychologically challenging. Rationalization refers to our attempt to logically justify something that is illogical or unacceptable by resorting to some lame, but seemingly plausible reason but not an excuse. People resort to rationalization either when they know that they have done something that they should not have done, when they can't do something that they want to do or when they want to convince themselves the things are not so bad after all. So they try to come up with lame reasons or excuses to justify themselves

In the fictional works of Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das, who are the literary doyens, various psychic mechanisms can be implied to interpret the role played by human psyche in the relationship established among or between the characters. Most of their characters are flat characters whose attitudes keep changing in due course of narration; that they deserve to analyse psychologically. It is viewed that when their characters endure a difficult or challenging situation, they reflect their psychic disturbance through their behaviour and actions; such disturbance that affects psyche is named as psychoneurosis. Psychoneurotic state in an affected human being may sustain within them for some week or some months.

Many of Bond and Das' characters endure the same issue of psychoneurosis. When their characters experience difficult or challenging situations in their established relationship with their fellow beings, changes in the behaviour can be witnessed. In Bond's short story "Chachi's Funeral", Sunil a ten year old boy who receives scolding from his aunt very often for his mischievous behaviour once got thrash from her for breaking honey bottle into pieces. He becomes aggressive as his pride got hurt and decides to kill his aunt. His wrath becomes neutralized when Madhu, his cousin substitutes aunt's portrait for their aunt to stab it to vent out the aggressive wrath of Sunil. In complete wrath he stabs the portrait thrice and gets relieved. Here one of the most common defence mechanisms 'displacement' demolishes the anger of Sunil and the relationship between Sunil and his aunt is conserved.

As soon as Sunil's anger gets vanished tears roll on his cheeks and he feels sorry for his aunt and flow to her. After seeing her, he cries aloud by holding his arms around her waist with love and affection, "Oh Chachi! ....I love you so much. Please don't leave us" ("Chachi's Funeral", 30). Thus the psychological factor 'aggression' in Sunil is pacified by the defence factor displacement of aunt's portrait for aunt by Madhu and creates a healthy relationship between Sunil and his aunt. However, the defence mechanism will not give favourable or adverse results in all occasions. On analysing the same story it is revealed that the scorn of Sunil's aunt on Sunil is not really on him but on his parents who work in an office and leave his aunty at home with household works. It causes depression in her and she let out her depression by showering her wrath on Sunil. Here Sunil is displaced for his parents to receive the envious wrath of his aunt.

Displacement mechanism can be applicable in another story of Bond "Sita and the River". In this Sita displaces a doll as her friend to share her feelings. Sita is a motherless ten year old girl living with her grandparents in an island. Her father moves to town in search of job. Once the island was devastated which made the other families to move out of the island. Being the only family in that island Sita does not have opportunity to have any friends. Therefore she displaces a ragged cloth doll as her friend to share her feelings and discloses the secrets if any:

The doll was someone to talk to, when the nights were long and sleep elusive... sometimes Sita wanted to have secrets and though there were no special secrets in her life, she made up a few because it was fun to have them. And if you have secrets, you must have a friend to share them with. Since there were no other children on the island Sita shared her secrets with the rag doll, whose name was Mumta ("Sita and the River", 181-182).

The rise of water in the river due to heavy rain in the monsoon and the poor health condition of her grandmother worries her much. In a desperate situation Sita starts to speak with Mumta.

'Mumta, whispered Sita in the dark, starting one of her private conversations. 'Do you think grandmother will get well again?'

Mumta always answered Sita's question, even though the answers were really Sita's answers.

‘She is very old said Mumta.

‘Do you think the river will reach the hut’ asked Sita

‘If it keeps raining like this, and the river keeps rising, it will reach the hut’.

‘I am afraid of the river, Mumta. Aren’t you afraid?’

‘Don’t be afraid the river has always been good to us’ (182).

Sita regards the doll as her soul mate. After losing it in the flood she never has mind to get another doll. Thus she refuses to get the new doll offered by Phambiri, the man who has helped her when she and Vijay reach the land from flood. Through Mumta, Sita fulfils her emotional needs. Besides displacement, delusion another Psychic mechanism is used by Bond in this story. Delusion is an illusionary that is created to gratify the inner needs by a person’s staunch desire for something. Next to Mumta, Sita grew intimate with Vijay. Vijay is the one who has saved Sita when she is carried away by flood. Though Vijay is completely a stranger to Sita a deep friendly bond is established between the two children. Vijay takes care of Sita as a mother and that makes her to consider him as God. With the help of Vijay, Sita safely returns to her island with her grandfather who has gone to town for her grandmother’s treatment. After returning home Sita intends to meet Vijay again and her deep desire to meet him gives her delusion of his presence in her island. “Sometimes Sita thought she saw a boat coming down the river, and she would run to meet it; but usually there was no boat, Or, if there was, it belonged to a stranger or to another fisherman” (208). In the busy schedule of household work which does not give time to think about her dead grandmother, Vijay and her brief journey with Vijay has given her immense pleasure. However, her delusion keeps her bond alive and strengthens her affection for Vijay. Towards the end of the story her delusion comes true as Vijay arrives to meet Sita in her island.

A sort of delusion observed in the story of Manoj Das is caused due to mental aberrations react to non-existent sensory stimuli such as hearing non-existent sounds; seeing non-existent object or person; smelling non-existent odours or tasting non-existent substances. This sort of aberration is experienced by one when he or she is in frustrated and confused state. In the story “The Vengeance” the central character Vilas Singh is affected by such mental aberration due to the frustration of failing in his attempt to kill Bahadur. Once Vilas Singh and Bahadur were in fond of Sumati, a prostitute, both the men were totally possessive by Sumati but she showed her favour to Bahadur. Bahadur kills her to assert his

ultimate right on her for which Vilas Singh wanted to take revenge on Bahadur. Manoj Das vividly explicits the psychic condition of a person who is highly disappointed in his love pursuit through Vilas Singh. The disappointment of Vilas Singh in his love frustrates him and makes him insane.

In frustrated state, the animal instinct of Vilas Singh comes into being and makes him more aggressive to possess destructive quality. The vengeance that lies in unconscious mind leads Vilas Singh to forget his family and his newly married wife. The continuous failures in his murder attempt depress him much; finally he becomes more aggressive on hearing the news of Bahadur's death and loses his psychic balance. He cannot accept Bahadur's death which is not caused by him. He runs into the nearby forest in rage with inner fire of not killing Bahadur. After a couple of months when he returns to his village, his inner fire gets diminished as a consequence of his living with Hidamba Baba even though the urge for vengeance is not rooted out. Even he does not want the vengeance to be rooted out. The desire for taking revenge on Bahadur, despite his death is alive in the psyche of Vilas Singh. This shows how his psychic state is possessed by his psychological drive for taking revenge. His wrath is demolished when he hears the news of the birth of his son. It delights him and he wishes to lead his life for his son and his innocent wife. However, the intension of taking revenge flees in a second at once he sees Bahadur in his own child. Here the delusion of Vilas Singh will destroy the harmony of his family and him. Thus familial relationship gets spoilt due to delusion that leads to destructive result.

Identification is also a kind of mental mechanism which can be applied in his story "The Crooked Staff". In this story, identification of dead Rudranath is found in Rintoo. Rintoo is a college student who once humiliates Rudranath, a retired lecturer by comparing him with his crooked walking stick when he has spent his time in river bank with his friends. But poor Rudranath believes him as his young friend and starts meeting him regularly and gives him lecture for hours in their hostel veranda. Rintoo being irritated avoids Rudranath by staying in his friend's house. After some days Rudranath's son meets Rintoo and informs the death of Rudranath and gives his father's walking stick to him as that has been his father's wish written in the will of his father. Rintoo takes the walking stick into his room so carefully as if he carries a child and after that a loud cry comes from his room. The following day Rintoo's friends witness him with Rudranath's walking stick as a gesture of Rudranath who identifies himself with his own stick. Time spent with that professor unknowingly influences Rintoo's psyche. Thus he assimilates to the behaviour of the dead professor in his absence.

On analysing the stories of Manoj Das it is observed that indigestible failures and frustration evolved out of the death of near and dear ones result in secluding a person from society. People enduring such stoical pain develop a negative tendency towards the things and persons around them and avoid their presence with any other company in fear of losing them too. That fear exists in the unconscious mind and hinders the particular person to avoid the presence of people and prefer seclusion. This attitude of a person is termed as withdrawal in psychology. Withdrawal, a psychic feature, is noticeable in Anjan Sharma, a chief character of Das in “The Shadow”. Sharma secludes himself from the society as his laboratory has become prey to fire set by an anonymous envious person. Sharma is a popular scientist who deserves to get public’s appreciation for his original works. He was in the peak of his inventions when his laboratory had been burnt. This incident makes him to disappear from the public’s presence as the destruction of his laboratory is an undesirable event which disturbs his conscience as his dream is also burnt along with his laboratory.

Besides pain and frustration, the death of his beloved wife intensifies his pain. He madly loves his wife. Her eternal departure puts him in extreme dejection and thus he secludes himself from the society. After his wife’s death no one sees him, he shuts himself in his millionaire friend’s mansion. Yet his conscious mind repressed all his frustrations and pain within himself; he does not express his regrets outside rather he hides all his feelings inside his mind until his dog’s death. The death of his dog which is his last companion nurtured by his beloved wife brings out all his feelings. He gives a loud cry and that follows changes in his behaviour. He feels loneliness and that makes him mad. In deserted state, his uncontrollable frustration gives him rage and he starts to hate his own shadow. To quote Sharma: “why must you keep me company when everybody else-even my dog- has deserted me? Get lost I say” (“The Shadow”, 162). The loss of his beloved wife makes Sharma to withdraw all his associates and in deep frustration he is witnessed by the public as he lays dead.

Expectations in relationship lead to disappointments and failures. Due to failures and disappointments one’s relationship with people around becomes weaker; also the particular person who has many expectations suffers from depression. And that depression leads to immorality, drug addiction and other forms of undesirable behaviour which completely destroy the life of the person. Such kind of character is seen in “The Martial Expedition” by Manoj Das. In that story the prince of Harikpur married an aristocratic, non-princely girl who captivates him by her dance performance. Within fortnight of his marriage, he becomes

gloom. He thinks that he misses something from his wife which inspires him to marry her by disregarding various marriage proposals from many princely families. However, not marrying a princess is not reason for his melancholy rather the reason is he expected his wife to have the same posture and gesture she had while doing the dance performance throughout her life. After the reason for his melancholy is exposed, his wife frankly explains the impossibilities to satisfy her husband's silly wish and this frank rejection shocks him. As his wife fails to satisfy his expectation his gloom rises higher and he even refuses to smile. Soon after his wife went abroad leaving her desperate husband in the company of his father and his servant Mohan. After the death of his father the prince becomes Raja, and this news is informed to his wife on her return. She is surprised to see him with frequent, irrelevant laughter. Her answer to simple question, "How are you?" made him to laugh a lot.

She is puzzled by her husband's change. She does not know whether to be happy or sad because of her husband's frequent laughter. As a wife she fails to understand the psychic trauma of her husband. The disappointment he got from his wife is replaced by the power he acquired after his father's death. He displaces his new power as 'Raja' to his unfulfilled expectations in his married life. But the abolition of princely system again pushes him into greater depression. This makes them to shift from their native place to city, and there he is diagnosed and told by physician that Raja Shahib has been affected by manic depressive psychosis. His attitude shifts between melancholy and ecstasy. The desire for excitement and adventure as ruler is so intense in the psyche of prince. As he fails in satisfying all his expectations he feels depressed and becomes addict to alcohol. All time he prefers alcohol than food. His servant and well-wisher Mohan, who nurses him after the death of his mother cries literally to convince him to take food. As a soul partner, his wife should be with him in all his hard times and that has been his expectation too, but she fails to do so. It is noticed that she has left him alone and gone to her father's house. The Raja Shahib gets frustrated with his domestic life. And becomes addict to alcohol, though his friend and his motherly servant are there to console and comfort him.

He called a meeting of the partners of his company at Raja Shahib's bungalow. Rani Shahiba was then away at her father's. The prudent and enterprising Chowdhury had arranged for a brand of liquor which Raja Shahib madly loved but could not afford ("The Martial Expedition", 115).

The addiction to alcohol is the result of his psychic depression as alcohol makes him to be unconscious of his bitter reality.

Like wise Ruskin Bond's "A Love of Long Ago" reflects how psychic mechanism both withdraws and preserves the love of narrator and his lady love Kamala. Narrator of this story falls in love with Kamala at his first sight but the economical status of both separates them. The narrator as a freelance writer is economically dependent. He happens to meet Kamala when she brings refreshment which is given by Motti Bibi for him instead of her brother who usually brings for him; usually Motti Bibi, the landowner of the narrator sends him Kanji, or juices of sugar cane and lime through Kamala's brother. At the very first sight he is fascinated by Kamala's smile. A tender love grows between them. They share few and short moments together when the narrator climbs the steps to reach his room. Though they do not spend much time together, the plan of Kamala's parents to marry her to a forty years old widower causes him great distress and pain. Unable to bear this he plans to elope with her; yet both of their economical situations compel them to drop the plan of elopement. Hence both of them withdraw their love. It shows that their relationship is not intense and it seems to be deliberate break up. The narrator also rationalizes his breakup with her. To quote him: "Had I loved more passionately, more fiercely, I might have felt compelled to elope with Kamala, regardless of the consequences. But it never became an intense relationship" ("A Love of Long Ago", 244).

Here the defence mechanisms 'Withdrawal' and 'Rationalization' play the role in stopping the narrator to grow the relationship between him and her so intense to avoid the unwanted pain and suffering they have to endure in future because of their love.

I thought of running away with kamala when I mentioned it to her, her eyes lit up. She thought it would be great fun. Women in love can be more reckless than men! But I had read too many stories about runaway marriages ending in disaster, and I lacked the courage to go through with such an adventure (244).

However both the narrator and Kamala preserve their love even after their separation through the plants given by the narrator to her. Though Kamala rejects to elope with him, she wants to continue her love through projecting their love in the plants she has got from the narrator. "But before she left for her husband's house, she asked me for some of the plants that I had owned and nourished on my small balcony....My husband's house is on the Delhi road. You

will pass that way. I will keep these flowers where you can see them" (245). Thus their love is preserved through projection.

In "A Case for Inspector Lal", one finds inspector Lal rationalizing the negligence of his duty as an inspector to save an innocent girl who has killed Rani for her chastity. Inspector Lal is an intelligent police officer who has lost his hope to get promotion and remains as an inspector for a long period. His compassionate nature hinders him to attain his promotion. When he is in charge of Panauli, he happens to investigate the murder of dwindling Rani of that locality. He takes much pain in investigating the case. In due course of his enquiry he suspects Kusum, a thirteen year old girl who avoids him at the time of investigation of her father. Soon he copes to establish a good relationship with her. The attachment he has for Kusum does not allow him to send her to jail for her murder, instead he saved her by stroking her head.

Thus both Ruskin Bond and Manoj Das' characters deserve in depth psychological analysis to identify the embedded psychic mechanism in shaping the relationship between or among the characters. The psychic and defence mechanisms like aggression, depression, displacement, delusion, identification, withdrawal and projection that are engrafted in the select short stories which express their staunch role in determining or maintaining the established relationship as healthy or unhealthy one. Also the analysis reflects the influence of such mechanisms in the behaviour of the characters which is more important in maintaining the relationship established among their associates.

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