

**USE OF IRONY AS A PRINCIPLE DEVICE TO DEPICT THE  
THEME OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN RUSKIN BOND'S  
SHORT STORY, "THE GIRL FROM COPENHAGEN".**

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**Introduction**

Ruskin Bond (born 19 May 1934) is an Indian author of British descent. He got the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, for his published work in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014. Most of his works are influenced by life in the hill stations at the foothills of the Himalayas, where he spent his childhood.

Bond experimented with different genres; early works include fiction, short stories, novella with some being autobiographical. Later, he tried out non-fiction, romance and books for children. He said his favourite genres are essays and short stories. The short story 'The Girl from Copenhagen' from genre of travelogue touches many issues of human emotions and bonding.

**Play of Irony in 'The Girl from Copenhagen':**

In the story "The girl from Copenhagen" what we see is a bond of love and friendship. Here, there are many incidents, which invoke the universal feeling in the reader and surprises one to see the vivid picture of the impossibilities.

The narrator, Ruskin Bond, makes it clear, in the very beginning of the story that it is not a love story but a story about love.

The story is perfect blend of light Comedy, irony and surprises fulfilling some of the basic premises of the story.

In short, the story of the story, is, Ruskin Bond, the narrator, of course an Indian, is working in London, happens to know a polytechnic student, Phuong, from Vietnam and has a crush on her. She is just about fond of him.

Phuong introduces Ulla a sixteen Old Danish girl to the narrator and asks him to take care of her for a few days, as she does not know anybody in London; Phuong leaves in hurry, which the narrator does not like. Ulla has come to London to holiday just for two days.

Ulla and the narrator, the two strangers who have a unique blend of care freeness and innocence come together to part forever.

Thus, it becomes interesting to watch how this relationship flourishes in the story, how they get to each other how their natures are revealed ironically too much of our surprise.

Let us get back to the point, how universality reflects in over here. The setting provides the strong a universal dimension. We see the people and the things studded in the story are from different countries.

Phuong is truly a modern girl, who not only mixes with others easily but also freaks leisurely without bothering about anybody's nationality culture, history or language. We find her drinking and merry making in the country with her friends. Here one should note that she does not behave so because she is away from her home but she is just her usual self.

The narrator protests and does not like phuong's idea of leaving Ulla, a stranger with him. But he cannot even leave Ulla all alone now but to wishes to get rid of her as early as possible.

Ulla and the narrator leave her bag in the luggage office and come out of the underground station on the pavement. Now they are "free" and it symbolizes their coming out of own selves and really are on a steady road in heralding a healthy relationship.

Love and hunger are truly very basic and universal feelings, usually, one mitigating the other (in fiction); but here are see a different chemistry.

The narrator feels that having meals together is an easiest way to grow acquainted with strangers and they use the opportunity to break their silences.

They go to an Indian restaurant and eat hot "Hyderabadi Chicken Curry" and their cool off their mouths with a Tamil Koykotay. Ulla enjoys everything.

Significantly enough Ulla's parents own a 'bookshop' a warehouse of universal knowledge and symbol of traveling of traveling; but ironically Ulla does not believe in reading but seems to be more keen about getting experience and knowledge from practical life. She wants to see life in face so she comes out of home all alone.

Ulla is an active, fun loving and carefree girl. Her acts like swimming and playing tennis and her love for theatre show that she is a girl of action.

Till now the narrator was neutral and did not feel anything for Ulla but carries her as phuong's burden, and describes her extreme cateresses and innocence as irritating.

After lunch they go to watch a play the narrator does not seem to be very happy with her behavior in the theatre either and is eager to get rid of her after dinner. But Ulla refuses to go to phuong's place uninvited and instead proposes to stay the narrator, if he did not mind, as she does not carry much money, to stay in a hotel, the narrator first hesitant, brings Ulla with him in Swiss Cottage where he stayed. After coming in his house, she behaves as if it was her own home. She never plays a helpless woman. She is her normal self, always with tremendous romantic zeal and agility. "She throws the windows open and scent o honeysuckle comes through".

They sleep in the same bed at night. Ulla unlike the narrator sleeps off immediately. He cannot help feeling the warmth of her body. The narrator finds himself in an embarrassing situation. He puts it in a funny way- "So I counted eight hundred and sixty two Scandinavian sheep, and managed to fall asleep".

By this time, they come considerably close to understand each other. Here, we see a complete shift in the narrator's attitude of ironically enough starts liking her. The same narrator who wanted to get rid of Ulla at the very first opportunity is not ready to accompany her anywhere putting of his own book.

They climb hills, watch boys flying kites, go to zoo and lunch at a small Greek restaurant. The narrator now likes Ulla's company and before going to bed tries to dissuade her from going back - He takes her as an interesting friend.

There, Ulla looks wonderingly into his eyes as though she was searching for something; kisses him and thanks for everything. They lie in each other's arms but do not even think of going beyond the pole. As though they had all nights of lifetime, all eternity to love.

In the morning the narrator sees Ulla's slim, bare leg dangling over the side of the bed as if indicating a departing step out of the love world and at the same time wanted to hover/linger over there; his face suggest their attachment. (In his memory) which definitely comes back as a 'story'.

When they have become friends of the also falls in love with her. Again very ironically there is shift in the development of the story. The departing scene is what the most

colorfully described and there becomes an important part in the development of the story. However, at the same time it is also painful and sad.

"We made no promises- of writing, or of meeting again. Somehow, our relationship seemed complete and whole; as though it had been destined to blossom for those two days. A courting and marriage and a living together had been compresses, perfectly, into one summer night".

Their relationship & decisions present the emotional maturity and reflect in their cultures. They do not want to lose this happiness and break their most wonderful dream by promising to meet again.

It seems they had developed so much understanding of each other's approaches that they believe in enjoying every moment of togetherness and being happy. Here we see two without consciously thinking of these different cultures coming together. Differences are bound to be there so they do not merge easily. At the end though they merge, they do not lose their identity and respecting each other depart to preserve the happy moments in their hearts forever.

As for the narrator, Ulla exists in the scent of the honeysuckle so he keeps the window open all through the summer.

Finally, Love and friendship are feelings, which do not know any boundaries such as nationality, history culture, language or any type of conscious inhibitions.

The story moves from a candid friendship to innocent love that without maligning anybody or anything becomes a long lasting memorable dream for both of them.

As for reader, the moment he starts postulating the obvious logical 'and they lived happily ever after' end is disappointed.

Ironically, enough the whole story becomes a very short-lived dream of the Ulla for the reader.

Here we find that irony running all along the story to reinforce that love of friendship know no boundaries.

### ***Works Referred***

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