

# *TIGER, TIGER, BURNING BRIGHT*

BY

RUSKIN BOND

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# Ruskin Bond (1934 - )



# RUSKIN BOND

- Ruskin Bond was born on 19 May 1934.
- Indian author of British descent. His father British and mother an Anglo-Indian.
- Recipient of Sahitya Akademi award in 1992 for ***Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra***.
- He was awarded Padma Shiri in 1999 and Padma Bhusan in 2014.
- He lost his father at age 10. He recounted his orphaned days in his maiden novel ***The Room on the Roof*** which won him John Llewellyn Rhys Prize (1957) awarded to a British Commonwealth writer under 30.
- He had written *Vagrants in the Valley* in 1956, as a sequel to *The Room on the Roof*. These two novels were published in one volume by [Penguin India](#) in 1993.
- He has written over five hundred short stories, essays and novels, including [The Blue Umbrella](#), *Funny Side Up*, [A Flight of Pigeons](#) and more than 50 books for children.
- He has also published two autobiographies: *Scenes from a Writer's Life* and *Lone Fox Dancing* (2017).
- In his essay, "On being an Indian", he explains his Indian identity, "Race did not make me one. Religion did not make me one. But history did. And in the long run, it's history that counts."
- Ruskin Bond himself has said, "I am as Indian as the dust of plains or the grass of a mountain meadow."

# RUSKIN BOND as an Indian Author

- Though most of English and Anglo Indian families returned to U.K., many of these families chose to remain in India. Ruskin Bond and his mother's family were among such 'whites' who settled in India.
- Critic Aggarwal says, when others were passing through post colonial trauma of displacement, of loss of country, friends and parents, of insecurity and of finance, for Bond, it was only a trauma of a loss of identity. He tried to search his roots in India. (Aggarwal, 66-67)
- During colonial period many British writers presented India as a land of Sadhus and snake charmers'. Wilkie Collins in his the *Moonstone* presented Indians as having clairvoyant abilities. Even Rudyard Kipling also came up with the portrayal of India in his work but India was always looked through the glasses of a colonizer and therefore not very credible. Writers like Raja Rao were content with presenting the 'Vedantic' India only. Writers like Khushwant Singh were busy talking about the preceding and succeeding events of the partition.
- Usha Bande writes, (Bond's) India lives and breathes in the hills. To him trees, mountains and rivers have a special appeal and have as much beauty and as many problems as humans have.
- For Bond, India has never been just a piece of land. It has meant love, simplicity, unity and acceptance. As Bond has always selected north India as the background for his works, one can very clearly see that north India merges in the end into an Indian spirit. Bond himself considers India as a living organism.



# RUSKIN BOND as a Short Story Writer

- Ruskin Bond is among those writers who would care little for the form and the structure of the story. His stories do not fulfill the requirement of a beginning, a middle and an end as most of his stories are abrupt. Bond lays emphasis on the entertainment as well as the message. He is more concerned with message than genre. He is not moralist like Bhabani Bhattacharya, nor is he like Mulk Raj Anand who has highlighted the problems of the oppressed and poor people. Some of his stories may fail in the test of its technicality but they never fail in entertaining value and moral lesson. Most of his stories ‘instruct as well as delight’ us. Bond’s short stories can be classified as stories for children, nature stories, ghost stories, crime and suspense stories, railways stories, autobiographical stories and animal stories.
- His ‘Tiger Tiger Burning Bright’ is also a wonderful story about the only survived old tiger in the forest on the left bank of the Ganga. Bond expresses his concern about the deforestation and the extinction of wild animals. Bond describes how industrialization affects wild life
- S.Mohanraj says: ...To me it is his simple style of narration with nature as one of his characters almost always. He seems to be obsessed with landscapes, the hilly terrain, water spots, mountain streams, cool lakes and ponds and huge trees in particular rhododendrons, deodars and sals; flowering plants-petunias, nasturtiums and marigolds changing seasons and birds and animals ...

# Filmography

- The 1978 Bollywood film *Junoon* is based on Bond's historical novel *A Flight of Pigeons*. It was produced by Shashi Kapoor and directed by Shyam Benegal.
- The Rusty stories have been adapted into a Doordarshan TV series *Ek Tha Rusty*.
- In 2005, the Bollywood director Vishal Bhardwaj made a film based on his popular novel for children, *The Blue Umbrella*. The movie won the National Award for Best Children's film.
- Ruskin Bond made his maiden big screen appearance with a cameo in Vishal Bhardwaj's film [7 Khoon Maaf](#) in 2011, based on his short story *Susanna's Seven Husbands*. Bond appears as a Bishop in the movie with Priyanka Chopra playing the title role.

# *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*

What we shall learn:

- Adaptation of Title and its significance.
- Outline of the Story.
- Major Issues in the Story:
  1. GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF NATURE WITH ITS FLORA AND FAUNA.
  2. ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS: INDUSTRIALIZATION, INDISCRIMINATE DEFORESTATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
  3. CRISES IN WILD LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES
  3. MAN VS WILD: LACK OF GOODWILL FOR BALANCE
  4. HUNTING AND POACHING OF ANIMALS FOR HIDES, HORNS AND HEADS.
  5. NEED FOR CONSERVATION OF FOREST FOR WILD LIVES MATTER

# *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*

## Title & its Significance

- Adapted from William Blake's poem *The Tyger* which reads as follows:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

- \* Significance: Catchy; reiterates the strength, vigour and grace of the animal.



# *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright*

## Major Issues in the Story

1. GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF NATURE WITH ITS FLORA AND FAUNA.
2. ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS: INDUSTRIALIZATION, INDISCRIMINATE DEFORESTATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE
3. CRISES IN WILD LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES
3. MAN VS WILD: LACK OF GOODWILL FOR BALANCE
4. HUNTING AND POACHING OF ANIMALS FOR HIDES, HORNS AND HEADS.
5. NEED FOR CONSERVATION OF FOREST FOR WILD LIVES MATTER (Message)

## INTRODUCING THE STORY

- *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright* by Ruskin Bond is a novella.
- It is loosely based on the theme of conserving wild animals and nature from the realms of greedy human being.

# STORY-LINE

- **A Story within a Story:**  
**A young boy named Rakesh insists Ruskin Bond to narrate a story full of wild animals and forests.**
- **Bond agrees but on a term that the end of the story will be provided by the boy himself.**

# STORY-LINE

- **Bond Narrates the Story:**
- **Bond narrates a story of a senile tiger that lives in the jungle situated near the river Ganges:**

“On the left bank of the Ganga, where it emerges from the Himalayan foothills, there is a long stretch of heavy forest.”



# STORY-LINE

## **Cruelty against Animals:**

**1. Since the townships were rapidly growing and farming lands were also being prepared by clearing the forest, the population of the wild animals shrinks drastically.**

**2. Poachers and hunters stalk lions, tigers and leopards to display their skin on the walls of their homes as well as to sell in the market.**

**3. It is sad to note that to fulfil his void ego man kills the innocent animals of jungles.**

**4. Bond describes how hunters have killed innumerable forest animals over the years:**

**“Hunters, however, have found the area an ideal hunting ground during the last seventy years, and as a result, the animals are not as numerous as they used to be... Slowly they are being denied the right to live”**

# Introducing the Tiger:

- We are told that this tiger has gained great experience in sensing the man and his intentions, thus he knows how to remain out of their sight.
- The tiger does not go to the river bank for drinking water as it is an open land and there he can be killed easily. So, he goes up to a lake inside the jungle but that too is shrinking fast.
- There villagers come with their buffaloes and cows and the tiger does not mind their presence, neither he attacks the cattle. As once he did but then the angry villagers chased him for several days. Thus, it is better to not to disturb their things and lives. The only enemies of the tiger are selfish hunters.

# Cont... Introducing the Tiger:

- The tiger roars in the jungle not to show his might but to hear back from other fellow tigers but he receives no roaring in return. The tiger is the only survivor and others have been either hunted down or died of wounds.
- Bond repeatedly mentions that tigers are fast disappearing from the jungles of India. The soul of the Indian jungles will be departed with their extinction.
- Bond describes the tiger in eloquent terms:  
“His muscles rippled beneath the golden yellow of his coat and he walked through the long grass with the confidence of one who knew that he was still a king, even though his subjects were fewer.”

# Characters of Ramu and Shyam

- Characters of Ramu and Shyam are introduced. They are village boys who take their buffaloes out into the forest for bath in a small 'jheel' where other animals including the tiger also come to drink water.
- The tiger never attacks Ramu and Shyam neither their buffaloes. Bond shows how symbiotically they were living together. Few other funny incidents are narrated to show how human and animals were living without being a cause of threat to each other.
- Bond describes one incident in which Ramu was saved from imminent danger and lurking death by the tiger by arriving timely and chasing out the Bear which threatened to attack Ramu.
- Another incident is described wherein Ramu saved the tiger from poachers by scattering and hanging pieces of ragged clothes for the tiger knew if there was cloth there must be man nearby.



# Twist in the Story

- **However, this normal and ordinary situation soon got disrupted:**  
“It was not until the summer that an event occurred which altered the hunting habits of the old tiger and brought him into conflict with the villagers.  
There had been no rain for almost two months and the tall jungle grass had become a sea of billowy yellow....”
- **The tiger was hungry for many days until he finally killed a buffalo that Ramu had brought in that ‘jheel’ for bathing and drinking.**
- **The villagers felt threatened at this unlikely and unprecedented action of the tiger. They decided to kill the tiger to safeguard both the lives of their buffaloes and their own.**

## Toward Conclusion:

- **They shoot the tiger at his limb while the tiger was crossing a suspension bridge over the river. As an upshot, he staggers and falls in the river down and gets washed away. The hunters rummage both the banks but to no avail.**
- **“Is he dead?” the young boy asks and Ruskin Bond says he does not know. They part away for lunch and following it the boy comes to him with a fitting end to the story.**

# **Conclusion:**

**The tiger does not drown but is carried away to a far off place where the warm sun rays heals his wounds and he sees the tall grass and myriad trees before him. To confirm whether it is a right place or not, he roars loudly and in return comes back many roars, he feels happy and safe and saunters in the jungle. To this happy ending, even Ruskin feels good about both the tiger and the boy.**

# What about the villagers?

“At first the villagers were glad because they felt their buffaloes were safe. Then the men began to feel that something had gone out of their lives; out of the life of the forest; they began to feel that the forest was no longer a forest. It had been shrinking year by year, but, as long as the tiger had been there and the villagers had heard it roar at night, they had known that they were still secure from the intruders and newcomers who came to fell the trees and eat up the land and let the flood waters into the village. But, now that the tiger had gone, it was as though a protector had gone, leaving the forest open and vulnerable, easily destroyable. And once the forest was destroyed, they too would be in danger.”



**--END--**

**Toward the end the of the story, there is a conversation between Ramu and Shyam, which is as following:**

‘The King of our forest is dead,’ said Shyam. ‘There are no more tigers.’

‘There must be tigers,’ said Ramu, ‘How can there be an India without tigers?’