

## THE ABSENCE OF VISION : AN EXPLORATION OF THE SHORT STORY 'THE EYES ARE NOT HERE' BY RUSKIN BOND

RADHA MAKADIYA

### Abstract: -

*In our human body all parts are most important. Without one part of the body we can't imagine ourselves. In the body sight and vision is the most important sense organ without this our world becomes black to us. When we imagine a person with this disability, we always sympathize with them. In this story "The eyes are not Here" is about a person who has a vision problem. This paper will analyze the story's use of imagery, symbolism and character development to explore the complexities of vision and its absence. This Paper also analyzes which kind of dialogue is spoken by blind characters, other sensory perception and how they behave with other characters in the train compartment and hide their disability.*

**Key Words: - Vision, Disability, senses, Blindness, Perception**

### Introduction

Ruskin Bond is a renowned Indian author who has garnered numerous accolades for his work throughout the year. He has written a wide array of stories catering to both children and adults. Ruskin Bond grew up in the hills of Shimla, Dehradun and Mussoorie and has fondly remembered those times in his fictional and non-fictional works. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, the Padma shri in 1999 for Children's literature, the Bal Sahitya Puraskar in 2013 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014. 'The Room on the Roof', 'Vagrants in the Valley', 'A Flight of Pigeons' and 'Delhi is not Far' are some of his acclaimed works.

"*The Eyes Are Not Here*" is an interesting story with a surprise ending. The story begins in a railway compartment, where the narrator is already seated on the train. A girl boards the train, and her parents are instructing her on where to keep her belongings, when not to lean out of the windows, and how to avoid speaking to strangers. All these minor activities are noticed by the narrator through the noise and the conversation between the girl and her parents. Then, the train journey resumes.

In the second paragraph of the story, the narrator reveals that he is blind, saying, "*As I was totally blind at the time, my eyes are sensitive only to light and darkness.*" However, his other senses work exceptionally well. By the sound of her footsteps, he deduces that she is wearing slippers. Although he cannot see her or determine what she looks like, he can smell her perfume. In this way, he navigates and understands the world around him without the aid of sight.

Both traveling companions start talking to each other. First, the narrator asks the girl a question, but she doesn't seem to understand it. They discuss their train journey, their destinations, and the beauty of the Mussoorie hills in October. During their conversation, the narrator tries to hide his blindness, saying, "*I wondered if I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind.*"

The narrator hides his blindness perhaps due to shame, loneliness, or a deeper reason—possibly because society doesn't treat people with disabilities fairly.

Another clue is given about how the narrator perceives the world through memory and imagination. He asks the girl, "What is it like?" to which she replies, "Why don't you look out the window?" The narrator moves to the window ledge, pretending to study the landscape while listening to the sound of the engine. He responds in a way that prevents the girl from realizing he is blind. Later, he compliments her by saying, "You have an interesting face," an action that contradicts his hidden blindness. After a moment of silence, the narrator realizes the train is nearing her station. He expresses that he could sit in the train indefinitely just to hear her voice. While he assumes she might forget their conversation, he knows it will stay with him.

When the train stops, the girl gathers her baggage. Unable to see her, the narrator wonders if she wears her hair in a bun, plaited, loose over her shoulders, or cut short. He stands beside her, raising his hand to feel her hair, but she leaves too quickly, leaving only the lingering scent of her hair. Shortly after, a young boy enters the compartment, and the narrator reflects, "I had a game to play with a new fellow traveler." This reveals his continued effort to conceal his blindness.

The new traveler strikes up a conversation, remarking, "You must be disappointed because I may not be as beautiful as the girl who just left." The narrator replies that she was interesting and asks, "Can you tell me, was her hair long or short?" The traveler responds that he didn't notice her hair but did notice her eyes, saying, "She had beautiful eyes—but they were of no use to her. She was completely blind; didn't you notice?"

This ending creates a humorous yet profound twist when both the reader and narrator realize the girl was blind, too. The narrator, trying to hide his blindness, unknowingly interacts with someone concealing the same condition. Both characters conceal their disabilities, possibly due to feelings of inferiority or societal pressure.

The narrator's blindness shapes his perspective. From the outset, he reveals his condition and feels frustrated by his inability to see the girl. His desire to hide his blindness may stem from embarrassment or a longing to appear "normal." His efforts reflect an internal conflict.

Similarly, the girl omits her blindness, acting as if she can see, perhaps to avoid being treated differently. This mutual concealment creates a unique dynamic. Both characters engage in a performance, masking their realities to connect more freely.

The story highlights the contrast between perception and reality. The narrator's blindness shapes how he perceives the world. He uses his other senses to form an image of the girl, yet he cannot fully understand her presence. The girl's behavior reflects her desire to conform to societal norms. Bond suggests that perception can be deceiving and that appearances often hide deeper truths.

Both characters struggle with their identities, shaped by their disabilities. The narrator's embarrassment and desire to be seen as "normal" reveal his struggle for self-acceptance. Meanwhile, the girl's silence about her condition reflects her wish to be seen beyond her disability. This theme emphasizes societal pressures on people with disabilities and the universal need for acceptance. Their interaction demonstrates the complexity of human connection. Despite their physical limitations, they share a meaningful conversation. Their shared experience creates an intimate connection, showing that true understanding goes beyond physical sight, emphasizing empathy and emotional connection.

## Conclusion

"The Eyes Are Not Here" is a poignant exploration of identity, perception, and the longing for connection. Ruskin Bond masterfully crafts a narrative that challenges societal norms surrounding disabilities. Through the interactions of the blind narrator and the girl, he conveys a powerful message about the essence of human relationships—empathy, understanding, and the recognition that true sight goes beyond physical vision. The story encourages readers to look beyond appearances and appreciate the deeper connections that define our humanity.

## References

- 
- Bond, Ruskin. *The Eyes Are Not Here*. In *Collected Short Stories of Ruskin Bond*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2009. Top of Form
  - Prajapati, Chetan N. "Ruskin Bond's The Eyes Are Not Here as a Suppressed Emotion Digger of the Blind." *JETIR: Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, vol. 6, no. 9, 2019, pp. 67-70. <https://www.jetir.org/view?paper=JETIR1909A12>
  - "What is the Summary of The Eyes Are Not Here by Ruskin Bond." *eNotes*, <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/summary-eyes-not-here-by-ruskin-bond-608394>.