Chapter I
Overview of Ruskin Bond

“Among writers, I am not one of the big guns. I am not even a little gun. I’m just a pebble lying on the beach. But I like to think that I’m smooth, round, colourful pebble, and that someone will pick me up, derive a little pleasure from holding me, and possibly even put me in his, or her, pocket. Could you be that wanderer by the sea? I shall nestle there, close to you. I shall try to make you feel better. And if you tire of me, you can always throw me back into the sea. Perhaps a kindly wave will wash me ashore again, and someone else will pick me up”.

Ruskin Bond

(The Lamp Is Lit: Leaves from a Journal xi)
Introduction

The Introduction to this thesis discussed definition and types of children’s literature, and placed Rusty fiction in the context of children’s literature. This chapter analyses in detail the five volumes of Rusty series, Rusty the Boy from the Hills, Rusty Runs Away, Rusty and the Leopard, Rusty Goes to London and Rusty Comes Home. These primary sources are referred to, here, as ‘Rusty fiction’ of Ruskin Bond. In this chapter, each story or episode is studied from the point of view of

i. Rusty’s relationship with nature (animals, plants and environment)

ii. Rusty’s relationship with humans (family, friends and others)

iii. Rusty’s relationship with self (the protagonist’s personal adventures and experiences)

The themes and values underlying each episode or story have been highlighted.

At the outset, a couple of examples from the research studies on the life and works of Bond, and his style and technique of writing are given. Critical analysis of each story in the Rusty fiction follows this study. Before going into detailed analysis of Rusty fiction it will be useful to have an overview of the works of Ruskin Bond. This chapter analyses his life and works from the perspective of Ruskin Bond as a writer for children. Subhadra Sengupta’s words that Bond takes us again to our childhood days reveal the impact of Bond’s works on readers (25).
**Bond’s Life and Literary Works**

Ruskin Bond was born on May 19, 1934 at Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh. This was the time of the period between the World Wars. India was drawn into the war by Britain and Indian soldiers fought along with British soldiers. The World Wars I and II created an economic crisis throughout the world. The Indian administration was streamlined by Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy. The economical recession affected the people throughout the world and lead to a drastic change in their life style.

Both the material wealth of India, as well as its manpower were at the disposal of Britain during these wars. In recognition of India’s services, the British made changes in the administration and allowed Indians to participate in it. Local self-government was manned by Indians. The post war period was marked by acute problems of financial recession and reconstruction; the 1943 famine in Bengal affected poor people especially (Majumdar et al 932).

This period is called “British India period” or “British Raj period 1858-1945.” Ruskin Bond’s forefathers were living in India during this period. The stories *Rusty, The Boy from the Hills* describe the service rendered by Bond’s father as a member of RAF in 1932. In the aftermath of the world wars, the British in India faced a peculiar situation. While many chose to go back home, some chose to stay back in India. Back home in Britain too, they faced severe economic recession and unemployment. Those who stayed back too had to reconcile with social as well as economic slump. Their social attitude is described by Meena Khorana:
The British lived in the cantonments if they were in the military or in the Civil Lines if they were part of the prestigious civil services. They saw no sense in belonging to India, because it was ill mannered to and inferior to “go native.” This tiny “society of the exiles” (MacMillan 42) was bound together by a common culture and loneliness for family and friends in England (Khorana 3).

The author of the Rusty series, Ruskin Bond was also affected by these drastic changes in lifestyle. Ruskin Bond spent the time with his father. During his childhood, Ruskin Bond spent some years in Jamnagar where he “was more exposed to Indian culture than the average British child in India (8).”

During the time of second World War, i.e. 1940 to 1945, as a young child Bond lived in his father’s custody in the army tents, “…probably without official permission” (Khorana 11). During this period Bond could not attend regular school. His father taught him to read and write. He read many story books during this period.

The authors R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand were contemporaries of Ruskin Bond. They also wrote children’s stories in English as it was a common language among educated Indians by then. So the authors express their views through English as a medium to communicate their ideas to the world.

Rabindranath Tagore belongs to pre-colonial period (1861-1941) and his novel on My Boyhood Days was an autobiography. Mulk Raj Anand’s (1905-2004) Coolie, a novel in 1936 falls under the category of children’s literature. The
protagonist Munoo’s state in the society and his poverty is the theme, which reflects pre-colonial Indian period. Satyajit Ray also belongs to the same period. His *Adventures of Feluda: Bandits of Bombay* describes the protagonist/detective Feluda and his adventures in solving different cases. His other science fiction books like *Exploits of Professor Shonku: Diary of a Space Traveller* and *Exploits of Professor Shonku: Unicorn Expedition* and other stories are popular among children.

Bond also follows the footsteps of these writers and begins to contribute in children’s literature. Reality and fiction are inextricably mingled in his stories. Bond was born in 1934 and started writing by 1951, so in his stories one finds reflections of after effects of war and post independence stated in a direct manner. For example, from his Rusty fiction *Rusty, The Boy from the Hills* we come to know that Rusty’s nanny tells him about India in 1940:

… it belongs to the King of England, and the jewels in his crown were taken from India, and that when the Indians get their jewels back, the King will lose India! But first they have to get the crown from the King, but this is very difficult, she says, because the crown is always on his head. He even sleeps wearing his crown! (92)

As a young boy, Bond understands the views of Indians and he blends this fact in his fiction. It is not only his nanny’s view, but the people who belonged to that period had the same opinion. The opinions of different people are portrayed through Rusty in his fiction.
Bond’s father died suddenly because of malaria. He lived in India with his mother and step-father. Later, Bond decided to become a writer, and he went to England to fulfill his ambition. He wrote the final draft of his first novel *The Room on the Roof* in London. After Bond’s return to India, in the year 1956, Diana Athill and Andre Deutsch published his first book in London (*Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir* 174). Details of his life and works are taken from several fragmentary texts and two autobiographical works, *Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir* and *The Lamp Is Lit: Leaves from a Journal* written by the author himself.

Bond’s England trip was to establish himself as a writer. Bond’s ancestors were British but his parents and grandparents were settled in India. Bond got three jobs at Jersey but he was not satisfied with those, because he missed India and his friends at Dehra Dun. He returned to India in 1955 without witnessing the publication of his first novel in England. He could not receive in person the highest award for young writers, John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957.

Bond returned to Dehra Dun from London after his failed attempts at finding a satisfactory workplace. He settled in his previous residing place, Dehra Dun and decided to be a writer; after many hardships he finally succeed to be a popular writer. This is reflected in his own words in the prologue of *Rain in The Mountain: Notes from the Himalayas* – “...from my small room in Dehradun, I began bombarding every newspaper and magazine editor in the land with articles, stories, essays and even poems” (viii).
Ruskin Bond’s Works

Ruskin Bond has written books for children and young adults. He has written fiction, nonfiction and poetry. He has edited anthologies and traditional stories. His books for children are published in different parts of the world. *Vagrants in the Valley, Delhi is Not Far and A Flight of Pigeons* were written and published after 1970.

*A Flight of Pigeons* by Bond in 1970 was made into a film titled *Junoon*, (1978) a classic movie on India’s first war of independence in India in 1857. Likewise, Bond’s *The Blue Umbrella* was made into a film in 2007 and also won the award for best children’s movie for that year. “Susanna’s Seven Husband” a novella written by Ruskin Bond in the year 2001, in the collection *When the Darkness Falls and Other Stories* was made into a movie *Saat Khoon Maaf* by Vishal Bhardwaj and Mathew Robbins in 2011. *The Adventures of Rusty* has been created into a serial named *Ek Tha Rusty* in Door Darshan around 2007. Hundreds of stories, poems, essays and novellas were published under the title of *The Best of Ruskin Bond*. *The Ruskin Bond Omnibus* was published by Penguin, India in 1996. The Omnibus includes stories and novels taken from about thirty books of Bond. It covers the best of his essays, articles, ghost stories, reminiscences, journals and rhymes along with fifteen other works for children by Bond.

In 1992, he received the Sahitya Academy Award for the book titled *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*. His two novels, *The Room on the Roof* and *Vagrants in the Valley* have been published in a single volume by Penguin in 1993. Bond’s novella, *A Handful of Nuts* is a purely imaginary story about icy winds and
snowstorms at his home in the Mussoori hills. He has edited several anthologies including *Children’s Omnibus volumes I, II, III, IV, V*, *Classical Indian Love Stories and Lyrics*, *The Penguin Book of Indian Railway Stories*, *Indian Ghost Stories* and *The Rupa Book of Haunted Houses*. Bandyopadhya in his article “The Past Unearthed: New Reading of Ruskin Bond’s Supernatural Tales” states, “The genre of supernatural is one medium in which he relives this truth in his search for identity. Meant apparently to ravish young readers, the stories are actually informed by the author’s psychological experiences of negotiating his ironical position during childhood” (70). This clearly points out Bond’s intention to reach out to young readers.


The British Broadcasting Corporation brought out an audio visual abridged version of the chapter “The Playing Fields of Simla” from *Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir* during its India session, 1997. He was honoured with the prestigious Padmashree Award in 1999 for his lifetime contribution to Indian English literature.

Early in his career, as a writer, Bond tried to publish his stories in weekly installments in dailies, such as *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *The Sunday Statesman, My Magazine of India, The Onlooker* and *Tatler*. They accepted and appreciated Bond’s stories by offering good remuneration. After he finished school, at the end of 1950, he was a writer in *The Hindu Sport* and *Pastime* and *The

Some of Bond’s articles, essays and poems have appeared in magazines such as Blackwood’s Magazine (London and Edinburgh), Hemisphere (Australia), and The Heritage (Madras). Sainik Samchar (the Armed Forces Weekly) published some of his stories and paid reasonably well which helped in Bond’s financial independence (Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir, The Lamp Is Lit: Leaves from a Journal, Rain in the Mountains: Notes from the Himalayas).

Sravasti Datta compliments Ruskin Bond as a popular, prolific and charming author who continues to draw readers to his heart warming stories for sixty years. Bond, while emphasising the importance of imagination, expresses the influence of Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights on his writing (Datta 1A+).

Ruskin Bond’s fiction offers good entertainment to children, because he has portrayed his life and experience through his stories in a simple and direct manner. His mode of writing is in the first person narrative and his stories have autobiographical elements in them. This creates an interest in the readers of present generation to know about the real characters in Bond’s life. Moreover, Bond
decoded his memories into intelligible and readable language. Hidden values are embedded in his fiction. Instead of directly instructing his young readers about values, Bond involves the reader through his adventurous stories. After his return from London, Bond settled down in Mussoorie, with the family of his adopted son, Prem. Prem’s children and grand-children continue to give him immense pleasure and emotional support.

**Bond’s Literary Style and Technique**

Bond’s father played a major role in teaching him how to enjoy reading and writing, which later shaped his creative talents. As Bond states, “I learnt to read from my father but not in his classroom” (*Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir* 4). The author’s words show that from his childhood days he developed this habit. This reflects the autobiographical elements found in Bond’s work.

Nature plays an important role in Bond’s writing. Moreover, it acts like a silent character and forms the background in his stories. Bond’s description of natural surroundings of northern India and foothills of the Himalayas has romantic beauty. Like Rudyard Kipling, Bond projects nature as a living being and animals play an important part in his work.

Bond has read English classics of Dickens, Wordsworth, H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham and Lewis Carroll from his childhood. Bond states that he loved Charles Dickens and the Bronte sisters. “Authors like P.G. Wodehouse, Somerset Maugham and H. E. Bates also inspired and influenced me” (Daftuar 11+).
Bond was also inspired by the works of Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, and others. Bond’s style of writing is similar to that of Anton Chekov or Leo Tolstoy. Bond’s writings usually portray a realistic image of life. This is a result of both experience and insight and this is reflected in his narrative spontaneity. Elizabeth Eapen in “Portraits of the Author as a Youngman” comments that his “…narratives are direct and guileless” (39).

**a. Style**

Bond, with his simple style and interesting stories, describes the limitless universe of the child. Bond has the advantage of English as his mother tongue and so his writings are free from the conscious use of a foreign language. There is no great difficulty to understand Bond’s language. His prose is definite, simple and conveys the emotions of his characters. Almost all of his characters are children and young adults. The language, structure, plot and setting of his stories are the products of his mature and imaginative thought process.

Bond uses love as a theme, which is his basic foundation for establishing a relation with nature, animals, and people around him. T. N. Dhar in his “Tender and Authentic” opines that Bond’s story is “…permeated with love, sympathy, warmth, and fellow-feeling” (155).

**b. Technique**

Short story or fiction is the most popular modern literary genre and has vast readership in the present day. Bond’s specialisation is in the area of short fiction. He combines both narrative and dramatic modes in his stories to make them interesting.
For writing short stories, a writer has to employ his skills of concise writing and homogeneity of formation. In an interview with Amita Aggarwal in *The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond*, Bond says: “People keep asking me why I write short piece. My reply is that I have no pretensions of writing a great sociological novel.” Bond is usually considered “a writer of personal notes”. He considers himself as “Indian Charles Lamb” (144).

Aggarwal has this to say about Bond’s writing:

He employs various narrative devices like impressionistic technique, flashbacks, narration within narration, first person narration, third person narration, and witness narration keeping in view the demand of subject matter. Myths, symbols, harangues, soliloquies and poetic overflows are ingeniously incorporated in the narration (144).

Bond’s style of writing has varied techniques; they are useful for the reader to understand the situation as well as his mode of conveying things makes an impression in the mind forever.

Dialogues form a major part of his narration. They provide a touch of drama and help the reader to understand the characters. For example, in Rusty series, Kishen’s mischief and innocence, Rusty’s sincerity and affection, Somi’s liveliness and Meena’s stateliness are all reflected in the dialogue. When there is a sudden shift of narration from descriptive to short and dramatic forms of discourse, it makes the
reader more interested in the story. One of the best examples of such shifts in
dialogue is found in the jungle scene where Meena and Rusty are alone together:

“‘Listen to the jungle’, she said.
‘I can’t hear anything.’
‘That’s what I mean. Listen to nothing.’

We were surrounded by silence; a dark, pensive silence, heavy, scented with magnolia and jasmine … A monkey chattered shrilly in a branch above us, and the spell was broken.

“‘Oh, Meena…’
‘Shh… you spoil these things by saying them.’
‘Oh, Meena…’ (Rusty and the Leopard 63-64).

Form the above, we can understand Bond’s dialogue clearly states the background for the climax of the story and gives the sketchy plot a fine finish.

Bond writes with emotional and constructive imagination about the adventures encountered by his characters during the journey to various places in their teenage. These kinds of experiences are projected through the character of Rusty and his adventures, such as, train journey with the python to Lucknow, tonga-ride by Dehra Dun riverside and his visit and escape from Java (the then name of Jakarta) during World War. Satish Aikant states, “Bond’s prose does not gain effect by a labored artifice, but with a floating rhythm and spontaneity of expression that signals the spontaneity of life itself” (132). From his description of adventure,
readers can picture how Bond observes people around him closely and tell tales about them. He conveys life experiences, whether they convey crisis or blessing and teaches perseverance to endure or be humble. Dilip Raote declares, “…his skills have been honed in the international market…the rewards proportionately high” (14) which speak volumes about his popularity.

There is nostalgia in Bond’s writings when he describes the actions of his young characters, which is why the readers can connect to him immediately and get attracted to his writing easily. The story “Coming Home to Dehra” talks about Rusty’s nostalgic feeling about his father. The story describes the life of Rusty after his father’s death. He comes home to visit his mother and step-father in Dehra Dun when no one receives Rusty at the station, in this story. During that timeless waiting, Rusty remembers, “It was only last summer that I had gone to spend my school holidays with my father. We were happy together” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 191). In his mind, the child compares his present depressing situation with the happy past and in remembering the good times overcomes falling prey to depression. The reader is inspired to make the most of optimistic thoughts in life through this narration.

Simple humour found in his stories makes the narration lively. For instance, in the story “Monkey Trouble,” he narrates the mischievous character of the monkey as “It was only Tutu trying on Aunt Ruby’s petticoats! They were much too large, of course, and when Aunt Ruby entered the room all she saw was a faceless white blob jumping up and down on the bed” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 42). Such narrations frequent in his stories to introduce humor and to create interest among
readers. Divya Kumar says, “Ruskin Bond’s stories are imbued with a gentle humour, warmth and kindness that have made them loved by generations of children and adults” (1+.) The adults who read/narrate Bond’s stories to their small children also enjoy the laugh and warmth expressed with values in them. R. Rajamani comments “… gentle humor shines on most pages and there are good laughs to be shared…” through the characters of Bond (Rajamani 20).

Bond’s art of characterisation requires special attention as this enriches his stories. The men, women and children of various ages and classes belong to the hills of Garhwal and Doon valleys. It is a general notion that people living in the mountains are simple, hardworking and innocent as they live close to nature and most of the times away from the hustle and bustle of city life. His portraits are non-static; they develop and mature in the course of the story. Characters, like the protagonist Rusty, in all his fiction, and Rusty’s friends, Uncle Ken, Dukhi the gardener, the tonga-driver and Rusty’s relatives are remarkably presented in different developing stages, some real and some imaginary. While talking about Bond, Baldev Chauhan states, “His persona is much like a schoolboy, simple, naïve, sometimes mysterious and dreamy, hardly able to see life under the surface, so typical of a vision of someone so young” (32). A detailed analysis of these characters is dealt with in the next chapter which talks of the autobiographical elements in Bond’s writing.

Major Themes (Motifs) in Bond’s Fiction: A Survey

Various interesting themes which underlie Bond’s works can be figured out by the reader. Bond touches almost all aspects of human life and his characters
represent all sections of society. However, for the scope of the present study, only five books involving the protagonist Rusty, referred as a Rusty fiction, have been closely read. The stories and episodes progress on the basis of different relationships that Rusty enjoys with the outside world. Three main themes can be identified on the basis of Rusty’s interactions with the world. They are:

a) Rusty’s relationship with nature
b) Rusty’s relationship with people in outer world
c) Rusty’s relationship with self

**Rusty’s Relationship with Nature**

Rusty’s relationship with nature is one of the recurring themes in all the five books. This is because Ruskin Bond himself is an passionate lover of nature. We can understand that Bond has found immense comfort and contentment in nature through his keen observation of flowers, insects and animals. So, the background of his novels is mainly Dehra Dun, his hometown. William Wordsworth’s poetry and other romantics also worshipped nature, and the style of Bond’s prose resembles their limerick. Usha Chengappa opines that “Many of the stories have simple village folk for whom the author has immense respect” (23). Just as Wordsworth wanted to portray the commoners and sing songs about the beauty in simplicity, so does Bond.

In *Rain in the Mountains* Ruskin Bond writes a ditty named “The Wind and the Rain”:
Like the wind, I run;
Like the rain, I sing;
Like the leaves, I dance;
Like the earth, I’m still;
And in this, Lord, I do thy will. (144)

This reveals the fact that Bond gives a special role to nature in his writing. Nature provides him new themes and backdrops for his stories and stimulates Bond’s creative talent. His “All Creatures Great and Small” is a story of a python that accidently enters the bedroom and gets attracted to its own reflection in the mirror. This imaginative writing is symbolic of narcissism. Bond elevates this fearful reptile to the level of heroes in epic style. He does not consider them inferior to humans and brings out the ecological value through them. They are also an important part of nature just like human beings. Rita Sridhar notices, “…that could well lead us believe that here we have a writer specializing in nature writings” (34).

Many stories of Rusty fiction discuss the themes of nature from different angles. The story “Tree Lover” explains Rusty’s grandfather’s love towards trees. Rusty thinks that the plants and trees also have the same kind of love for grandfather. So he imagines that the tendril “…had crossed the veranda step and was touching Grandfather’s feet” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 21). Muriel Wasi further elaborates, “…Bond observes trees with that sixth sense…” (99) This is vivid in the above mentioned story. Deepa Vanjani describes, “…Bond presents Nature in all her splendor so that it becomes a character in his stories – omniscient and omnipotent” (143). Bond’s stories describe the natural beauty of mountainous Mussoorie, valley
of Dehra Dun, Garhwal hills, Simla hills, Delhi plains and Channel Islands at Jersey in London.

**Rusty’s relationship with Human Beings**

Ruskin Bond has selected people in the community or the streets, such as roadside vendors, orphans, young boys and girls living in the hills and made them superheroes of his stories. Rusty looks at life with the curiosity of a young boy and desires to enjoy it. Bond is one of the most popular humanist writers. He does not believe in complex philosophies, but reflects on the simple mutual love among fellow human beings. He appreciates the people around him and does not give importance only to their occupation or status in society. His stories show a positive approach to life and things.

Anand Lal illustrates Rusty’s/Bond’s relationship with people, “It is as if Dehra was giving him daily lessons on how to live” (161). Ruskin Bond insists on the importance of relationship and friends because he thinks that they are a strong ground on which life travels. So the projection of family in his fiction motivates the child reader to appreciate their own family. Friends, he has created in fiction, are mostly from Indian families. They are from different walks of life, like gardener, Dhuki, Ayah (Hindi word for nanny) and the shepherd for buffaloes, Ramu. They also belong to different communities in India, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. In London Rusty made friends with everyone, British, Chinese or Vietnamese. Rusty’s female friends are from different age groups, like, Koki, Madhu, (teenagers) Miss. Mackenzie and Miss. Kellener (elders). Ruskin Bond, through Rusty, created these characters to play the special role of bonding with friends in his fiction. The value of
kinship is brought out through these characters and has an everlasting effect on the readers.

**Rusty’s relationship with the Self**

The Rusty series makes a close observation of life and growth of a boy. The stories and episodes in these five books are arranged in chronological order according to passage of time in Rusty’s life. Most of the stories help us in understanding Rusty’s emotions. Rusty’s loneliness in his adolescence provides ample time for him to think about himself and his position in society. After the death of his father, Rusty experiences the big bad world which helps him build his character and grow into a young matured man. Bond has presented moments of happiness and sorrow in Rusty’s life. Brinda Bose appraises Bond’s stories as, “…the honest straight-forward story of man and nature, honestly and straightforwardly told” (46). Bond makes the reader empathise with Rusty in his struggles and rejoice in his success. Most of the stories in the five books deal with Rusty’s observations of incidents around him. The reader can clearly understand Rusty’s thoughts and feelings. The stories are narrated in first person and it introduces the reader to Rusty’s character. Rusty fiction covers the emotional, financial, sociological and psychological growth and development of Rusty’s life. In Mala Kumar’s interview with Ruskin Bond, Bond states that “Rusty is my alter ego.” (Kumar 2) which proves that autobiographical elements are present in Rusty fiction.
Research on the Life and Works of Ruskin Bond

An overview of the secondary sources on Ruskin Bond provides many critical writings, reviews and detailed introductions in various anthologies. A close reading of these offers information on the writer.

Bond, a prominent contemporary writer of India, has witnessed the continuing changes in politics and culture of India from British rule to an independent nation. He has also witnessed changes in the Indian community and British community residing in India after independence. His fiction represents the growth of independent India right from the dawn of independence till date. Neelima Luthra says, “Bond’s writing acquires added resonance due to the plural sensibility at work, his dual literary and cultural heritage conjoined to specific historical circumstances” (101). Through his choice of genre, Bond displays his interest and finer aspects of life in a simple manner. He is a novelist, short story writer, poet and essayist, and has also edited anthologies for children.

This chapter focusses on the writer’s literary works and his contribution to the development of children’s literature in India. Bond’s unique position as a writer in the history of Indian English literature can be studied from various points of view. They are as follows:

i) A diasporic writer born in India

ii) Indo-Anglican writer who carries forward the legacy of the British Raj in India

iii) A postcolonial or post-independence writer
iv) A writer in English for children and young adults

v) An autobiographer, who has published complete autobiographical works and a few fragmentary autobiographical articles

vi) A writer engaged in teaching values of family, nature and life to young minds.

Several research studies have been carried out already about Bond’s life and works in India and abroad. The following are a few texts published in United States of America and India that are seminal to the study of the author:

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prabhat K. Singh</td>
<td>The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Meena G. Khorana</td>
<td>The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>USA</td>
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<td>Ganesh Saili</td>
<td>Ruskin, Our Enduring Bond</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Amita Aggarwal</td>
<td>The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond</td>
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Prabhat K. Singh’s *The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond: An Anthology of Critical Writings* helps the readers to understand the features of Bond’s art, so as to appreciate his writings in the context of the author. These critical writings are the analysis of Bond’s works by fifty one authors. In the preface, the author informs, “Besides, majority of Bond’s books for children were published from England and USA giving him wide popularity in the West for their literary qualities” (x). Covering all genres Bond has touched, this anthology talks about his mindscape in creating short and long fiction, poetry and essays.
Meena G Khorana’s *The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond* deals with Bond’s life and his literary works. Her book explains Ruskin Bond’s own life experiences. Khorana has taken Bond’s short stories and some autobiographical works and speaks about his work and career as a writer. Khorana establishes Bond as a postcolonial writer. Finally, she concludes that Bond belongs to the Indian soil and his writings are about nature. Khorana has taken short stories, poems, novels and novellas (not in chronological order) and brought out how these reflect nature, culture and heritage.

Ganesh Saili’s book entitled *Ruskin, Our Enduring Bond* depicts Bond’s life, family details and friends along with photographs and copies of original handwritten letters by Bond. This book is a sort of biography on Bond. It contains photograph of Ruskin Bond’s early age to adulthood and his family members, like his mother, father, Uncle Ken and the extended family of Prem. This book can be summed up in one line, “This, dear reader, is the tale of a little boy who set out to become a writer” (13). This book talks about Bond’s awards and degrees at length; it informs that Benares Hindu University honoured him the degree of Doctor of Literature. The chapters give a rough picture of his family tree, contain his father’s handwritten letters, informs about his high school qualification in Cambridge, his London trip and return to Dehra Dun. They are proof for the autobiographical writings of Bond being authentic.

Amita Aggarwal’s *The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond* gives information about Bond’s life and his techniques of writing. Aggarwal has focussed on Bond as a nature writer contributing immensely to children’s literature. She has given biographical details of Bond and brought out the nuances of techniques he uses in
his writing. Aggarwal covers Bond’s vision of life, his treatment of nature, his
Indianness, his art of characterisation and his narrative techniques.

These texts and other research articles published in journals provide critical
insight on the author and his works. All these writers are of the same view that most
of Bond’s works are based on his life experiences. They have given a kaleidoscopic
view on Bond and his writings.

Critical Analysis of Rusty fiction

Rusty, The Boy from the Hills

Rusty, The Boy from the Hills has fourteen stories. It traces the
development of Rusty from early childhood to pre-teens (seven to twelve years). In
this work, three main themes are found:

a. Five stories except for the second story, center on the relationship of
Rusty with grandparents, friends and his grandfather’s menagerie.
The main theme of the second story is nature.

b. Stories, six to eleven, twelve and fourteen, describe his relationship
with family members, friends and other persons of the outside world.

c. The twelfth story represents the view of child’s understanding of the
loss of a parent.

During this period, Rusty experiences the love of a family with different
people in Dehra Dun, Java and in Delhi. He lives first with paternal grandparents,
later with his father, and with his mother and stepfather for a couple of months. He also lives with relatives, helpers/caretakers and different kinds of pets.

“All Creatures Great and Small,” “The Tiger in the House,” “Animals on the Tracks,” and “Monkey Trouble” are stories which talk about bonding with animals in this volume. The story “All Creatures Great and Small” introduces Rusty as a curious boy of seven living with his paternal grandparents, whose mother is legally separated from his father when he was four years old (1). His grandfather’s love for animals turns the house into a menagerie. It is here that Rusty learns the value of love for animals. The highlighted value of ecological balance is expressed through the narration of Indian mythological tales. Through his friendship with Ramu, Rusty learns about Indian mythology, “‘Many birds are sacred,’ said Ramu, as we watched a bluejay swoop down from a peepul tree and carry off a grasshopper. He told me that both the bluejay and the God Shiva were called Nilkanth” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 19).

“The Tiger in the House” is a story about the hunting expedition undertaken by Rusty’s grandfather. Grandfather brings home a tiger cub and names him Timothy. Timothy rapidly grows within six months and creates fear in the house. Even though the grandmother showers love on pets, she is apprehensive of keeping a wild animal at home and thinks that a tiger cannot be domesticated. She foretells, “‘…we are going to find Timothy sitting on Mahmoud’s bed, and no sign of the cook except his clothes and shoes!’” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 34) Rusty gains knowledge about wild animals and the reason why keeping wild animals at home is not advisable.
Like, tiger, grandfather brought home a pet monkey in the story named “Monkey Trouble”. It is a humorous story about the mischievous activities of Tutu, the family’s pet monkey. Tutu imitates others while taking a bath in the tub and dances around. She grabs jewellery from the shop in the bazaar and adorns her neck and finally she drops it in the nearby canal (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 47). Astonished crowd of people who followed the monkey retrieve the necklace from the canal. The author portrays the mischievous and humorous aspect of Rusty’s character through Tutu Monkey. Another interesting incident happens in Rusty’s life when he travels with a young python in the train with his grandfather and the rest of the family.

“Animals on the Track” discusses the adventures of the python and grandfather’s pets while travelling in the train to visit Rusty’s Aunt, Emily, in Lucknow. The sudden disappearance of the python creates confusion in the compartment. “‘We can’t get into the toilet,’ said someone.’ There’s a huge snake inside’” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 57). The grandfather, however, captures the python in the train’s toilet; later, he releases it in the aunt’s garden in Lucknow. Grandfather’s ardent love for nature is revealed through “The Tree Lover” and his advice to the young generation is, “‘. . .We’re not planting for people only,’ said Grandfather. ‘We’re planting for the forest – and for the birds and animals to live here and need more food and shelter’” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 25). This realistic story emphasises the value of preserving nature’s gift.

The next set of stories explains Rusty’s adventures and his friendship with people when he visits his father and grandmother. They are “Escape from Java,”
“The Room of Many Colours” and “The Last Tonga Ride”. The first story deals with Rusty’s daring escape during the Second World War, from Java in Indonesia, where his father was working. Rusty became friendly with a boy named Sono, who gifted him a blue jade horse as a talisman. His father said “‘Keep it carefully,’ he said. ‘It may bring us luck’” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 82). Rusty believes that this gift saved him from danger. Finally they reached India safely. “The Room of Many Colours” narrates the experience of Rusty when he was eight years old. Rusty was mature enough to know social values. He met a mad, lonely, neglected princess living in the top of a tower palace. Rusty comes to know from Ayah that the princess had a love affair with a commoner, which was not accepted by her father. Rusty understands the differences in social hierarchy for the first time. Rusty also learns from Ayah that snakes are good omens, so the princess bars Dhuki from killing a garden snake. These stories reveal the adventurous life of Rusty and his introduction to societal rules and regulations of life. “The Last Tonga Ride” informs about Rusty’s friendship with a tonga-driver Bansilal. In his paternal grandmother’s house, without informing Ayah and grandmother, Rusty goes for a ride by the river with Bansilal. The tonga-driver calls Rusty “dost” (Hindi word for friend), even though Ayah and grandmother look upon him with suspicion (135).

The forthcoming stories talks about Rusty’s family experiences. “Life with Uncle Ken” narrates the character of Rusty’s uncle. Uncle Ken was a lazy person who took jobs on and off. His grandmother exhorted Uncle Ken, “‘It’s high time you found a job...’” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 144) Uncle Ken’s life style and eccentricities were lessons for Rusty on how not to live on others’ earning. Rusty narrates the activities of granny’s legendary kitchen, his experiences of selling
homemade pickles and his relationship with Mohan, the gardener’s son. “The Ghost in the Garden” is different from other stories. This story explains Rusty’s curiosity about ghosts. He had been warned by others in the family and the gardener that a ghost is living in the mango tree in their garden. The challenging curiosity at that age makes Rusty visit the tree because he learnt from Miss Kellner that his grandfather’s first wife, Rose, committed suicide by hanging herself from that mango tree and Rose’s ghost is believed to be there still. He dreamt of Rose coming near him in the night and found a fresh red rose by his pillow the next day morning. Rusty develops great affection for Rose and the mango tree in due course of time. The story insists that ghosts/spirits are not that harmful always and the author reveals fantasy at play in a child’s mind. The next adventure in Rusty’s life in grandmother’s house is explained in “The Photograph”. Rusty finds grandmother’s childhood photo in an old trunk. Smart Rusty identifies the person in the photo as his grandmother, “…because Grandmother still smiled in the same way…” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 182)

“The Funeral” talks about the demise of Rusty’s father and conveys the tragic feelings of an eleven year old boy. He respected his father’s view that, “‘The strongest man in the world is he who stands alone’” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 188). He recollected this statement often to console himself while struggling for his position later in life. “Coming Home to Dehra” is the continuation of “The Funeral”, the story is a flashback after his father’s death when Rusty was travelling in train to meet his mother in Dehra Dun. He emotionally recollects “It was only last summer that I had gone to spend my school holidays with my father” (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 191). Rusty’s mother married for the second time and he hated to spend
time in the company of his stepfather, mother and stepbrother because they do not care about him the way his father did. The bitter experiences evolved due to Rusty’s loss of his loving father.

The first book ends with the story entitled “The Wish”. This story narrates Rusty’s wish slowly becoming a reality in his life. His grandmother decides to go to London in 1944. When the tonga-driver delays in reaching the station, it makes grandmother nervous. Rusty insists on the importance of grandmother’s punctuality principles. He also recollects Ayah’s confidence in shooting stars that if one wished on a shooting star, it fulfills their wish in life (208). Rusty wished that he does not have to go to England when he saw a shooting star and this did come true in his life because he returned to Dehra Dun after the sudden death of his grandmother in Lucknow (Rusty, The Boy from the Hills 209).

The first book consists of fourteen stories, and the title itself gives a hint to the reader about the theme. The stories reveal the value of hard work, being independent in life and insists on the close relationship between a child and his grandmother. Rusty understands the value of self-discipline, punctuality and the importance of love through which the former two can be taught. Through Rusty the young readers understand these important values and are enthused to follow them in life.

Given below is an overview of the themes and values presented in Rusty, The Boy from the Hills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Story</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Creatures Great and Small</td>
<td>Respect nature</td>
<td>Learning values from Indian mythology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Tree Lover</td>
<td>The trees are microcosm of eco-system and one must protect them</td>
<td>Protect and conserve nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Tiger in the House</td>
<td>Humans should be saviours of young and sick animals</td>
<td>Wild animals have to live in the forest</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monkey Trouble</td>
<td>Love towards animals</td>
<td>Value of humour</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Animals on the Track</td>
<td>Ecological balance</td>
<td>Wild animals find joy only in the forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Escape From Java</td>
<td>Dangerous adventure</td>
<td>Children must learn the value of friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Room of Many Colours</td>
<td>Superstitious belief and social status</td>
<td>The reality of social hierarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Last Tonga Ride</td>
<td>Friendship with everyone is important. It has no age bar</td>
<td>A child hides things when the elders restrict him/her</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Life with Uncle Ken</td>
<td>Lazy people are a burden to others</td>
<td>People should work and be independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Ghost in the Garden</td>
<td>Children are curious about supernatural beings</td>
<td>Ghosts/spirits are not always harmful scary beings</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Photograph</td>
<td>Nostalgia fascinates elders</td>
<td>Bonding with grandparents is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Funeral</td>
<td>The strongest man in the world is one who stands alone</td>
<td>Children should be taught to cultivate self-discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Coming Home to Dehra</td>
<td>Lack of mother’s love and attention</td>
<td>The importance of having a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Wish</td>
<td>The story revolves around Rusty’s wish to be in India</td>
<td>Punctuality is a virtue</td>
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</table>
The second book, *Rusty Runs Away*, traces the experiences in the life of Rusty from when he was twelve years old until he is seventeen years old. This book describes how Rusty becomes wise in the ways of the world. The text also narrates his relationship with different people in various places.

The stories “The Window,” “The Prospect of Flowers,” “The Woman on Platform No.8” gives details of Rusty in his teens and narrates his boarding school holidays which he spent in his guardian’s house. He never finds affection and love during the holidays while visiting his guardian, Mr. Harrison. Rusty’s only companion in the story is a window in his room, which gives him a glimpse of the world. Rusty becomes friendly with his neighbour, Koki, a ten-year-old girl who is visiting her relative’s house during vacation. Rusty and Koki enjoy each other’s company, viewing the outside world through the window of Rusty’s room. Rusty finds solace in her company which is revealed through the words, “Koki came up my steps nearly every day, and joined me at the window. There was a lot excitement to be had in our world, especially when the rains broke” (*Rusty Runs Away* 6). Rusty felt like a prisoner when not in the company of Koki. After the vacation, Koki left for her school. In Rusty’s mind Koki’s friendship stays forever, he feels Koki was his true companion. Rusty thinks Koki quenches his thirst for love after his father’s death. The frustrated words of Rusty after Koki’s departure are, “Then I closed the window. It would be opened only when the spring and Koki came again” (9).

“The Prospect of Flowers” is a contrast to the previous story and explains Rusty’s friendship with Miss Mackenzie, an eighty year old European woman who
lives alone in Mulberry Cottage. Rusty’s interest in her flowers makes him friends with this old lady. Miss Mackenzie teaches Rusty to differentiate the Himalayan flowers from others. She also presents him the book *Flora Himaliensis*, which has information on wild Himalayan flowers. Rusty admires her knowledge of rare flowers. Miss Mackenzie’s lonely death on a winter day clearly portrays the condition of old European people who stayed back during the transition period in Independent India. “The Woman on Platform No.8” clearly pictures Rusty’s longing for his mother’s love. Rusty, a fourteen year old boy on his way back to his boarding school, waits for his train on platform No.8 at Ambala railway station and meets a strange woman. The woman offers Rusty tea, samosas (Hindi word for snacks) and jalebis (Hindi word for a dessert) with affection. Rusty meets one of his classmates, Satish along with his mother. Satish’s mother assumes that this strange woman is Rusty’s mother. Both Rusty and the woman play mother and son for time being. Rusty derives pleasure having a substitute mother for a short time at least. These three stories narrate Rusty’s friendship with women of different age groups. The contrast to the above stories is the forthcoming story which flames Rusty’s unpleasant feelings on his visit to his mother’s place.

“The Job Well Done” narrates Rusty’s visit to his mother’s house from his boarding school. Rusty’s mother invites Rusty, because his stepfather was out of station at that time. Rusty compares his father and stepfather, the bitter feelings for his stepfather emerge, “My father had always given me books to read. When I’d first stayed with my mother and stepfather, he had said that I would become a dreamer if I read too much and had taken my books away” (*Rusty Runs Away* 23). Rusty enjoys the company of Puran, the gardener in his mother’s place who had been there before the legal separation. Rusty helps Puran build the wall of the old well. The
author emphasises the importance of a happy atmosphere during a child’s vacation. Stepfather is, more or less, a villain in the eyes of a stepchild, but Rusty never thinks of his stepfather as an enemy. Rusty does not forget, but forgives him in the course of life. The next unforgettable event in Rusty’s life is his running away from school.

“Running Away” and “The Playing Fields of Simla” are Rusty’s unusual experiences in life. The title of the first story clearly indicates Rusty’s running away from his Arundel boarding school. Rusty, as a sixteen year old boy becomes close with his friend, Daljit, who belongs to the Sikh community. Daljit’s father, a businessman is settled in East Africa where Daljit aspires to go and live with his father. Both Rusty and Daljit plan to run away from school because they think they are adventurous heroes like Huck Finn, Copperfield, Oliver Twist and Kim (Rusty Runs Away 53). Rusty’s Uncle Jim is the captain of a steamer that travels between Mombasa in East Africa and Jamnagar port in Gujarat, India. Both of them want to board the ship at Jamnagar and Rusty decides to go to London, whereas Daljit will take off to his father in East Africa. They fail at their attempt and both return to their boarding school. Rusty and Daljit are dismissed by the school authorities. This story shows how impulsiveness in life more than often results in failure.

Another adventurous story is “The Playing Fields of Simla” which describes the new boarding school of Rusty in Simla. Rusty’s new friend in this school is Omar, who is a Muslim. He is an orphan like Rusty. The partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 separates Rusty from Omar. The headmaster of the school asks the Muslim boys to go to their new formed country, Pakistan (Rusty Runs Away 112). Omar leaves India and settles in his home town. Rusty recollects his friendship with Omar during those days when they attempted to visit the tunnel and gain pleasure in
new findings. Rusty feels sad after Omar leaves for Pakistan. After some years he hears that Omar died in a plane crash during the war between India and Pakistan. This nostalgic story reveals the sadness associated with the loss of a friend.

Then comes the most important part in Rusty’s life – adolescence. The character of Rusty as a young adult in the story “It Happened One Spring” brings out the psychological change in anyone belonging to this age. More than this, Rusty belongs to European community, who has decided to stay in India after Independence. This particular story is in a novella form and contains the first nine chapters of *The Room on the Roof*. It is Ruskin Bond’s famous first novel. Bond has arranged these stories in Rusty fiction as nested stories.

The opening part of the story introduces Rusty in Dehra Dun hills to the reader; as an open person, he makes friends with boys of his same age. During his evening walks in spring, Rusty meets a boy named Somi riding his bicycle. Somi is a symbol of friendship who asks Rusty to accompany him on the bicycle ride. Rusty welcomes Somi’s invitation. On their way, they meet another friend, Ranbir, a talented wrestler in the bazaar. The fourth person to accompany them on the cycle ride is Suri, with his spectacled owlish look. They are the main characters introduced through Rusty in the story. At the end of the ride, Somi informs Rusty that he could meet them at the chaat shop (Hindi word for spicy snacks) in the bazaar. From that moment onwards, Rusty is eager to enjoy their company and spent time in the bazaar.

These stories belong to the post-colonial period when elderly Europeans settled in mountainous regions of India due to favourable climatic conditions. One
set of people settled in Dehra Dun; among them was Rusty’s guardian Mr. Harrison. Mr. Harrison strictly follows the laws of European community; he does not encourage social or cultural mingling with natives. Rusty, who belongs to European community as well breaks this rule and makes friends with others, enjoys Holi and other festivities of India, which angers Mr. Harrison. Rusty becomes angry with the spiteful words of his guardian and finally attacks him. Later in the night, he escapes from his guardian’s house. Rusty spends time in the lonely bazaar and looks forward to meeting his friend Somi.

The next morning, understanding Rusty’s pathetic and miserable situation, Somi consoles Rusty and takes him to his house. Somi finds a job for Rusty as an English teacher to Kishen, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Kapoor. Rusty receives a warm welcome from the Kapoor family and stays in a room on the rooftop of their house.

Mr. Kapoor is an alcoholic and he does not care for his family. Although Rusty enjoys Mr. Kapoor’s activities, he is attracted towards Mrs. Meena Kapoor’s beauty, “I stared after Meena Kapoor, and continued to stare even when she had disappeared” (*Rusty Runs Away* 177). Rusty falls in love with Mrs. Meena Kapoor. This stands in stark contrast with Rusty’s earlier rejection of a prostitute, who approaches him when he ran away from his guardian’s house to the bazaar. The author describes adolescent Rusty having some ethics in his life, longing for identity and his urge to assert himself as an adult.

The following table sums up the themes and values in *Rusty Runs Away.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Story</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Window</td>
<td>Friendship between two children is beyond nationality</td>
<td>Need for friends is expressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Prospect of Flowers</td>
<td>The British people who settled after independence and their miserable position is explained</td>
<td>Children must gain knowledge about natural world around them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A Job Well Done</td>
<td>A sensitive child hates stepparents if they do not show love and compassion</td>
<td>Elders must be trustworthy and earn respect of their children</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The Woman on Platform No.8</td>
<td>Parental affection is important</td>
<td>Children can appreciate love from strangers also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Running Away</td>
<td>Teenage adventures teach a lesson in life</td>
<td>Children should follow the safety rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Playing Fields of Simla</td>
<td>Orphaned children possess more courage and perseverance</td>
<td>A teenager needs friends to share his emotional feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>It Happened One Spring</td>
<td>Teenage friendship is strong and truthful</td>
<td>Adolescence is a crucial period in the formative years of a child</td>
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**Rusty and the Leopard**

The third book, *Rusty and the Leopard*, has two parts. The first part “Alone in the World” contains chapters x to xxiii of *The Room on the Roof*. The second part “The Hills and Beyond” is a modified version of *Vagrants in the Valley* and includes other stories, namely, “The Leopard”, “The Tunnel” and “Face in the Darkness”. This book describes the life of Rusty during his formative years from eighteen to twenty years.
The “Alone in the World” is a sequel to “It Happened One Spring”. Rusty is responsible for teaching English to Kishen, while his remuneration for the job was a place to stay and food to eat. In the course of time, Rusty falls in love with Mrs. Meena Kapoor because she is kind hearted. Rusty confesses to Kishen, Meena’s son, about his love for Meena. Kishen laughs and says, “If you love her,” he said, ‘I’m not jealous. But it sounds funny…” (Rusty and the Leopard 22) One day, during his evening walk, Rusty comes across a ravine and a small stream at the bottom of the hillside. He informs Somi and Kishen about this discovery. All three enjoy the pleasure of this pool, swim, catch fish and ride a buffalo. Another adventure in Rusty’s life is learning ghost stories from Somi’s mother. She is a great storyteller. According to Somi’s mother, Jinn and Munjia are popular ghosts believed to be living in villages of north India. Rusty gets immense pleasure from these conversations.

Likewise, Rusty and his friends decide to visit the glaciers without any knowledge of mountain climbing. The young boys plan to visit the Pindari glacier of the Himalayas. Mrs. Kapoor permits Kishen to join the trip. Somi, Kishen and Rusty start their journey towards snowcapped mountains at the height of 12,000 feet, fifty four miles away from their place. They get help from a boy named Bishnu, who knows the hills. He assists them to reach the top of the hill. Bishnu updates the boys about snowmen stories, named Yeti, Lidini, Sagpa, and Sagpani who kidnap children. One day later, they reach the peak but heavy rain restricts their journey downwards. They take shelter in a cave for that night trembling with fear of floods.
Next morning, when the rain clears they return to the valley. Adolescent age pushes one to take risks in life for the mere adrenaline rush.

Rusty’s next trip is a picnic to the forest with the Kapoor’s family by car. Somi, Suri and the dog named Prickly Heat accompany them. On their way, the car breaks down in the middle of the river. The members decide to look around in the forest till the car is repaired by Mr. Kapoor. Rusty and Mrs. Meena Kapoor get away from the crowd and spend time in the thickets. They clasp hands and kiss without anybody’s knowledge. “It would be nice to stay in the jungle,” said Meena. ‘Let us stay…’ ‘We will be found. We cannot escape–from–others…” (Rusty and the Leopard 65) Rusty is shocked when Suri threatens Rusty that he would expose their intimacy to Mr. Kapoor. Rusty does not care much about Suri, since he was so confident nobody would believe him.

The next event in Rusty’s life is of paramount importance. Rusty feels comfortable and enjoys life in the company of Mrs. Meena Kapoor. His happiness is, however, short lived. Meena requests Rusty to take care of Kishen, because the couple planned to visit Delhi to start a new business.

The following day the postman brings a telegram which breaks the news of the death of Mrs. Meena Kapoor during their journey to Delhi. Heartbroken by the telegram, Kishen is informed to pack his bags and move to Hardwar where his aunt lives. Rusty is isolated and without money he struggles to survive in Dehra Dun. Rusty wants to forget Meena’s death but in vain. He is confident that Kapoor has not suspected his wife’s infidelity, “For Kapoor, Meena had died perfect. He suspected her of no infidelity. And, in a way, she had died perfect … I knew Kapoor couldn’t
believe a single disparaging word about Meena” (Rusty and the Leopard 98). In his loneliness he recollects memories of his childhood friend Koki, guardian and pines for losing Kishen and Meena.

From the scars of the past to bleak present he visualizes his future in London where he can overcome from this state of mind. Even the lizards in the wall of his room signal “… the present was lonely and depressing; the future became a distorted image, created out of my own brooding fancies” (Rusty and the Leopard 100). These frustrated words of Rusty show that he was depressed and would have lost mental balance due to Meena’s death.

Rusty’s feelings for his father and Meena are distinguished in their death. Rusty is a grown up boy when he meets Mrs. Meena. Both incidents impact Rusty, but adolescence gives way to depression, the younger Rusty was strong enough to bear his father’s demise. Rusty, first time in his life, drinks, “When I had drunk a little more, I began to talk…I struggled against Meena, but she was too powerful, and I began to cry” (Rusty and the Leopard 101). Rusty’s expressions are different during his father’s death, he then looked at the positive side of life and rose above it. Though Somi requested Rusty not to go to England, Rusty is hardened by then. On his way to London, Rusty decides to visit Hardwar to see how Kishen is doing. In Hardwar, he meets Mr. Kapoor, who has remarried another woman already. Rusty gets to know from Kapoor’s second wife that Kishen became a thief in the bazaar. Rusty gets angry at Mr. Kapoor’s conduct as a father. Luckily, Rusty meets Kishen near the Hardwar temple and he convinces Rusty to go back to Dehra Dun where
both can start a new life. The importance of optimistic approach in life shows a new way to Rusty.

“The Hills and Beyond”

The “The Hills and Beyond” is the modified version of the novel *Vagrants in the Valley*. It is the continuation of the novel *The Room on the Roof*. This is a collection of fifteen nested stories. The stories describe the life of Rusty in his late-teens (eighteen to twenty years) and the beginning of adult life without a home or a stable family. Rusty’s life is full of brave encounters.

The stories “The Homeless”, “The Forest Road” describe Rusty and Kishen’s return to Dehra Dun from Hardwar. With enough money for their food they walked through the forest route to Dehra Dun. On their way, Rusty considers his future options in Dehra Dun; he could either take English tuition or write stories and publish them to magazines for his living. Quest and Identity is highlighted in the story. The next story reports their life at Dehra Dun.

“A Place to Sleep” and “The Old Church” explain Rusty and Kishen’s vagabond life with meager amount of money for their food and the maidan (Hindi word for playground) to sleep after they reached Dehra Dun. Rusty shares his ghost experience with others in the tea shop near the maidan. One of his Anglo-Indian teachers, Mr. Oliver had met a boy sitting alone on a rock near the forest, “It had no eyes, ears, nose or mouth. It was just a round smooth head—with a school cap on top of it!” (154) The listeners trembled with fear. “The Old Church” narrates Rusty’s finding the St. Paul’s church on the outskirts of the town on his way back from an
interview. Rusty and Kishen find a place to sleep for time being, better than the maidan. The author introduces fantasy to create interest in children in the former story. Whereas, the latter gives practical education to adolescent children that vagabond life should be avoided because financial security and guidance are important.

In “New Encounters” and “Prospect of Journey” Rusty’s meets with his old friend Hathi, a wrestler. Hathi shares with Rusty that he is going to settle in the hills, in the village of Manjari near Lansdowne and invites Rusty to his place. Rusty gets friendly with an old Englishman, Mr. Pettigrew who has a bungalow in Dehra Dun. Mr. Pettigrew knew Rusty’s family and tells Rusty that his paternal uncle married a woman of Indian origin living in the hills of Garhwal. This aunt of Rusty, a widow already, has some valuable mementoes of Rusty’s father as well. Due to Mr. Pettigrew, Rusty comes across such an important member in his family and decides to visit his newfound aunt. In the meanwhile, Kishen is forcibly taken by Mrs. Bhusan, (a distant relative of Kapoor’s) to her home. Kishen escapes from the Bhushans’ house at night the same day. Rusty convinces Kishen that he should live with Mrs. Bhushan since Rusty will be visiting the hills to meet his aunt. Friends, when chosen correctly, give courage and help to make right decisions.

The forthcoming stories explain Rusty’s helpful friends in “The Lafunga,” “To the Hills,” “The Leopard,” “A Note From Sudheer,” “Rum and Curry,” “Lady with a Hookah,” “The Road to Rishikesh” and “First and Last Impressions.” “The Lafunga,” describes Rusty’s search for his aunt in the hills of Garhwal. Through Devinder, Rusty became familiar with Sudheer, the lafunga (lafunga means scamp in
Hindi). Sudheer by nature was a crook who cheats people for money. Rusty does not approve of his criminal activities but accepts him as his friend, because he is also an orphan and a homeless refugee. Devinder helps Rusty financially to reach his aunt’s place. These incidents reveal to the young adults the need for a nonjudgmental friend. The story “To the Hills” is about Rusty’s train travel experience to visit his aunt in the hills. “The Leopard” is a continuation of “To the Hills”. It is a reminiscence of Rusty’s journey during his school days, from Kalka to Simla. Rusty meets an old man, Raghu Singh, the tunnel inspector and joins him for an inspection that night. “‘What’s that?’ I whispered. I felt a bit uneasy. ‘It’s the leopard,’ said Raghu Singh. ‘I think it’s in the tunnel’” (Rusty and the Leopard 220). The leopard turned swiftly and disappeared into the darkness before the train crossed. Rusty felt good having saved the leopard’s life. The author conveys through Rusty that the lives of wild animals had been violated and their homes disturbed by making tunnels and other such so-called discoveries to better human civilisation.

“A Note From Sudheer” and “Rum and Curry” explains Rusty’s visit to Manjari hills. Rusty spends a couple of weeks in the Manjari village and understands the weak economical position of people in hilly regions after independence. Sudheer sends a note informing Rusty about their plans to visit his aunt in the hills of Garhwal. “Rum and Curry” gives a clear picture of Rusty and Sudheer’s search for Rusty’s aunt. They stay the night in the house of an old man named Ram Singh. Both enjoy Ram Singh’s food along with rum, his company. He is the one who tells Rusty that an Indian woman who was married to an English Sahib (Hindi word for Sir) lived on the road towards Rishikesh. The author shows that the adolescent’s interest in new kinds of food, shelter, discovery and friendship. “Lady with a
“Hookah” is about Rusty’s visit to his aunt. Rusty’s aunt gives him and his friend a warm welcome. She hands over to Rusty his father’s few old books. Rusty considers these assets as his treasure but turns down his aunt’s welcome to stay with her forever; he says, “…I must stand on my own feet. I’m too old to be looked after by others” (Rusty and the Leopard 256). The spirit of independence exhibited by this adolescent comes to the forefront and his contrast to Uncle Ken is highlighted.

“The Road to Rishikesh” and “End of Journey” narrate Rusty and Sudheer’s trip to a town of Rishikesh as pilgrims. Rusty takes bath in the holy river and feels a sudden ray of hope about his future. He bids goodbye to Sudheer and his vagrant life. Rusty’s pilgrimage gives him a new focus to begin a new phase in life. “First and Last Impressions” reports Rusty’s return to Dehra Dun and he comes to know that Kishen was happy in his relative’s house. Mr. Pettigrew comes up with the idea that Rusty could sell the first edition copies of his father’s old books to the booksellers for a good amount of money. Mr. Pettigrew also advises Rusty to use that money for his trip to London and fulfill his dream of becoming a writer. “Start of Journey” tells about Rusty’s trip to London. His friends also think that this firm decision in life is important.

Journey is a motif used by Bond here. Rusty’s journey from his schooldays to that of a renowned writer, within and without is sketched. Rusty’s running away from his guardian’s house is the beginning of a child’s quest for freedom. His trip to London is the commencement of a new phase – search for homeland and search for identity. It is the despair felt by Rusty in London which allows him to identify India as his motherland. Rusty seeks his paternal aunt; he undertakes this journey to find
his roots and strengthen their hold in India and establish himself as an Indian which becomes his identity.

The following grid highlights the themes and values of the stories in *Rusty and the Leopard*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the story</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Alone in the World</td>
<td>The life experiences force teenagers to run away from the control of parents to seek their own identity</td>
<td>Proper guidance should be given to teenagers in the formative years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Hills Beyond</td>
<td>The adolescent period gives enormous strength to survive in society only with an elder’s guidance</td>
<td>Self-identity is important in life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Rusty Goes to London**

The fourth book *Rusty Goes to London* narrates his life from the ages of twenty to twenty-four. The titles of the stories are highly indicative. When Rusty visits London for the first time he stays with his paternal aunt (father’s cousin), Emily, in Jersey. Rusty frequently changes his job to earn his bread and butter. He works as a clerk in a grocery shop, then as an assistant to Thomas Cook’s travel agency and later, as a clerk again, in Public Health Department in Jersey. The only stable job he has for a year is as an accountant at Photax office in London. Simultaneously, he finishes writing his first novel in London (*The Room on the Roof*). He finds a publisher and they agree to publish his novel. Nostalgia drives him to his homeland nevertheless. Though there is accomplishment of his desire,
dislocation dissatisfies him to the core and he decides to go to his homeland. So he returns to Dehra Dun as a freelancer.

The first few stories describe Rusty’s London life and dissatisfaction with it. “A Far Cry from India” clearly portrays Rusty’s mind and his nostalgic feelings for India. In the novel, Rusty creates his first novel out of this nostalgia. Rusty recreates the character of “…Somi, Ranbir, Kishen – and the essence of that calf-love I’d felt for Kishen’s mother” which is an inner voice of Ruskin Bond here (10). In “Six Pounds of Savings” Rusty understands the essential aspects and techniques of writing a novel. To finish fast he had to type on his own, so he bought a type-writer with his savings, amounting to six pounds and loaned the rest from his co-worker in Photax, Mr. Best, the senior clerk. Rusty left Channel Islands for London. After thirty five years, Rusty felt guilty for not paying his debts to Mr. Best. Rusty sent a cheque for his help in the early stages of his career, but it was returned due to Mr. Best’s change of residence. The story inculcates the value of honesty which does not change in a person with change of time. The next story of Rusty is about his stay in the hospital for treatment of Eale. The “Days of Wine and Roses” portray Rusty’s hospital experience as a patient and friends he finds there, like, other patients, nurses and visitors. The story highlights National Health Scheme in England. From the title, “Calypso Christmas” we assume that the hospital celebrated Calypso, a dance during Christmas. During the celebration of “Calypso Christmas” Rusty was kissed by a girl named Lucy, for the first time in London. This brings merriment in his otherwise boring and sickly life in this strange land.
The story “The Stolen Daffodils” and “The Man Who Was Kipling” delightfully tell tales of famous authors who influenced Rusty. In order to learn the methods of writing detective stories, Rusty read a lot of crime fiction of Sherlock Holmes. Once he met Sherlock Holmes in London Baker Street and Holmes taught him the techniques of writing a detective story. The next story “The Man Who Was Kipling” is Rusty’s experience at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Rusty has an illusion of being accosted by a man in the museum who professes to be Rudyard Kipling. The author reveals his inner ambition of becoming a writer through his imaginative meetings.

“My Limehouse Adventure” is totally different from the earlier stories. It describes the Limehouse area of London mostly occupied by Chinese people. Rusty visits a Chinese Restaurant and meets the Chinese owner-cum-bearer. Instead of enjoying Chinese food, he has to cope with the owner’s wife’s unexpected delivery at home due to delay of ambulance and gynaecologist. The Chinese man tells Rusty, “‘We have had six children, but all girls. Now we have a boy!’” (Rusty Goes to London 47) Rusty is amazed when he learns the importance of a boy child outside India.

The story “Tribute to a Dead Friend” and “The Girl from Copenhagen” talk about another platonic crush in Rusty’s life in 1954. The story “Tribute to a Dead Friend” is about Rusty and his Vietnamese friend, Thanh’s love for Vu-Phuong, a girl from Vietnam. Vu-Phuong did not respond to both of them. After a couple of months, through Pravin, another Gujarathi friend of Rusty’s, in London, Rusty hears about Thanh’s death in Paris. Rusty has a doubt whether Thanh had died of illness or
committed suicide because of failure in love. The author insists on understanding in love, a feeling that cannot be forced in another and rejection should also be taken courageously.

In the story, “The Girl from Copenhagen” Rusty finds comfort in Ulla, a Danish girl, who is a friend of Vu-Phuong as well. He spends one day with Ulla and says, “Somehow our relationship seemed complete and whole and I passed the day in glow of happiness” (72) but their relationship did not last. The author, through this story, reveals Rusty's continuous search for true love.

The story “Return to Dehra” explains Rusty’s journey back from London to his birth place, Dehra Dun. Rusty returned to his birth place because of the difficulties he faced to publish his stories in London and also due to Vu-Phuong’s rejection of his love. He thought, “… my forefathers were British, Britain was not really my place” (75). The main issue is his dilemma adding up with the lack of humaneness in his new environment. Rusty’s attempt to prove his identity as a writer in London became futile. His feeling of belonging to India intensified and he returned to Dehra Dun at age of twenty four in 1955. Devinder, Rusty’s old friend welcomed Rusty in the Dehra Dun station affectionately. The story explains Rusty’s longing for his homeland and realises the importance of his attachment towards the birthplace, his roots.

The last few stories, “The Garlands on his Brow,” “Time Stops at Shamli,” “My Most Important Day,” “A Handful of Nuts” are fragments of Rusty’s freelance writing in Dehra Dun. “The Garlands on his Brow,” is a story of the bygone days of Rani Raunakpur. The protagonist, Hassan, a small town wrestler succumbs to the
amoral nature of Rani (Hindi word for Queen) who had offered Hassan a post of personal bodyguard. After Rani’s death, he begins his career as a wrestler, but ends up as a beggar, because the newcomers had established themselves by then. The story reflects the fact that historical heroes in society are ignored, forgotten, and allowed to die uncared for, by the younger generation.

The story “Time Stops at Shamli” was written by Rusty when he was twenty-five years old. The title signifies fate, which made him visit a small town, Shamli. There Rusty met Koki; wife of the hotel manager and Rusty’s childhood friend during his stay in Dehra Dun. Rusty felt happy when he met Koki and asked her, “‘Leave this place. Come away with me tomorrow morning. We will go somewhere far away and be together always.’” Koki replies, “‘I am married. It is as simple as that.’” (Rusty Goes to London 124). Rusty learns that Indian girls do not break the sanctity of marriage as easily as Europeans.

“My Most Important Day” is another fragment of his freelance writing after a couple of years of his return from London. In this story, Rusty narrates his life in his landlady, Bibiji’s house. The Room on the Roof was published and the first part of the novel appeared in instalments in the newspaper “Illustrated Weekly of India.” Rusty, as a writer felt happy about his recognition and popularity.

“A Handful of Nuts” is the longest story of his fourth book. It narrates Rusty’s hope to flourish as a writer. But his focus shifted around during adolescence. The imaginary incidents in the story are a result of Rusty’s nostalgia. The story indulges in ribaldry, as it was written to address the pangs of young adult’s and their confused state of mind.
Listed below are the themes and values evident in *Rusty Goes to London*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Story</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A Far Cry from India</td>
<td>Young writers have to learn the techniques of writing</td>
<td>Practice makes a man perfect</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Six Pounds of Savings</td>
<td>Economic help is necessary</td>
<td>Honesty is the best policy</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Days of Wine and Roses</td>
<td>National Health Scheme is necessary</td>
<td>Human relationships give adequate knowledge</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Calypso Christmas</td>
<td>A young man wants merriment to take away the boredom of life</td>
<td>Monotonous life needs a break</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Stolen Daffodils</td>
<td>A writer must learn the techniques before writing a detective story</td>
<td>Fantasy is an important element in storytelling</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>My Limehouse Adventure</td>
<td>Most oriental families believe that a male child is important</td>
<td>Healthy society needs prohibition of gender inequalities</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>The Man Who Was Kipling</td>
<td>Setting and background are important aspects for story writing</td>
<td>Writing needs powerful imagination</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Tribute to a Dead Friend</td>
<td>Love affairs in early teenage are often infatuations</td>
<td>Love is eternal and not of short duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The Girl from Copenhagen</td>
<td>Unmarried young adults always search for love</td>
<td>Control of feelings in teenage is vital</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Return to Dehra</td>
<td>The writer feels comfortable in his motherland</td>
<td>True friendship is necessary in the formative years</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The Garlands on His Brow</td>
<td>Powerful persons like Raja and Rani desert their bodyguards when they age</td>
<td>Glories of unsung heroes too make history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Time Stops at Shamli</td>
<td>Childhood crush may not end in marriage</td>
<td>Traditions cannot be easily wrecked</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>My Most Important Day</td>
<td>Memorable occasions and specific incidents have to be celebrated</td>
<td>Celebration and exchange of greetings are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>A Handful of Nuts</td>
<td>Unfruitful dreaming is common in adolescent period</td>
<td>Neglecting professional life hampers later</td>
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Rusty Comes Home

The interesting stories in the fifth book *Rusty Comes Home* were written by Rusty after exploring Dehra Dun, Delhi and the small town Shahganj. The stories are about Rusty’s early years of freelancing. These stories became popular in no time. His stories were written for children and young adult readers. Rusty establishes himself as a contemporary writer of Indian English literature. In this book, the stories bring back memories of his past and he compares it with his present life. They are about love, ghosts, travels, animals, forests and nature. This volume consists of stories written on the basis of Rusty’s life experiences after establishing himself as a writer in India.

“All you Need is Paper,” and “Summer Time in Old New Delhi” are autobiographical narrations of Rusty as a freelance writer in Dehra Dun. Rusty missed his teenage friends Somi and Ranbir. Rusty became close his neighbour, “Mrs Singh often regaled me with tales of the supernatural from her village, and I did not hesitate to work some of them into my own stories” (*Rusty Comes Home* 3).

“All Summer Time in Old New Delhi” explains Rusty’s works as a freelance writer while working in an International Relief Agency in Delhi. When he was in Delhi, he compares, “…Dehra had limited scope for young Indian authors writing in English. I could not fall in love with Delhi, my heart was always in the hills and small towns of north India” (*Rusty Comes Home* 8). In this story, Rusty recollects Delhi in the 1940s when he was living with his father in army hutment and compares to the one he saw after independence in 1959. The drastic contrast was visible in its complete replacement of trees by concrete buildings. Rusty, in these stories, insists on the
importance of preservation of nature and how more than necessary industrial growth of the city spoils its ecology. He also emphasises on the need of uninhibited interactions with neighbours and friends for a basic survival in society.


The following stories in this volume explain Rusty’s familiarity with others. The story “Bhabiji’s House” is about Rusty’s stay in one of his friends, Kamal’s house. In this story, he writes how Bhabiji (Hindi word for sister-in-law), the old woman who heads the family strictly follows a joint family system in Rajouri Garden. “She still has complete control over her large family and, with tremendous confidence and enthusiasm, presides over the lives of three sons, a daughter, two daughters-in-law and fourteen grandchildren” (Rusty Comes Home 17). Bhabiji wanted Kamal to marry a Punjabi girl, she was afraid that if he marries a European girl then he would separate from a joint family under his wife’s influence. The story reveals the culture of joint family and expounds on the importance of tradition.

“The Crooked Tree” narrates Rusty’s acquaintance with another friend named Ketan, an orphan refugee from Pakistan. He was Rusty’s roommate in Shahganj district, a town in Uttar Pradesh. They felt comfortable in each other’s company and shared their difficult past. Ketan was a victim of the partition between
India and Pakistan in 1947. No man is an island; everybody enjoys comfort in another person.

“The story of Madhu” is a story of Rusty’s association with another thirteen year old girl, Madhu who dies suddenly due to high fever. “In a corner lay Madhu’s little treasures. I recognised among them the presents which during the past four years I had given her” (*Rusty Comes Home* 60). The story highlights the innocence of this affectionate girl.

“Most Beautiful” narrates Rusty’s relationship and experiences with the ‘ape-like’ boy Suresh, when he was living in Shahganj (62). The story is about society’s abhorrence towards differently-abled children. In this story, the differently abled boy was treated cruelly by other children and in turn Suresh became violent with his pets. Suresh continued to act cruelly and even began to enjoy causing pain to others. This attitude of a boy could be a result of the indifferent treatment he had encountered from his relatives and friends. It is clear that he is not cruel by birth when he reciprocates love and affection shown by Rusty. Hence, every child needs love and affection to mould them into a gentleman in the society.

Next set of stories have supernatural beings as their focus. “The Haunted Bicycle” explains the unforeseen and terrible death of two teenage children and how their souls transformed into malevolent spirits taking revenge on the travellers. Another interesting story is “The Trouble with Jinns” which is about the tricks of Jinn (here evil power) owned by the barbaric teenager, Jimmy. “A Jinn is a spirit creature from another world who had assumed, for a lifetime, the physical aspect of a human being (*Rusty Comes Home* 114).” “Listen to the Wind” is a love story in
which Robert, born to British parents falls in love with a Brahmin girl. They elope to Brunt Hill on a rainy day; they are charred to death by a sudden flash of lightening and the lovers continue to live as ghosts in the hills. Author represents the latent fear in the minds of teenagers about ghosts. These stories are appealing to the curious and adventurous nature of a teenager.

“The Night Train to Deoli” and “Binya Passes By” are momentary actions of Rusty around the age of twenty three. The stories inform transitory relationship between Rusty and an unnamed girl who sells baskets on the platform of Deoli station, and Rusty and Binya, a young widow. In “The Night Train to Deoli” Rusty cherishes the brief encounter with the former and mulls over the incident while passing by the station in another trip later. In “Binya Passes By” Rusty is attracted by Binya’s songs on his way home. They begin to spend time together in the hills. However, Binya disappears quickly from Rusty’s life because her grandmother sends her to her mother’s place, a hundred miles away. The story narrates the emotional experiences of an individual versus the socio-cultural values of the people who live in the hills and depicts the moral restraints of society against widow remarriage.

The story “He Said It with Arsenic” is about Rusty and his father’s cousin, Uncle Bill who shares an apartment with him for some time in Dehra Dun. Uncle Bill is shown to have dual personality, one as a true gentleman and another as a killer, who poisons people. This bizarre way of murdering people that creates no suspicion is the main surprise in the story. Rusty knows the trick of Uncle Bill’s and has a hunch that his idea is to kill him with poison too. Rusty asked, “Tell me,
"uncle, why did you drink it?" ‘Drink what? The water?’ ‘No, the glass of sherry into which you’d slipped one of your famous powders’’ (Rusty Comes Home 93). The author’s interest to write a crime fiction is revealed through this story. Moreover, the story guides the readers that there are suspicious psychopaths like Uncle Bill and one needs to be alert to coexist with them.

“The Good Old Days” is the story of an eighty five year old European, Miss Pettibone who lives in a small cottage. Miss Pettibone tells Rusty the story of two unmarried Anglo-Indian sisters, Miss Taylor and Miss Charlotte; the latter is killed by the former due in her drunken state, and is admitted in an asylum in Ranchi. The story elucidates the influence of alcohol on people.

The story, “The Last Time I saw Delhi” is about Rusty’s mother whom he met after many years at a hospital in Delhi. The conflicts and resentment of an abandoned son became important at the deathbed of his mother. The author conveys the importance of forgiving through this story. The next stories are dedicated to Prem, Rusty adopted son. “From Small Beginnings” is the story of an adopted son Prem Singh, a bachelor who started working for Rusty at the age of sixteen. He took care of Rusty and took over all responsibilities of the house. Prem Singh married Chandra, “Eight years with Prem. He was just a sixteen-year-old boy when I first saw him, and now he has a wife and child” (Rusty Comes Home 136). Prem’s family provided true service and gave love to Rusty which he has been searching throughout his life. From this story, the author brings forth the values of a stable home and relationship.
“Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright” is a story written for Prem’s young son, Rakesh. This story compiles many small stories within it. These stories deal with the flora and fauna on the bank of River Ganges. Rusty wrote it to purely entertain his eldest grandson Rakesh. The author expresses his concern for animals with special reference to deforestation harming the animal population. The loss of natural habitat tends to bring wild animals into villages in search of food. The story ends with Rusty informing Rakesh, “Always remember one thing, Raki: the tiger is the very soul of India, and when the last tiger goes, so will the soul of the country” (Rusty Comes Home 188). Rusty’s concern for the country where he lives, his homeland is revealed through this story. The book Rusty Comes Home ends with the protagonist’s revisit to his childhood days.

In “When You Can’t Climb Trees Any More,” “As Time Goes By,” and “Upon an Old Wall Dreaming” Rusty revisits his childhood days. After many years, Rusty visits Dehra Dun and learns that Miss Pettibone had expired at the age of eighty five. Rusty visits his grandmother’s house and recalls the secretly kept medal and iron cross of his grandfather in the hole of a jackfruit tree. Finding it difficult to climb the garden wall, Rusty requests the boy of the house owner to climb up the tree and hand over the iron cross and medal to Rusty. The intelligent boy understands that Rusty had come to see the house in search of his lost youth and respects his feelings. Through this, Rusty relishes his inseparable childhood days and attains indescribable amount of pleasure.

“As Time Goes By” is nostalgia of Rusty living in the company of his adopted son, Prem and his family. Rusty remembers his olden days and friends
when he sees Prem’s sons taking a dip in the pool, “Somi and Ranbir… I remember: it was going to rain. I could see the rain moving across the hills, and I could smell it on the breeze” (205). “Upon an Old Wall Dreaming” is the final story of the Rusty series written by Rusty/Bond when he was in his fifties. Rusty says that sitting on the fences is an important source to observe people which he had reproduced in hundreds of his stories, essays and writings. The message to readers is that his interest in people and living close to nature are the sources of his writing.

Listed below are the themes and values found in *Rusty Comes Home*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the story</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>All You Need is Paper</td>
<td>A young writer must work hard and overcome the difficulties</td>
<td>Importance of freedom in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Summertime in Old New Delhi</td>
<td>Fast growth of a great city disturbs the peace and calmness of people</td>
<td>Preservation of nature and environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bhabiji’s House</td>
<td>Indian Women preserve customs</td>
<td>Joint family has its own cultural values in Indian society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The Crooked Tree</td>
<td>Highlight the contrast between the rich/poor, the affluent/non-affluent, urban/rural</td>
<td>Accommodation and adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Haunted Bicycle</td>
<td>Common beliefs of ghost are emphasized</td>
<td>Rational approach to life is essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Story of Madhu</td>
<td>Love is a common theme</td>
<td>One should respect social values</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Most Beautiful</td>
<td>Differently-abled children must be cared for</td>
<td>People should be kind towards differently-abled people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Message</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Night Train at Deoli</td>
<td>Love is a common theme</td>
<td>Pleasant memories are cherishable</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>He Said It With Arsenic</td>
<td>Jekyll and Hyde story</td>
<td>Existence of suspicious characters and intelligence to escape from them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Binya Passes By</td>
<td>Love is the central theme</td>
<td>One has to respect the social codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Good Old Days</td>
<td>Addiction to alcoholism will result in committing a crime</td>
<td>Alcoholism should be condemned by society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Trouble With Jinns</td>
<td>Curiosity to know the things around him</td>
<td>Knowledge should be used only for the benefit of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Listen to the Wind</td>
<td>The cultural barrier of religion, race stand as obstacles for love marriages</td>
<td>Respect for social custom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Last Time I Saw Delhi</td>
<td>The eternal relationship between mother and son is highlighted</td>
<td>Forgiveness is a value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright</td>
<td>Deforestation leads to loss of shelter and migration of animals and birds</td>
<td>Protection of environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>From Small Beginnings</td>
<td>Having a family is essential for a writer</td>
<td>Emotional support is provided only by a family</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>When You Can’t Climb Trees Any More</td>
<td>Nostalgic feelings of childhood and teenage</td>
<td>Nostalgic memories of childhood days bestows indescribable pleasure in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>As Time Goes By</td>
<td>Creative ideas are important to write stories</td>
<td>If one door closes, another door opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Upon an Old Wall Dreaming</td>
<td>Writer’s experiences are the sources for his creative work</td>
<td>Taking care of others/family adds new meaning to life</td>
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</table>
Conclusion

Bond’s Rusty fiction is about Rusty’s life and a variety of people he has seen in his life. The stories narrate memorable incidents he has witnessed in various places which form the milieu for his stories. Ruskin Bond, through his stories connects the familiar places and people around him. Most of his writings have a personal touch. The five books of Rusty fiction trace the life of the protagonist from his childhood days to fifty five years of age in a chronological order. The study highlights the success of Rusty’s ambition from childhood to adulthood and evolution as a writer. Children are attracted towards short stories as their attention span is not too long, which is why Bond chooses this form. Rusty fiction provides pleasure of reading, apart from implicitly instructing ethical, cultural and social values. All his writings bring out good values like, importance of kinship and empathy in relationships with fellow human beings.

Symbiosis plays a key role in Rusty fiction. His writings emphasise positive attitude even in undesirable and complex situations. The story “The Crooked Tree” brings forth how rural life calms Rusty and he begins to concentrate in his writing. Rusty is comfortable in the company of teenage Ketan. In “Binya Passes By” Bond encourages widow remarriage and indirectly supports Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s views. He also shows certain sections of people are stubborn in following the old rituals in the name of Indian social codes. The jinn ghost is a good force according to Quran, but in the story, “The Trouble with Jinns” Jimmy uses the jinn to destroy others. He loses his arms due to a lorry accident, which brings out the moral of the story – power should be used only for the good of others. Bond in his old age, when he is nearly fifty had written “Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright” for his
grandson Rakesh. The story highlights the flora and fauna of Dehra Dun. Like the grandfather Bond creates in Rusty fiction, he himself inculcates good values of preserving nature. Reading these stories evidently show autobiographical elements in them. The next chapter traces Rusty fiction as an autobiography of Ruskin Bond.