
Exploring Hidden Desires in the Selected Works of Ruskin Bond: A Psychoanalytical Study through Jaques Lacan's Concept of 'Desire'

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Abstract

This study, "Exploring Hidden Desires in the Selected Works of Ruskin Bond: A Psychoanalytical Study through Jaques Lacan's Concept of 'Desire'", delves into lesser studied psychoanalytical aspect of Ruskin Bond's characters. The study specially focuses on the presence of Jaques Lacan's concept of desire in Bond's short stories. This article examines how Bond's narrative employs Lacanian concept of 'desire' such as suppressed desires, absence and lack of something, the form of emotional reactions that subverts reader's expectation of just reading a simple short story to a complex reading experience. The findings highlight the relevance of Bond's work in the context of Lacan's psychoanalytical theory, showcasing its significance and contribution in understanding a literary canon. This study's significance lies in its offering different angle of studying Bond's work and its implication for literary analysis, further suggesting a nuanced understanding of his characters.

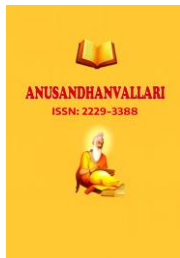
Keywords: desire, Jaques Lacan, unconscious, child psychology, psychoanalysis.

Introduction

Ruskin Bond is India's most celebrated author. Where his novels attracted film directors, his short stories are picked to make short films. His uniqueness lies in the fact that even belonging to British descent his work celebrates Indian soil and colours. He may read British, American or Indian literature but a great amount of his narrative elements as plot, characters, setting, point of view, theme, conflict, symbolisms, imagery, tone, style, narrative voice and pacing are dedicated to Indian folk. He drafts a story with his deep observation skill. His strength is the study of human behaviour and emotions. He showcases thought provoking themes through his character's life. Bond is claimed to be the writer of common folk but Bond's presentation of complexities and intricacies of relationship is a matter of attention. There are connotation, indication and suggestion towards deep rooted desires of his characters which could be traced from reading between the lines of the story.

Research question

- 1.How do Ruskin Bond's short stories exhibit the concept of hidden desire?
- 2.What are the steps taken by the characters for the fulfilment of hidden desires?
- 3.How do Bond's representation of desire relate to Jacques Lacan's concept of desire?
4. What suggestion does Bond's stories give when studied through the lance of Jacques Lacan's concept of desire?
5. Do hidden desires in Ruskin Bond's short stories pusses one meaning of physical fulfilment or more than that?



Objective

The objective of this study is to explore the hidden desires of Bond's characters through Jaques Lacan's concept of desire. This study also tries to know the various types of desires and what behavior of character indicates towards their deep unfulfilled desires. Further the researcher attempts to know how the Bondian characters satisfy their desires and if those desires could not be fulfilled due to societal norms and censorship, what are the options picked to meet the desired goal.

Scope

The researcher has selected two short stories of Ruskin Bond as 'Koki plays the game' and 'Chachi's funeral'. The stories provide a great scope to understand a character's behaviour and underflow of desire in shaping the life and relation of characters.

Literature review

"मौन की गूँज" (Echo of Silence) by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar describes desire from many aspects and tries to prove that desire is the cause of our grief. 'Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary' defines desire as "a strong wish to have or do sth". Peter Berry's 'Beginning Theory' deals in detail the psychoanalytic criticism which helps in understanding Freudian major ideas of human psyche. P.K.Nair also talks about psychoanalytic criticism. 'The Oxford Companion to English Literature' encapsulates the concept of desire under the heading of psychoanalytic criticism and unveils Jacques Lacan's law of desire thus clears the function of psychoanalytic criticism more than just discovering suppressed sexual desires. 'Research on Lacan's Theory of Desire' a research paper by Xiongzhen Teng is an important research paper to understand Lacan's concept of desire that explains Lacan's theory of desire in detail.

Research gap

Bond's stories have been studied mostly from ecocritical point of view. Then some studies step forward towards the study of human behaviour in Bond. Revathy M in her research paper 'A Psychoanalytic Study of the Characters in Ruskin Bond 's the Room on the Roof' deals with the human psyche and the unconscious desires of the leading characters in the novel. Present study is an effort to bridge the gap of psychoanalytical study of Bond's work through the study of his selected short stories.

Methodology

The study opts the qualitative and close reading approach to the short stories of Ruskin Bond. It analyses the statements spoken by the characters, their actions- reactions and the traces of Lacanian concept of desire in them. The data collection for the analysis is made from short story characters of Bond. The focus of whole study is limited to protagonists of the story only. Their hidden desires and their outcomes are critically analyzed.

Psychoanalysis theory

After Sigmond Freud it was the French thinker Jaques Lacan who made a side road by slightly changing the direction of Freudian concept of psychoanalytic. In 1960s, the advent of the French thinker Jaques Lacan changed

psychoanalysis irrevocably. Lacan, while advocating a 'return to Freud' recast Freudian theory in a linguistic framework influenced by Saussure and Emile Benveniste. Lacan's work which moves from structuralism to a definite post-structural phase, was followed by the philosophical orientation of psychoanalysis in the writing of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

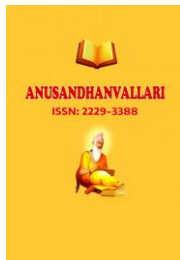
Jacques Lacan's key concept of 'Desire'

- *Unconscious desire mistakes one appearance for another similar to it, and therefore substitutes one with the other. Or desire may shift from one thing, say A, to another—B which is found/associated with A. B is now discovered as being more appropriate for desire. This movement from one signifier A to another B represents a lack.*
- *For Lacan the lack is desire, and desire seeks to fill the lack but can never do so.*
- *Language will always be a "sliding of the signified beneath the signifier."*
- *The repressed is merely temporary and symbolizes the slipperiness of repressed desire, signifieds and identities.*
- *The repressed desire is the unconscious, which in seeking an end to the chain of signification, only effects metonymic shift from signifier to signifier.*
- *Desire is always, like language, concerned with the absence. (P.K.Nayar, 2002)*

Characters: Koki and Sunil

Bond's short story "Koki plays the game" is unique in a way that it talks of the main character Koki in the opening and closing paragraphs only. In the opening paragraph Koki is introduced by the narrator "*Even Koki, a girl, was allowed honorary membership, and had sometimes been 'twelfth man'—an extra. She knew the game well, and often bowled to Ranji in the morning when he wanted batting practice.*" (BOND, And Girls Will Be Girls, 2021) Sports of any kind is perceived to be masculine activity which needs physical power. Koki, was allowed to be the member of the team suggests that she would be having masculine physique or masculine power which made her fit to participate. When Bhartu got wounded Ranji called Koki in the field as replacement if Bhartu. "*She slipped off her sandals and dashed barefoot on to the field.*" Lacan's idea that "*The repressed desire is the unconscious, which in seeking an end to the chain of signification, only effects metonymic shift from signifier to signifier.*" After they won the match because of Koki's catch, the narrator says, "*from the onwards she was a regular member of the team.*" which suggests that Koki's desire to play cricket seeks an end and further metonymically shifts from one fulfilment of desire to another fulfilment of regular play. Thus it can be said that continuous shift of desire towards ethically right and advantageous direction can pave the way for great achievements in one's life.

The short story 'Chachi's funeral' is full of happening. It is a short and crisp example of tracing the lines of hidden desires, child psychology and true bond in a relation. Sunil is Madhu's cousin brother. Both of his parents are office going people. He was a little brighter and better-looking boy than Madhu and her brother. This creates a little resentfulness and irritation in Madhu's mother who was Sushil's chachi. When she scolds and taps him at shoulders for crashing honey jar at kitchen, bitter feelings emerge in Sunil for his chachi. He rushes to the roof and from his secret place of keeping his kite strings takes out a knife. "*I'll kill her!*" he whispered fiercely "*I'll kill her! I'll kill her!*" On Madhu's inquire he tells her that "*she hates me, I know. Well, I hate her too. This time I'll kill her!*" Madhu shows him the danger of being caught by the CID and sent to jail. Sunil asks in one line "*won't they hang me?*" this line indicates that the small boy of ten was ready to be hanged due to his firm determination of killing his chachi as she scolded and beat him for breaking honey jar but more than that as a small child he feared going to boarding school. Madhu knew this, that's why she said, "*They don't hang small boys. They send them to boarding schools.*" Then Sunil opts Madhu's next idea of making chachi's sketch on a paper with big heart



and stab that, but when Madhu burns the paper and throws it in drain water as cremation, Sunil sees the lose of chachi. He starts crying, “*Chachi, I didn’t hate her so much.*”

He could then understand is real love for chachi. When stepping down stairs he sees chachi coming out from kitchen ‘*He rushed to her and tried to get his arms around her ample waist*’. He happily shouts ‘*I love you so much. please don’t leave us*’. Thus, the real bonding turns out to be haviour on the hidden desire of murder of chachi. This story offers another aspect of hidden desire that sometime the desire turns out to be childish. Sunil could never see his chachi’s genuine love and affection for him or his bonding for his chachi. Lacan’s point that, “*Desire is always, like language, concerned with the absence.*” (P.K.Nayar, 2002) . Here the absence is related to the absence of having pampering and being loved by chachi which Sunil felt lacking because of many reasons. This absence of love resulted in hatred in Sunil for his chachi to the level of thinking of her stabbing. Lacan’s concept, ‘*Unconscious desire mistakes one appearance for another similar to it, and therefore substitutes one with the other. Or desire may shift from one thing, say A, to another—B which is found/associated with A. B is now discovered as being more appropriate for desire. This movement from one signifier A to another B represents a lack.*’ When coming downstairs with the feeling of losing his chachi Sunil found his chachi alive, his feelings found a movement from bitterness to love for chachi. He found his living chachi more appropriate than the dead chachi.

Discussion

Ruskin bond’s short stories claimed to be full of simple local character with all their simplicity but it is true to a certain limit as further researches have proved that his characters have the scope to be studied from other theoretical angles. They present an underflow of hidden desire in their simple characters. Superficially it appears that Koki gets a chance to play in the cricket match but a close reading of the text unveils her hidden wish to play cricket.

In ‘Chachi’s funeral’, Sunil wants to kill his chachi for scolding him but as Madhu introduces him with the danger of boarding school sending by CID, he instantly changes his mind from stabbing chachi’s heart three times to stabbing the sketch of heart. This way Bond not only shows fulfilment of hidden desires but also suggests the shift of desire from trivial to greater desires.

There is a reciprocal relation in Lacan’s concept of desire and Bond’s presentation of desire in his characters. Bond’s stories can be studied as an example of implementation of Lacan’s concept of desire. But the point to be noted that his work does not wholly adheres to Lacan’s point on desire, as his stories have their other flavours also. Studying Bond under the shade of psychoanalytical concept of Jaques Lacan advances the reader’s experience of reading Bond to next level.

Bond’s representation of hidden desire, when studied in the light of Lacan’s concept of desire, offers to understand that though desire never ends, only shifts from one fulfilment to next one wish, but this shift helps in understanding the more pure, uplifted and greater wish to be fulfilled if flew towards right direction. By fulfilling small desire one can achieve some big goals.

Reading Bond suggests that hidden desires does not pusses only one meaning of physical fulfilment but they are more than that. Sunil developed a feeling of hatred for his chachi it was the result of absence of expressive affection from his chachi, which he could see in chachi for her own kids, he also desired to be pampered by her which lacked from her side. In Koki’s case her hidden desires were to play cricket, there was no other wish. She had her suppressed desire to participate in the match and when she got the chance, she proved herself.

Conclusion

This study's analysis of hidden desires through Jaques Lacan's concept of 'Desire' in Ruskin Bond's short stories, 'Koki plays the game' and 'Chachi's funeral' reveals the nuanced and complexed narrative aspects. The findings demonstrate that Bond's stories exhibit Lacan's concept of 'shift of desires', 'lack is desire', 'repressed desire only affect metonymic shift from one signifier to another signifier'. These elements subvert the traditional notion of storytelling. These findings highlight the complexity of hidden desires in human experience.

The implication of the study is significant as it challenges traditional perception of Bond's work which is understood to be simple description of folk life. It highlights the importance of Lacan's psychoanalytical concept of 'desire'. In the analysis of Indian literary texts.

The significance of the story lies in its contribution to the understanding of Ruskin Bond's narrative style and its implication for literary analysis. The study demonstrates the usability of Lacan psychoanalytical theory to analyse Indian literary text, highlights the complexity and nuance of Indian emotions, psychology and desire, described by Bond in his short stories.

Psychological theory of Lacan in Indian Literature, Searching elements of desire in the works of Ruskin Bond. By exploring these avenues further researches could be constructed on the findings of this study and provide further insight into the complexity of literary texts.

In conclusion it can be said that this study showcases Ruskin Bond's short stories 'Koki plays the game' and 'Chachi's funeral' exhibiting several elements of Jaques Lacan's concept of desire, that challenges traditional storytelling notions. The findings of this study have significant implication in understanding Bond's work and experience the deep-rooted complexity of child psychology. This study contributes to the literary research and facilitates with a new aspect of reading Ruskin Bond.

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