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A Quest of Identity and Belongingness in Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof*

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Abstract:

Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* explores the experiences of Rusty, a sixteen year old boy of the European community. Set in the early years after Indian independence, the narrative, categorically falls into the genre of young adult fiction. The thrust area of the novel is the growth in the character of Rusty, a teenager, an adolescent and a young adult. This paper attempts to explore the growth pattern in the character of Rusty from an irresponsible teenager to a responsible young adult. However, at the end, Rusty has grown, has become mature, and has achieved a purpose in his life. The paper delves into the trials and tribulations of an adolescent's quest of identity and belongingness in a world full of risk and adventure.

Keywords: young adult, teenager, adolescent, youngster, belongingness, identity etc.

Introduction

Ruskin Bond, India's most celebrated writer in English, is a well known author of 'children and young adults'. His first book *The Room on the Roof* is 'a moving tale of love and friendship.' The narrative falls under the genre of young adult fiction. The novel portrays the struggle of adjustment that arises when Rusty runs away from a sheltered and disciplined atmosphere to a place where life is full of risk and adventure.

The narrative unfolds at various levels, and depicts the character graph of Rusty from an irresponsible youth to a responsible person. The main concern of the novel is the growth in the character of Rusty. Rusty, we meet in the beginning, is different from the Rusty we meet at the end. At the end, he is a matured person who is worried about his life and future.

Companionship

A teenager always craves for company. Rusty also wants companionship with the children of his own age group. In the European community where Rusty lived, there was no one of his age. He wanted to mix up and socialize with the people of his own age group. Somi, Suri and Ranbir were ready to provide the 'much needed companionship' to Rusty. At this age, a young adult does not believe in caste, color and religion. These

things are immaterial to them. Rusty wanted to socialize with the children who lived in the 'Indian bazaar'. The colorful Indian bazaar bustling with noise and activities enticed Rusty. It was so different from the sheltered and protected life of the English quarters away from the prying eyes of the Indians.

Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* is a novel about 'the quest for freedom and self-identity'. At this age an adolescent seeks freedom from the tyranny of the adult. They are unwilling to accept the authoritarianism of the elderly people. A disciplined way of life repels them.

By birth, Rusty was a European. His parents were not alive. Rusty lived with Mr. Harrison and his wife in an English style bungalow. These people did not like mixing with the Indian masses. For them "India started a mile away, where the bazaar began." For people like Mr. Harrison, Indian bazaar was a place – 'full of thieves and germs', but the same 'Indian bazaar fascinated Rusty.'

A young adult is usually not submissive; he is a rebel. He does not want to follow rules. Rusty did not like the way he was treated by Mr Harrison. Since Rusty's parents were not alive, he was, 'owned by Mr. Harrison'. However, Rusty wanted to live a free and independent life.

Loneliness

Adolescence is an age of loneliness. The young people have yet to understand the nuances of life. They have a feeling that the whole world is against them. They are not able to clarify their position to the people around them. This makes them feel more lonely. They are not able to communicate properly. They feel that they are misunderstood. This increases the intensity of loneliness in their innocent hearts.

Rusty is very lonely. He always felt miserable in the company of the Europeans who had preferred to stay in India after Independence. In the beginning when he left Somi and Ranbir in the dark, he felt very lonely.

It had stopped raining, but the boy was unaware of this; he was almost home, and that was a miserable thought. To his surprise and disgust, he found himself wishing he had gone into Dehra with Somi. He stood in the sidetrack and stared down the empty road; and, to his surprise and disgust, he felt immeasurably lonely.(Bond, 6)

Circumstances had made Rusty lonely. His parents were not alive. He had no real friend in his life. He always longed for company. "Rusty, being the only young person in the community, was the centre of every one's attention, particularly the ladies. He was also very lonely." (Bond, 10)

A Secret Plan

An adolescent usually does not trust the elders. There is a tendency among them to go beyond the lines drawn. As a part of the European community, Rusty was forbidden to go down the hills; he was not allowed to mix up with the boys in the Indian bazaar. But this did not deter Rusty. He made a secret plan. He yearned and craved for the company of the boys from the Indian bazaar. Rusty knew that Mr. Harrison, his guardian, was going away, and hence, he had a secret plan. He wanted to explore the Indian bazaar in the city of Dehra, a place away from the European settlement.

So he threw himself on the bed and visualized the morrow...where should he go-- into the hills again, into the forest? Or should he listen to the devil in his heart and go into the bazaar? (Bond, 11)

Rusty was strictly told not to go to the Indian bazaar. But, the attraction was too much for him to resist. Once Mr Harrison left for Delhi, Rusty listened to the 'devil of his heart', and went out. This was the first time he had taken his steps out to the bazaar. He had defied the law, and had crossed the boundary. He was 'excited, nervous and hesitant.'

Rusty's heart was beating fast as he reached the Clock Tower. He was about to defy the law of his guardian and of his community. He stood at the Clock Tower, nervous, hesitant, biting his nails. He was afraid of discovery and punishment, but hungering curiosity impelled him forward. (Bond, 14)

This was the adventure of a European boy trying to have the first hand experience of the 'real India'.

Growing Consciousness

A young adult is very much conscious of himself. Rusty is at a growing stage. He admires his own appearance. There was a change in his consciousness, an inner development, a radical transformation. Like all other young people, Rusty wanted to feel mature, more than that of his age.

Rusty spent much of his time studying himself in the dressing table mirror; he was able to ignore his pimples and see a grown man, worldly and attractive. Though only sixteen, he felt much older. (Bond,11)

It's not unusual for a person of Rusty's age to think about himself. It's a typical characteristic of an adolescent to think like a grown up man.

Retaliation

Many times a young adult suffers the whims and fancies of an authoritarian guardian. He wants 'to argue, to rebel, but there is a fear of beating and thrashing.' In this case,

Mr. Harrison was an authoritarian guardian. He was a tyrant who thrashed Rusty mercilessly.

Rusty wanted to argue, longed to rebel, but fear of Mr. Harrison held him back. He wanted to resist the man's authority, but he was conscious of the supple Malacca cane in the glass cupboard. (Bond, 24)

Rusty's helplessness in the clutches of Mr. Harrison is evident. That day when he came back in the evening, he was severely beaten by Mr Harrison, and nobody came to rescue him. Later "Rusty buried his head in his pillow and tried to shut out reality, he faced a dream in which he was thrashing Mr. Harrison until his guardian begged for mercy."

Rusty was, in no way, able to retaliate, but like all other adolescents, he was reluctant to accept the tyranny and authoritarianism of Mr. Harrison. Defying the order of his guardian, Rusty went out to the bazaar to play Holi, the Indian festival of color, with the local boys in the bazaar.

When the 'day of feverish emotion' came to an end, he was exhausted, but happy. He wanted the revelry 'to continue forever'. He was 'lying in the forest', and did not want to go home. "He did not want to leave the forest, it was safe, its earth soothed him, gathered him in, so that the pain of his body became a pleasure..." At last when he came home, he was again severely beaten by Mr Harrison with the 'supple Malacca cane.' But this time Rusty could not control himself; he retaliated. He "flared into a temper, showing some spirit for the first time in his life." He did not want to accept the fact that he had done anything wrong. He said, "I'm no better than the sweeper boy, but I'm as good as him. I'm as good as you. I'm as good as anyone."

In his fury and anger, Rusty did something that he would have only dreamt of doing. The cut across his face 'maddened him'. In the fit of anger, Rusty started beating Mr. Harrison mercilessly. He felt 'a sense of power inside'. He felt that he was no longer a child. He was a man, and it was 'a wonderful discovery.'

Rusty hit the man again and again, wildly and awkwardly, but with the giddy thrill of knowing he could do it: he was a child no longer, he was seventeen, he was a man. He could inflict pain, that was a wonderful discovery; there was a power in his body—a devil or a god—and he gained confidence in his power; and he was a man!" (Bond, 36)

This was a turning point in Rusty's life. The realization came to him, and it brought a change in him. Nothing changed outside, but inside everything changed. Rusty appeared to be the same teenage boy, but he was not the same person altogether. He had grown. He had become a man. There was a transformation from 'being to becoming.'

Rusty Left Mr. Harrison's Home

A noticeable trend, one can find at this age, is that a considerable number of young people run away from their home. Rusty left Mr. Harrison's house, and ran away to the bazaar. "One thing was certain, he would never return to his guardian." The crowded bazaar was 'empty and deserted.' In the dark and deserted bazaar Rusty felt 'helpless and lonely.' He found the 'vast, naked loneliness of the maidan, and his own insignificance'. Like all other youngsters of his age, it was easy for him to leave the comfort of the home, but he had no plan about his own future. He had no money in his pocket. He was helpless and forlorn.

Love and Friendship

Friends hold a significant place in the life of an adolescent. They are a ray of hope. Rusty was provided food and a place to sleep in the night by Somi, an Indian boy of his own age. He felt very comfortable in the house of Somi. "In Somi's 'middle class Indian house', Rusty felt 'safe and happy'. There was a feeling of bond and trust. There was no feeling of obligation from either side. He says 'in true friendship, there is no formalities and no obligation'.

Rusty was now homeless. There was no source of income. It was Somi who not only gave him food and shelter, but also arranged a job for him. The job was to teach English to Kishen, the spoiled son of Mr Kapoor. In return Rusty would get meal and a place to live. The European community disowned him, and the Indian part of the town gladly received him.

Rusty was independent now. He started enjoying his newly found freedom. He did not have to worry about Mr. Harrison's strict rules and regulations. For Rusty, the transformation had begun. He was not the helpless boy living at the mercy of his guardian. Now he was free. He had a job, and he had friends. He got an identity. A new phase of his life had begun, and he was happy.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is 'a primordial urge' that begins with the 'age of puberty.' Because of his age, it is quite natural for a young adult to notice such things. In a lighter vein, Rusty notices:

When a large butterfly settled on the missionary's wife's palatial bosom, she felt flattered, and allowed it to remain there. Her garden was beginning to burst into flowers, giving her great pleasure—her husband gave her none. (Bond, 07)

The Room on the Roof as a young adult novel is significant in many ways. This is a novel written by Ruskin Bond when he himself was an adolescent. Hence, it was quite natural for him to be attracted to these things. At the age of seventeen, Rusty was able to notice the huge breasts of Mrs. Harrison that he called 'palatial'. He had also started understanding the woman's nature that she was 'flattered to see a butterfly' sitting on her breasts, and she had 'allowed it to remain there.' He also noticed the growth of flowers in

the garden that gave her a lot of pleasure, and this pleasure was compared to the pleasure a woman derives from her man. Rusty also knew that her husband, Mr. Harrison, was not able to give her any pleasure, and she felt compensated by the flowers blooming in her garden.

Rusty and Meena

Attraction towards opposite sex is an 'intrinsic part' of human nature. It is more intense in the case of an adolescent. Rusty saw the ravishing Meena Kapoor for the first time in the house of Mr. Kapoor. She was 'a young, charming hostess.' In her 'red sari and white silk jacket, her hair plaited and scented with jasmine, she looked stunning.' Rusty was smitten by her. He wanted to complement her : "Mrs. Kapoor, you are beautiful." Not only Meena, but even Kishen, the 'spoiled brat' of the Kapoors looked 'curiously attractive' to Rusty. Surprisingly, even Kishen liked him. Moreover, he was liked and respected by Meena Kapoor. It was a case of 'mutual acceptance', and Rusty 'was ready to fall in love.'

And when he lay down to sleep, he saw her in his mind's eye, and for the first time took note of her beauty, of her warmth and softness; and made up his mind that he would fall in love with her. (Bond, 63)

In the beginning, Meena 'felt a kind of sisterly affection for him; but he was stumbling into her.' Later on even Meena responded passionately.

Secret and illicit relationship is not uncommon in the life of a young adult, and most people cherish it in the rest of their life. In the middle of the narrative, the experiences of Rusty become more 'intense and passionate.' This was when he became deeply involved with Meena Kapoor. It is this experience and involvement that brought him a sense of maturity and responsibility.

The climax of Rusty's relationship with Meena came on the picnic day, when Rusty and Meena drifted in the deep of the forest. They were standing behind the bushes holding hands together. They did not want to move. They were in a state of forgetfulness. They embraced and kissed each other passionately.

It was a clumsy, awkward kiss, but fiercely passionate, and Meena responded, tightening the embrace, returning the fervor of the kiss. They stood together in the shadows, Rusty intoxicated with beauty and sweetness, Meena with freedom and the comfort of being loved. (Bond, 86)

Rusty and Meena were the two passionate lovers who had opened their hearts to each other. They accepted each other.

Rusty was a seventeen year old boy. This was his first experience of being close to a woman. It was purely a physical love. He had repeatedly said to Meena "I love you."

Once Meena was cutting the hair of Rusty, and she asked, “Don’t you trust me?” Rusty replied, ‘I love you.’

It was a strange and awkward relationship between Rusty and Meena. He only thought about the beauty of Meena, but Meena had a different expectation from Rusty. She was a mature and responsible lady. Her priorities were her husband and her son. She did not trust her drunkard and irresponsible husband; neither did she trust her mischievous son.. Ironically, she trusted Rusty whom she had known only for a few days.

Meena trusted Rusty, and Rusty loved Meena. Strange is the way human relationship evolves. Meena was taking Mr. Kapoor for a job in Delhi. She was not taking Kishen with her. She had submitted herself to Rusty. She had a strong sense of belief that it was only Rusty who could take care of Kishen, as it is evident from the following extract:

Rusty, I have a favor to ask you, said Meena.

We are not taking Kishen Bhaiya, as he is only a nuisance value, so will you look after him and keep him out of mischief ? (Bond,93)

The day Meena was taking Mr. Kapoor to Delhi, she was looking tired and restless. She was quite worried about Kishen. She took her seat into the car. Rusty gave her the small suitcase she was taking to Delhi, and “when he did, their hands touched. She laced her fingers with his, and gave him a quick smile, and squeezed his fingers.” The car left, and Rusty ‘felt like crying.’ He was feeling ‘a sense of loss.’

The love and trust of Meena had transformed Rusty. Meena had given him the custody of Kishen, and it was very important. From now onwards, Kishen was Rusty’s responsibility. However, the sudden death of Meena shattered Rusty.

Rusty and Kishen

Ruskin Bond’s *The Room on the Roof* is not only about Rusty and Meena, it is also about Rusty and Kishen. Underneath, a relationship was developing between Rusty and Kishen. Both of them were adolescents, though Rusty was a bit older than Kishen. Rusty had opened his heart to Kishen, that he was in love with his mother. Surprisingly, Kishen was not angry. He was, rather, confused. “I’m not jealous. But it sounds funny.”

Rusty’s relationship with Kishen was working on a different plane. Together they used to go to shops, and roam around the alleys of the bazaar. Kishen was not a friend. He was ‘like a brother, more than a friend.’

Rusty felt protectively towards the boy, for a bond of ‘genuine affection’ had grown between the two. Somi was Rusty’s best friend, in the same way, that Ranbir was a friend, and their friendship was on ‘a high emotional plane’. But Kishen was ‘a brother more than a friend.’ (Bond, 89)

Being a sensitive woman, Meena had noticed the growing friendship between Rusty and Kishen. She knew that Kishen was obstinate, and he could be controlled only by love and trust displayed by Rusty towards Kishen. It was because of this reason, she had given the custody of Kishen to Rusty.

Rusty, Kishen and Mr Kapoor, all, were dependent on Meena. She was the anchor in their life. She was the mast in the ship. Her death was a big blow especially to Rusty and Kishen. The telegram that had brought the death of Meena was a heart breaking news for them. They felt devastated.

There was a terrible silence. Kishen looked helplessly at Rusty, his eyes full of tears and bewilderment; and Rusty could stand the strain no longer, and threw his arms round Kishen, and wept uncontrollably. (Bond, 105)

Both of them were like a rudderless boat. Kishen's aunt wanted him to take to Haridwar, but Kishen did not want to go there. He wanted to live with Rusty.

I'll stay with you.
I can't look after you, Kishen. I haven't got any money, any work.... you must stay with your aunt. I'll come to see you.
You'll never come.
I'll try. (Bond, 107)

In the night Kishen and Rusty were sleeping together. Rusty heard 'Kishen sobbing under the blankets.' 'Oh, Kishen *bhai*, cried Rusty, putting his arms around the boy, 'don't cry, please don't cry. You are making me afraid of myself. Don't be afraid, Kishen. Don't make me feel afraid of myself...' (Bond,108) The grief was unbearable to both the adolescents.

The Misery of Kishen

The Room on the Roof is a novel about the problems of adolescents. Rusty and Kishen both are adolescents. However, Kishen was too innocent to bear the pain. His mother was his anchor, and after the death of his mother it was Rusty he was dependent on. A bond had developed and strengthened between the two. But now Kishen had to go to Haridwar with his aunt. He did not want to go anywhere. He wanted to live with Rusty. Kishen did not trust anybody except Rusty.

Kishen made no effort to conceal his misery.
'I wish you could come, Rusty,' he said.
'I will come and see you one day, be sure of that.' (Bond,109)

Kishen was brought up in convenience and luxury. He was always absorbed with the material comfort; he never had 'any profound thought, but he did have profound feelings, though they were seldom thought or spoken.' At the time of being taken to Haridwar by his aunt, Kishen felt very lonely.

‘Inside of me,’ he said, ‘I am all lonely....’ (Bond, 109)

Rusty was worried about Kishen. Although, Kishan was being taken by his aunt, “it seemed as though he were born away to some strange, friendless world, where no one would know or care for him.” (Bond, 109)

After the death of Meena, Kishen was completely dependent on Rusty. In fact, they were inseparable. Once the tonga left with Kishen and his aunt, ‘Rusty stood on the gate, staring down the road.’ He knew that time had changed, and his life had changed. The death of Meena had changed everything. And now Kishen had gone, and with Kishen a part of his life had gone.’ Life was not going to be the same. ‘There will be other friends, but there will be no Meena and no Kishen.’ Their lives had ‘drifted apart.’

But Kishen was always at the back of his mind. While talking to Somi, he said, “I am afraid for Kishen. I am sure he will give trouble to his relatives, and they are not like his parents. Mr Kapoor will have no say, without Meena.”

The Question of Identity and Belongingness.

From the beginning of the novel Rusty had to face the dilemma of belongingness. He was not able to understand why Mr Harrison did not allow him to go to the market, and to mix up with the boys in the ‘Indian bazaar’.

The point is, I have told you never to visit the bazaar. You belong here, to this house, this road, these people. Don’t go where you don’t belong. (Bond,24)

At heart he knew that Mr Harrison’s house was not the place he wanted to live. He did not know where he belonged to. There was a dilemma. He was a European, but he wanted to mix up with the boys in the Indian bazaar. These boys had provided him the warmth he was craving for. Later on when he met Kishen and Meena, his quest was complete.

It was because of Meena’s trust and response, Rusty had developed a sense of belonging. When Meena was alive, he thought only about Meena, and nothing else. He belonged to Meena. The death of Meena changed the entire perspective. He became introspective. He started suspecting his belongingness?

‘But I don’t belong here, Somi, I don’t belong. I’m a half caste. Even if I have papers, I don’t belong. I’m a half caste. I know it, and that is as good as not belonging anywhere.’ (Bond, 115)

One by one all had gone. Suri, Ranbir, Meena, Kishen and now even Somi was going. These were the people who had supported Rusty when he had left the house of Mr. Harrison. But now everybody had gone.

And, I'm here alone; everyone has gone. (Bond, 116)

Again, Rusty had no anchor in his life. "His life with his guardian was empty and meaningless." He came back again to the same 'frame of mind'. He began to 'fret, to dream, to lose his grip on reality.' He felt that it was the end of his life. "The present was lonely and depressing and the future became a distorted image."

Growth and Maturity

Rusty knew that he could not live in Mr. Kapoor's house forever. He had to move. Death of Meena was too much for him. He knew that "Meena would never return", and Kishen had gone.

The full life of the past few months had suddenly ended, and the present was lonely and depressing; the future became a distorted image, created out of his own brooding fancies. (Bond, 119)

Rusty was not happy with his present circumstances. He longed for something to happen. He started thinking of his future. He knew things which had gone, would not come back. This was a truth of life. Now he wanted to do something. He would like to have an identity in his life. He wanted to be recognized. For him his future was more important. "I am not interested in today, I want tomorrow." A little later he says "I have to break away. I want to be either somebody or nobody. I don't want to be anybody." (Bond,125)

The Transformation

At this stage of the novel, Rusty was no longer the same boy we had met in the beginning. After having gone through all these violent experiences, he has transformed. He started thinking of his future. He knew that Meena had gone, and Kishen had gone too. Life was not going to be the same. In order to forget all these, one evening he drank a lot, but the very next morning, he threw the bottle, and when it started raining, he bathed in the rain, and he felt the change.

The rain was more intoxicating than the alcohol, and it was with difficulty that he restrained himself from shouting and dancing in mad abandon. The force and freshness of the rain brought tremendous relief, washed away the stagnation that had been settling on him, poisoning mind and body. (Bond,123)

It was the time of monsoon, and it rained everyday. Rusty was still living in 'the room on the roof' in the house of Mr. Kapoor. The 'incessant rain' washed the mind of Rusty. He wanted to forget the past, and he was ready to make a new beginning. Most of the time he introspected. "Where do I belong, he wondered, what am I doing, what is going to happen to me..." Now he was determined to break the monotony. He wanted to leave Dehra. He wanted to move.

I cannot live like the gardener, the cook and the water carrier, doing the same task everyday of my life. I am not interested in today, I want tomorrow. I cannot live in this same small room all my life, with a family of lizards, living in other people's homes and never having one of my own. I have to break away. I want to be either somebody or anybody. I don't want to be anybody. (Bond,124)

Rusty's transformation is complete. He is no longer a boy. He is a man. He is worried about his future. He is not interested in doing nothing. Now he has a plan. The time he had left the missionary's house was different. At that time he was in a violent temper. He had rushed without thinking or planning. Now he started thinking and planning. Like a mature person, he started calculating. He wanted to go and talk to the authorities at British High Commission, New Delhi. He was looking forward to an 'assisted passage' to London. However, he had his promises to keep. On his way to Delhi, he wanted to go to Haridwar to meet Kishen.

Coming of Age

Rusty left Dehra, and traveled in a third class compartment of Haridwar Mail. This was the end of the second stage of his life. First stage ended when he had left the missionary's house. The second stage of his life started when he shifted to the house of Mr. Kapoor. The first stage was dull and boring, and the second was too exciting. Now the third stage was about to begin.

He had been cut away from his roots; he had been replanted, had sprung to life, new life. But it was too quick a growth, rootless and he had withered. (Bond,132)

He was only seventeen, but he was feeling old. His experiences had made him feel old. "... and he did not know why, except that he was lost and lonely and tired and old; only seventeen, but old..." There was no excitement left in his life. Moreover, he was not in search of any excitement. He wanted to meet his obligations. He thought that Kishen would be surprised and happy to see him.

However, at Hardwar, Rusty had to face a shocking reality. When he reached at Kishen's aunt's address, he met Mr. Kapoor, and saw his new wife. It was inconceivable for him to know that Mr. Kapoor got married so soon. Besides, when Rusty heard about Kishen, he became quite worried. Mr. Kapoor's young wife told Rusty that Kishen was 'the most cunning thief on both sides of the river' in Hardwar.

First, it was the death of Meena Kapoor, and then the information he received about Kishen left Rusty devastated. Although tired, he did not stop at Mr Kapoor's house. He went out to see Kishen. He was in great hurry. Now, he got a mission in his life. Somehow, he had to meet and reform Kishen. "He was tormented by thoughts of what might have happened to Kishen, of might happen.... (Bond, 138) "

It was Kishen who first saw Rusty,, and he immediately recognized him. But he could not figure out why Rusty was here in Hardwar. Even Rusty saw him, but he was too

hungry and weak to shout. It was Kishen who called him. Rusty noticed 'Kishan's wild condition; the bones protruded from the boy's skin, his hair was knotted'. Kishen was scared. He wanted to know why Rusty was here.

'Why are you here, Rusty?

To see you...'

Why?

I am going away.

How can you go anywhere? You look sick enough to die.

I came to see you, anyway. (Bond, 140)

They sat together and ate watermelon. They understood each other. Kishen told him that he was a thief, and he worked for others. He was tired of police. He wanted to get rid of this life. He wanted to change his life style. Kishen said: "But don't worry, *bhai*, we will not do it in Dehra."

In less than a month, Kishen had become mature and confident. Now more than Rusty, it was Kishen who made all the planning. Kishen said that he was tired of stealing, and he was tired of police. He did not want to continue this job. Kishen had a plan for everything, and Rusty was a great moral support for him.

Then what will we do?

Oh, we will find someone for you to give English lessons. Not one, but many.

And I will start a chat shop. (Bond,141)

Rusty's plan to go to England vanished into thin air. Kishen made all the planning about how to leave Haridwar safely, and go to Dehra. Rusty was amazed to see 'how competent and practical Kishen had become'

Kishen's mind had developed far quicker than his body, and he was a funny cross between an experienced adventurer and a ragged urchin. A month ago he had clung to Rusty for protection; now Rusty looked to Kishen for guidance. (Bond, 142)

They slept in the night on the steps of the river. Early in the morning, when it was still dark, they sat in the small boat. They were inseparable now, and they had their hands held together.

Kishen and Rusty sat crushed together in the middle of the boat. There was no likelihood of their being separated now, but they held hands. (Bond,144)

Rusty was happy to go back to Dehra with Kishen. Now again he got an anchor in his life. Rusty wanted to understand the relationship between him and Kishen. In the boat while crossing the river, an 'old toothless lady' asked Rusty, 'who is the boy with you.' and 'what is he to you?'

Rusty did not answer; he was asking himself the same question: what was Kishen to him? He was sure of one thing, they were both refugees--- refugees from the world. They were each other's shelter, each other's refuge, each other's help. Kishen was a *jungli*, divorced from the rest of mankind, and Rusty was the only one who understood him-- because Rusty too was divorced from mankind. And theirs was a tie that would hold, because they were the only people who knew each other and loved each other. (Bond,144)

This was the relationship between Rusty and Kishen. Rusty decided not to go anywhere. He wanted to continue living in Dehra with Kishen. There was a house vacant for them in Dehra where they could live independently and do something for their future. The idea gave Rusty a feeling of support and stability. His quest of identity and belongingness came to an end.

Conclusion

The Room on the Roof has remained Ruskin Bond's 'masterpiece of adolescence and coming of age.' It has 'brilliantly described the hopes and passions that capture young mind and hearts.' At the end of the narrative Rusty has become mature, and his journey has come to an end. He has found Kishen as a brother and companion, and there is a future lying ahead of him. Now he is not an unruly teenager. He has learned lessons, and has emerged as a mature person who can take responsibilities.

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