

Contextualising the Child and Interpersonal Relationship in Child Development Study: An Analysis of Ruskin Bond's Select Short Stories

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Abstract

This following paper seeks to understand child and his/her interpersonal relationship in the context of child development study by analysing three select short stories of Ruskin Bond "Chachi's Funeral", "The Woman on Platform No. 8", and "The Thief", and concentrating on some critical aspects such as importance of (inter)personal relationship in child's life, recognition of child's relationship with others beyond parents, child's role and emotional, moral growth in that interpersonal relationship, and change in dynamics of relationship through effective handling of child's negative feelings. While the overview of child development study suggests interpersonal relationship as a crucial factor for physical, emotional and social development of child, the textual analysis reveals that the selected stories show not only the close relationships beyond parents, but also child's ambivalent attitude, and capture as well how those relationships play significant role to manoeuvre child towards positivity by contributing to his/her psychological and characteristic growth. It further explicates the point that child can be equipped with the ability to contribute to and maintain a relationship and can also actively participate in it.

Keywords: Interpersonal Relationship; Moral Development; Reciprocity

I

Interpersonal relationship of child has secured its coveted place in child development study. The significance of this theme lies in understanding its impact on child's holistic development as well as the role and contribution of child in that relationship. Interestingly, apart from the scientific child study, this subject has been also treated thoughtfully in literature, and

this paper considers Ruskin Bond's works as suitable representatives of so. Bond's writings, as an existing body of research works reveals, are the reservoirs of child and adolescent characters who are replete with individuality, innocence (Jyothi et al. 42), "decorum", and devoid of "meanness" and "pettiness" even at their maturity (Marriya101; ch. 3). Simultaneously, relationship comes forward as a recurrent subject as the writings deal with man-nature relationship (Losini 44, 61; ch. 2; Marriya 39; ch.1; Srividya and Umadevi 25-26) and human relationship (Jyothi et al. 38; Thakur, Preface). In Bond's short stories, particularly, the presence of child's relationship with parents and other persons has also been noted along with the appreciation of the writer's understanding of human psychology and sensibility (Thakur, Preface; Pathania 718,719, 724). Additionally, as for interpretation, most of the studies included the autobiographical elements/ influences (Losini 168; ch. 4; Marriya38; ch.1; 76; ch. 3).

However, the present paper solely concentrates on child and his/her interpersonal relationship, and seeks to understand some of its critical aspects such as recognition of child's relationship with others beyond parents, child's role and emotional, moral growth in that interpersonal relationship, and change in dynamics of relationship through effective handling of child's negative feelings namely, by analysing Ruskin Bond's three short stories, "Chachi's Funeral", "The Woman...", and "The Thief". For analysis, the paper contextualises the stories in the literature of child's interpersonal relationship as a part of child development study in general. Due to this, the autobiographical interpretation have been avoided. The structure of the paper includes a brief overview pertaining to child's interpersonal relationship and its contribution to his/her development, the textual analysis and conclusion.

II

Interpersonal relationship of a child represents a "network" of relationships that expands from personal to social levels (Bracken and Newman 109), and can be viewed to interconnect the system from micro through meso to macro, therefore, creating a seemingly encompassing environment for a child's development, as understood from the Ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (qtd. in Berk 26-27). This personal to social range of relationship consists of parents/ primary caregiver/caretaker, siblings, grandparents, other extended family members like uncles, aunts, cousins, non-family members like peers and friends, neighbours and non-parental adults like teachers, mentors mainly (Bracken and Newman 109; "Interpersonal Relationships" par. 1, 5).

In order to simplify the long series of relationship figures, Bracken and Newman broadly split the cluster of relationships into adult and child, and then, further grouped them according to child's belonging to individual or cluster as follows: uniquely related to individuals such as individual connection with mother, father, sibling, friend, teacher, uniquely related to gender group like male, female, other, uniquely related to classes of relationships meaning related to groups like parent, peer, teacher, and relationship in general (109). Additionally, they also identified mother, father, male peer, female peer, and teacher as the five "independent primary relationships" (109) of the child in three primary contexts, i.e. family, social and academic (117).

Apart from including concrete figures, interpersonal relationship also consists of abstract attributes. Bracken and Newman pointed out such fifteen characteristics or attributes of relationship (identified and gathered from the review of various literature of relationship, and used in an Assessment of Interpersonal Relationships or AIR in 1993 by Bracken) in "Child and Adolescent Interpersonal Relations with Parents, Peers, and Teachers: A Factor Analytic Investigation" as follows: "companionship", "emotional support", "guidance", "emotional comfort", "reliance", "trust", "understanding", "conflict", "identification", "respect", "empathy", "intimacy", "affect", "acceptance", and "shared values" (110). However, every interpersonal relationship does not necessarily involve all these characteristics, and the "degree" and "standard" of them may also vary from one relationship to another (114). In addition, it is noticeable that among various interpersonal relationships, some of them are more intimate or casual than the other, and mainly six factors "knowledge, interdependence, caring, trust, responsiveness, mutuality, and commitment" are functioning to determine the level of intimacy, as pointed out by Ben-Ari and Lavee (qtd. in Miller 2).

III

The nature of child's interpersonal relationship depends on some "inter-and intra-individual factors" such as the nature of parent-child relationship, intraparental relationship, psychological condition of parents, social adjustment/ competence of child, abusive or maltreatment of child namely that influence the relationship (Bracken and Newman 108-109), which, in turn, tends to impact child's psychological, socio-emotional (Bracken and Newman 108; Berk 408, 414), physical and motor skill development (Berk 168, 170).

Child related study has identified the relationship with parents, particularly mother or primary caregiver as the primary, immediate bond of a child during infancy through childhood (Kakar 61), and tends to prioritise it over other relationships because of its crucial role in fulfilling the need of hunger, survival, sensory growth and physical security namely (62, 65). The dynamic of child-parent relationship can be more impactful on the development of child at various levels. For example, a positive attachment between child-parent/primary caregiver, as observed in Attachment theory of Bowlby and Ainsworth, contributes to building up trust and emotional security in the child which is believed to found the base of initial relationship along with future relationship too (Cherry and Gans, "What Is Attachment").

The base of a positive relationship between parent-child dyad is functional to build confidence within the child to deal with other relationship and trust the unknown outside world beyond the immediate relationship (Cherry and Gans, "What Is Attachment"; "Interpersonal Relationships" par. 4; Kakar 63; Miller 15). On the other hand, if there is a significant lack of attachment, it may increase anxiety, stress and doubt inside child that may cause him/her to mistrust others, suffer from lack of confidence, and adjustment problem in stressful or unknown situation (Cherry and Gans, "What Is Attachment"; Miller 15). In similar vein, supportive and balanced behaviour from parents works effectively on child to grow confidence and faith within, whereas harsh criticism, discouragement and lenient behaviour of parents put a negative impact on child by aggravating self-doubt and inferiority complex mainly, as shown in Freudian theory (Cherry and Gans, "Freud's Sexual Stages" par. 12, 14, 15). Thus, a healthy child-parent/ caregiver relationship can be effectively influential for inculcating emotional growth and security and facilitating emotional regulation of the child (Berk 409).

Despite the predominance of parents/caregiver in a child's life, other interpersonal relationships are also important for the child. For example, the stages of identity development, expounded by Erikson, highlight the role of other family members, relatives, friends, peers and teachers for providing child "with a social response" to grow the sense of autonomy and accomplishment, and a wider social milieu, a congruent "context" for his/her identity formation (Ferrer-Wreder and Kroger 24-25, 8-9, 27). Simultaneously, other family members like grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings etc. are also capable of providing the child with care, attention, affection, and comfort, especially when parents or primary caregiver are absent or, less impactful. In traditional Indian society, the extended family members

play noteworthy roles in childrearing and comforting as the “potentially nurturing figures” (Kakar 139). They actively take part to balm “the infantile anxiety” (92). In *Child Development*, eminent child development and psychology scholar, Laura E. Berk also took into account of extended family members performing their role to as the attachment figures to look after a child with love, care and concern which she was deprived of (437, 438, 567), and referred to the finding of Masten and Reed of interpersonal figure’s role for instilling resilience and adaptability into the child (10). Apart from nurturing, the figures of interpersonal relationships represent the significant “Others” to the child, “who guarantee the sense of sameness and affirm the inner continuity of the self” (Kakar 144). They become the “immediate ‘society’” to the child (140).

Therefore, the contribution of interpersonal relationship in a child’s life can be functional for multiple purposes such as fulfilment of hunger need, survival, physical and emotional security, self-confidence in performing any task, trust in self and other, development of cognitive and learning skill, effective confrontation of conflict or challenging situation, management of negative emotions and effective dealing with anxiety, stress, ability to resolve a problem, learning of social behaviour, growth of social cognition and psychosocial adjustment, and development of self and identity as well.

IV

In this background, provided the emphasis on child-parent relationship in child development study, the selected short stories of Ruskin Bond make an interesting case, where the focus stays away from parent-child relationship or only some references to parents are made, and relationship of child with other persons come to the forefront. In “Chachi’s Funeral”, Sunil’s parents are mentioned only once and that too comes in context of reasoning Chachi’s resentment towards Sunil: “...she resented having to cook for the boy while both his parents went out to office jobs” (Bond *Collected Short Stories* 128). Except this, nothing has been mentioned about Sunil’s parents and their relationship with Sunil. However, parents’ work involvement, Chachi’s resentment for him, and Madhu (his cousin) being the only confidante, all indicate to a lonely, neglected existence of Sunil at home. In “The Woman...”, Arun’s parents are not physically present. Only some references to them, particularly to mother, have been made in certain contexts that indicate to an alienated position and quite indifferent relationship between Arun and his parents. Arun, despite being only a twelve years old boy, is left by his parents to travel alone from his house to

his boarding school through Ambala where he waits for his train till midnight with hunger and patience. This presumption of lack of concern and attachment from his parents' side gets further consolidated with Arun's conscious and frequent avoidance of talking about his parents.

For example, when the stranger lady enquires whether his parents have come to see him off, Arun immediately changes the focus to him: "I don't live here...I had to change trains. Anyway, I can travel alone." (26). Even in the revelation of his life and close persons to the lady, the mention of his parents is nowhere, and later, his friend's mother's repeated preaching of obeying one's mother and staying away from strangers turns him apathetic towards that lady. The steering away of attention from parents to his own capability, his uneasiness, reluctance, hesitance to talk about parents or his defiance of Suresh's mother's idea of obeying mother, all these acts need to be understood in the context of his destitute, neglected and insignificant position in parent-child relationship. In "The Thief", the thief and impostor Deepak is mentioned as friendless and without any warm companionship of other: "I had never kept any friends because sometimes friends can be one's undoing" (33).

Simultaneously there is no reference to his parents, and he can be assumed as someone without any attachment figure. So, the brief references to or complete absence of parent-child relationship create an emotional background of the central characters against which certain acts and behaviours of them need to be untangled. They appear to be more or less deprived of love, care, attention and emotional connection in their interpersonal relationship with parents/parent. This observation is congruent with the understanding of Bonds' short stories as the accounts of "insecure childhood", "loneliness" where "utter alienation" and "negligence" are the experiences of the characters (Jyothi et al. 36-37).

With a stark absence of strong or secure parent-child relationship, an emptiness/void is created in child's life, with which the relevance of the presence of other interpersonal relationship is associated. As the primary parent-child relationship becomes distant; child's relationship with non-parental adult or peer becomes dominantly important. "The Woman..." and "The Thief" show how the child and adolescent protagonists respectively, develop stronger relationship of love, care and understanding with complete strangers, while "Chachi's Funeral" explores the layered relationships that a child shares with his extended family members like aunt, and cousin or peer. All the characters are shown either to grow or improve or maintain their interpersonal relationship with someone else

other than parents. Through the presences of other interpersonal relationship, the desire of connectedness and belongingness is juxtaposed with the sense of alienation and loneliness that prevails in these child characters' lives.

V

In the relationship, focusing on the position of child is necessary. Ruskin Bond's works can be described as stories positioning children as the central characters or protagonists and giving a window to their perspectives by revealing their minds: "Like children's literature of the continent, he focuses on the individuality of children, their dreams and their adventure", elaborated Jyothi, Raghu Ram and Kumar (42). This sensitive portrayal and focalisation of child characters in Bonds' works seem to be in contrast with the previous presentation of the child in Indian context. A thesis titled as *Negotiating Home in Indian English Childrens Literature: A Study of the Selected Works of Ruskin Bond Arup Kumar Dutta Anita Desai Shashi Deshpande and Salman Rushdie* showed that although parent-child relationship found prominence in Indian literature, mainly written in Sanskrit and Hindi, a child seemed to be understood less than an individual, more as "an object of adoration" or just a possession of parents, whose existence solely depended on her parents, particularly on father (Laskar 31; ch. 1). On the contrary, child characters in Bonds' stories may not be the apples of the eye, yet well established with their distinct presences, feelings, and behaviours, and the same, as this paper argues, is applicable for their interpersonal relationship also.

The dyad of interpersonal relationship consists of minimum two persons, and in child's case, he/she can often be misunderstood as a passive, inactive, dependent part who hardly contributes to the relationship. Theories show that from infancy, child adopts various ways to respond (Berk 154), and with cognitive, emotional development, demonstrates the capacity of reciprocating in his/her interpersonal relationship. However, not only the response, but child's perception and feelings in the relationship as well as towards the involved person in that relationship also matters, as opined by Bracken and Newman in their paper (117).

Given the point of passivity and lack of space, it can be said that the three children and adolescent characters, Sunil, Arun, and Deepak occupy the central position in their respective stories as protagonists. The stories centre round their perceptions towards their relationship as well as the other one present in that relationship, and how they interact, feel or behave in

changing situations. In "Chachi's Funeral", two relationships have been portrayed: Sunil-Chachi, and Sunil-Madhu. Sunil's character is described as "little brighter", "more sensitive", and "better looking" than her (Chachi's) own children" with a particular disliking towards "a scolding or a cuff across the head" (Bond 128). This mention of particularity regarding the child's liking and disliking recognises the child's individuality. Further, it has been shown that how Sunil does mischievous acts to disturb Chachi despite being aware of her aversion towards him.

However, the resistance from Sunil's side breaks down when Chachi humiliatingly beats him with her sandals on his shoulder. The suppressed dormant negative feelings towards Chachi suddenly burst out inside Sunil, and having been overpowered with rage and hatred, he fulminates to take revenge by killing her; however, with the interference of Madhu, his cousin sister, the situation comes under control. Sunil, after the ventilation, feels guilty, realises his love for Chachi, and the tussle ends with a reconciliation following the confession of love for each other. Here, it can be seen that both Chachi and Sunil involve in their relationships, and their personal feelings towards each other as well as respective behaviours and acts (at times negative) have been sketched out prominently. When Sunil realises his mistakes or feels something, he does not hesitate to apologise or express. Even his apologetic act can be taken as the initiative from his side to bridge the breach between them. So his acts suggest his points of view, thoughts, acknowledgement and reciprocity in his relationship. As for the relationship with Madhu, the paper will focus on this part later.

In "The Woman on Platform No. 8," the first person narrator, Arun expresses his initial hesitation to interact with a stranger lady; nevertheless, the caring and concerned behaviours of that apparently poor lady manage to touch his withdrawal self. According to this boy:

I was going to refuse (her proposal to have some food), out of shyness and suspicion, but she took me by the hand...Her hand was gentle...it was the food that strengthened the bond between us and cemented our friendship...I began to talk quite freely, and told her about my school, my friends, my likes and dislikes. She questioned me quietly from time to time, but preferred listening...I accepted her for what she had been to me. (26)

It can be observed that unlike Sunil and Chachi, Arun and the stranger lady try to reciprocate each other's feelings, even support each other in untoward situations shortly after the beginning of the story. The lady

shows caring attitude, honest concern and respect for Arun's capability to travel alone without embarrassing or annoying him by doubting his ability or enquiring further about parents. Arun, withal, puts effort to make the lady feel reassured, protected and comfortable around him. His acts of direct defiance of Suresh's mother, or calling 'mother' to a complete stranger, attempts to protect her dignity from other's insulting, belittling behaviours- all these are the testaments of his active involvement and sense of connectedness in this brief yet cherished and memorable relationship with a stranger lady.

In "The Thief", Deepak and Arun share a relationship that hinges upon trust, fondness, and forgiveness as well. After stealing the money from Arun, Deepak reviews the very act, and after speculating his bond with Arun, he returns to him with the hope of becoming a better version of him, a learned person equipped with the qualities to get a respectable occupation rather than thieving. In turn, Arun also forgives Deepak silently, further providing him with the opportunity to rectify and improve him.

The stories not only project child's feelings and perspectives in view of the relationship, but also bring out important quality required in interpersonal relationship: child's ability to understand other's emotion and feelings, a sign of developing social cognition and an empathetic mind. Child also is equipped with the ability to notice, feel, and understand what others feel to certain extent; simultaneously, the recognition helps him/her use own socio-emotional experiences, and endeavour to nurture the relationship (Berk 415-416).

Here, child characters are imbued with sensitive, intelligent mind to understand and consider other's state of mind and feelings. For example, in "The Woman...", Arun understands the loving nature of the lady towards him; hence, he attempts to provide her with assurance and reassurance during some unnerving moment:

An engine was shunting up and down beside platform no. 8...a boy leapt off the platform and ran across the rails...the woman clutched my arm. Her fingers dug into my flesh, and I winced with pain. I caught her fingers...and I saw a spasm of pain and fear and sadness pass across her face.... (Bond 26-27)

As the lady panics, Arun tries to assure her regarding the safety of that boy, "He was alright,' I said, feeling it was she who needed reassurance" (27). Apart from reassuring the loved one, his sensitive mind has "instinc-

tive dislike" towards Suresh's mother for her suspicious and demeaning attitude towards the lady (27), "patronizing" behaviour (28), and undermining his capability to travel alone at midnight:

...in the middle of the night...one can't let the child wait here alone...Always listen to what your mother tells you'...'And never ever talk to strangers'...I glared resentfully at her, and moved closer to the woman who had befriended me. (27-28)

However, the lady keeps her faith intact in his capability. He feels a need to protect the lady's dignity for her support and love, and at the moment of departure, "'Goodbye,' I said to the other woman, 'goodbye--- Mother...'" (29), this final expression demonstrates Arun's gratitude towards and acknowledgment of that lady's position in his life, and that is of his mother.

In "Chachi's Funeral", Sunil, in spite of being a child, has an understanding of Chachi's aversion and jealousy for him, and his pranks are means of irritating her more, as well as that of communicating. However, the humiliation of being beaten by Chachi, and the awareness of negligence infuriate him from inside blocking his ability to contemplate or feel anything else other than taking revenge: "Opening the knife, he plunged it thrice into the soft wood of the window frame. 'I'll kill her!' he whispered fiercely. 'I'll kill her, I'll kill her!'" (129).

In such challenging situation, the relationship between Sunil and Madhu comes as an instance to reflect peer understanding as well as an alternative relationship of guidance. Madhu is introduced as his "cousin, a dark, slim girl of twelve, who aided and abetted him in most of his exploits" with the knowledge of his secret place of hiding (129). The information immediately indicates to a more intimate bond between these two characters. However, her relationship with Sunil proves to be more significant provided Madhu's tactics and skilful handling of that emotionally grave situation, which can be better understood by relating to the opinion of Dr. Haim G. Ginott regarding the handling of negative emotion of the child in *Between Parent and Child*. According to his study, to feel negative, repulsive emotion in relationship can be natural for a child and the denial or dismissal of such emotion may fail to resolve the issue; even the attempt of reasoning anger and hatred in emotionally overwhelmed moments does not work. In fact what is needed is recognition of and respect for the child's feeling, and to find an effective way to channelise it (ch. 4). Madhu, instead of preaching or forcefully restricting Sunil from

harming Chachi with the knife, tries to know about Sunil's acts and recognises his state of mind:

'Who are you going to kill, Sunil?'

'Chachi...I hate her too. This time I'll kill her.'

'How are you going to do it?'

'I'll stab her with this (knife)...Three times, at the heart.' (129)

She puts certain questions before Sunil to gauge his moves, and instead of criticising or denying his strong feeling of hatred for Chachi, she acknowledges it, and restricting herself from imposing her advice, she lets him think of the possible consequences of such acts on his own like CID punishing him by putting in boarding school which Sunil is afraid of (129), and steers the flow of anger to the way of ventilation: "'Then better not kill your chachi. At least not this way. I'll show you how.'" (129). Then she draws a picture of Chachi, and asks Sunil to stab that picture. With the pseudo acts of stabbing, killing and cremating, all stored up negative emotions of Sunil are burnt like the ashes of Chachi and ventilated, thus, helping him restore the stability of mind.

In "The Thief", the focus stays on Deepak's constant effort to perceive his act of stealing from Arun's perspective which makes him realise the reason for Arun to be disappointed with him: betrayal of trust. In order to steal Arun's money, Deepak befriends him, and even Arun allows this complete stranger to stay with him, and move freely in his room:

I had a key to the front door which meant I had access to the room whenever Arun was out. He was the most trusting person I had ever met. And that's why I couldn't make up my mind to rob him....Arun had put his money where it would be child's play for me to remove it without his knowledge. (Bond 32)

The empathetic bent of mind in child not only identifies other's feelings but also attempts to reciprocate to that person accordingly, which, to some extent, marks the active agency of child to take decision and operate in the relationship .

VI

The stories further unfold the function of morality, conscience, and guilt in

child that shapes his/her relationship. Arun's conscience along with love drives him to protect the lady from insult by retaliating Suresh's mother's objectionable behaviour. Sunil feels guilty immediately after performing the false act of stabbing Chachi's picture, and soon realises as well as confesses his love for her. For Deepak, he battles against the allurements to escape with the stolen money; the prick of conscience and guilt feeling for exploiting and betraying Arun's trust finally compels him to return to Arun, and his peace of mind comes back with the silent gesture of forgiveness from Arun's side.

Here, along with the showcase of moral fibre and righteousness of the characters, the need of effective communication to handle the negative situations becomes pertinent enough. In *Parent and Child*, Ginott emphasised on the importance of holding skilful communication between child and parent, of which can be effective for child's other interpersonal relationship as well. Child generally bears a disliking to preaching, humiliation or, criticism; for wrong deeds or mistakes, harsh criticism or rebuke may create an undesirable situation which can be avoided with thoughtful, compassionate responses directed towards child's feelings and acts, rather than his/ her behaviour or character (ch. 1).

The emotional outburst of child should be considered as a way of communication through which he/she can convey the suppressed or dormant "feelings of fear, despair, and helplessness" or "share their frustration and disappointment, hurt of self-respect" thus, bringing forth various emotions that child feels (ch. 1). It needs to be deciphered with "sympathy" and "understanding", and instead of criticising or demeaning child, resolving the problem should be the priority (ch. 1). In "The Thief", Arun does not use any abusive words or humiliate Deepak for committing mistake or stealing money; rather he assures to teach him how to cook or write which makes Deepak acknowledge his mistakes. On the other hand, Chachi hits Sunil with sandals for accidentally breaking a jar of honey and the physical humiliation hurts his ego. Chachi, instead of damage control, ventilates her own frustration on Sunil. On the contrary, Madhu tries to respond to Sunil's feeling of hurt, and not to rectify his behaviour or what he feels. Even in "The Woman...", the stranger lady restricts herself from poking or criticising Arun for not talking about his parents or travelling alone. She shows respect to his silence unlike Suresh's mother, and in return, she gets respect from Arun.

What is striking about these stories is that at surface level, all of them apparently look simple and innocent yet at deeper level, the nuances and

complexities of relationships coupling with the coexistence of positive and negative emotions are present there. The child and adolescent characters along with other characters showcase love, hatred, anger, jealousy, guilt, sadness, happiness, fear, concern, protectiveness, fondness, joy, and sensitivity- an amalgamation of what Berk called “basic emotions”, “self-conscious emotions” or “higher-order set of feelings” (406, 408) and qualities. This acceptance of ambivalent feelings makes the characters more human and the relationships changeable and multidimensional. The stories seem to suggest that while, on the one hand, it is not easy to come out of the influence of dysfunctional, indifferent or distant relationship suffering from lack of attachment, on the other, the past experiences may not be ultimate to determine the future relationships, as opined by Miller in *Intimate Relationships* (19).

Arun, overcoming his initial hesitant, suspicious outlook towards the stranger lady, succeeds to connect with her. Similarly, Deepak has remained friendless due to its aversive disadvantage effect on his profession of stealing until his attachment with Arun brings a new dimension in his life and he accepts this friendship. Sunil’s hatred towards Chachi is replaced by love and from Chachi’s side, it has also been reciprocated. Moreover, the presence of companionship, trust, emotional support and comfort, understanding, respect, empathy, reliance, acceptance and intimacy in both sides makes the relationship of Arun and stranger lady, Sunil and Madhu, Deepak and Arun positive and more reciprocal (as mentioned above in Bracken and Newman’s identification), whereas, doubt, anxiety, fear, insecurity and hatred in relationship turn the characters conflicting and volatile to each other as happen between Arun and Satish’s mother and Chachi and Sunil.

VII

In sum, the position of child in the relationship, and the impact of the functional aspects of interpersonal relationship on him/her are crucial for the development of child. Here in the selected stories, selective relationships like relationships with stranger, extended family member and peer beyond child-parent dyad have been portrayed. It can also be observed that other interpersonal relationships have gained more priority since the primary parent-child relationship is either dysfunctional or less dominant or completely absent. Nevertheless, the fundamentals of relationship remain more or less unchangeable: effective communication, handling of (negative) feelings and emotions with skill, dignity and respect, love, care and attention, mutual trust, confidence on child’s self-worth namely.

A child, especially while being deprived of affection, care, attention and trust, may expect to fill the need from interpersonal relationship beyond parents.

However, provided the child's role, it would be erroneous to assume the child as completely passive, inactive or, dependent on others; rather, on the contrary, child can actively involve and reciprocate in his/her interpersonal relationship and possesses the capacity of nurturing and maintaining it with the help of other person present in that relationship. Bond has thoughtfully rendered voices to his child characters to keep their perspective on relationship in the forefront. Considering the impact of relationships on the child, the stories bring out the ambivalent nature of the presented relationships; although apparently looking simple and innocent, they are weaved with nuances, psychological complexities, and the interplay of love, happiness, anger, hatred, insecurity, trust, forgiveness, protectiveness, and defiance is present there as well. They also capture the multidimensional ways that interpersonal relationships work by helping child develop trust and respect for each other, and guiding him/her in emotionally and morally challenging situation as well as providing the shelter of care, love, attention and security when it is needed, thus, leaving an impact on child's life.

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