

**Research Plan Proposal**

**Interpersonal Relationships in Children's Literature of**

**Erich Kästner and Ruskin Bond : A Comparative Study**

**(Zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen in der Kinderliteratur von**

**Erich Kästner und Ruskin Bond: Eine vergleichende Studie)**



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**M.Phil.**

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## **Research Problem**

### **Interpersonal Relationships in Children's Literature of Erich Kästner and Ruskin Bond : A Comparative Study**

Study of human ties has been a very interesting area of investigation, In the children's Literature it would be more challenging as we would search it mainly focusing on child. A comparative study between two writers namely Ruskin Bond and Erich Kästner, who are from different nationalities and chronology, will look into two different cultures and give insight,how their cultures are different from each other.

Most of the short stories and novels of Ruskin Bond and Erich Kästner, the famous children's story writers are based on human ties and emotions which present a web of interpersonal relationships. Ruskin Bond and Erich Kästner are rightly adjudged as writers of children literature because a major section of their writings portray the different relationships which the child establishes and maintains with people around him either it be his/her parents, teachers, friends, or siblings. In this study I will discuss different aspects of interpersonal relationships projected in the writings of Ruskin Bond and Erich Kästner. These aspects are in the form of stories related to child and his/her family, where the child has interpersonal relationship with members of his/her family and it plays a significant role.I will be considering the writings of both the authors,where the child stands in the central point.

A strong bond between two or more people refers to interpersonal relationship. Attraction between individuals bring them close to each other and eventually results in a strong interpersonal relationship. As this term interpersonal relationship defines itself, it affects both sides of relationships. Whatever may be the situation or action, participants of both sides get affected, in the same way it's not only the child who influences family members, peer groups, teachers, friends through his/her behavior but he also gets influenced by their positive, negative or neutral behavior. How do both writers narrate through various stories this projection of interpersonal relationship, is the main theme of my study.

Two different societies of different times present a variety of themes, where various characters show many aspects of interpersonal relationship. How different are they from each other? How many shades of human behavior do they show through these stories? How does the culture control the conduct of a human being? Are the meaning of parent-child relationship, friendship etc. remain same or do they change according to social norms already existing in the culture? How these two writers see and present them through their works, I would like to search in my study.

A lot has already been searched on Interpersonal relationship between couples, partners, organizations, but the view point of the child as such as a character has not yet been explored sufficiently. I would like to throw some light on this aspect of Interpersonal relationship in my work.

This Study analyses interpersonal relationship in terms of the character's psychological attitude, behavior such as rationalization, projection, identification, phantasy and withdrawal. This should help us to understand human mind, characters, behavior and attitude from the perspective of a child on the one hand and the social structure on the other.

Some of the stories which I would like to mention in my work are:

The relationship between characters in some of the Bond's stories display different aspects of Child's relationship with his/her parents: Ali and his

Grandfather Mehmood in “The Kite maker”,The narrator and his stepfather in “A job well done”,Sunil and his cousin Madhu in “Chachi’s funeral”, Binya and the shopkeeper in “the Blue Umbrella”,Suresh and his mother and father in “Most Beautiful”,The little boy and his dead father in “The Funeral”etc. presents the different dimensions of the interpersonal relationships similarly Erich Kästner also presents a variety of children with another child and child and his parents ties through his stories like: Pünktchen and Anton, Emil and die Detectives, Louise and lotte, The flying classroom ,and My uncle Franz etc.

In this M.Phil work, I will analyze selected works of these two writers –Ruskin Bond from India and Erich Kästner from Germany which themetize and are set in favour of the background of interpersonal relations from the view of a child.

According to a theory by **George Casper Homans** (1958) *“All relations have give and take, although the balance is not always equal ”*.The children characters as taken up in the literary writings though are not aware of such relationships consciously in their daily behavior yet the main emphasis of such “give and take” becomes a conscious part of dealing with the problem remains in the minds of the writers.

The main questions I will investigate are:

How does interpersonal relationship in family and school affect the psyche of a child, family members and peer groups ?

What major changes does it bring in the personality of a child ?

How does a child respond to interpersonal relationships with family members (parents, sibling, cousins, grandparents) friends, teachers and how do they respond to it ?

In testing my hypotheses I will compare selected short stories and novels analyzing each for social and psychological implications of interpersonal relationship from the view of a child. I will include autobiographical materials that directly contribute to understand the reasons why both the writers focus on a strong relationship amongst their characters .

What Problems could arise because of an abnormal family background of the two writers and what implications could it otherwise have on the personality development of the child in their writings?

Where does a child find solace in that case and what role it's school, friends, teachers, parents play to fulfill his/her emotional needs? How have the two writers dealt with the issues of the development of the children characters in their writings while delineating family, school, friendship keeping as central theme.

The role of a child both in the family and in society is significant and its importance cannot be denied. So such a study would help us to understand and investigate the realistic situation prevailing in the works of both the above mentioned writers.

## **Background**

This Study of interpersonal relationship from the perspective of the child enshrined in the writings of Erich Kästner and Ruskin Bond will not only help to throw light in the historical structure of the German society of 19<sup>th</sup> century but would also simultaneously expose the literary interests of Indian society through the writings of Ruskin Bond of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The studies taken up of different writers would hopefully support my research theme.

*Perceived interpersonal relations in adolescence'* by **Camilla Hakelind** quotes the three writers ( Benjamin. Sullivary & Leary ).They all claim that psychiatry is the study of Interpersonal relationship. They mention that personality is formed by social learning. In the same book she quote Schaffer (1993) who defines attachment as a close relationship between two persons, who share affection and wish to maintain closeness .

According to Bowlby (1969), persons who have a secure attachment take pleasure in their interactions and feel reassured by their partner's presence in time of stress.

Though all the above descriptions directly have a bearing on the studies of psychology but since they are expositing the role of interpersonal relationships, so taken up in the literature of these two writers they are perhaps relevant for our research purpose.

**Meena G.Knorana** in *The Life and works of Ruskin Bond* (2003) finds a dominant theme in Bond's stories for younger children that there is a loving, nurturing relationship between children and adults but not necessarily their parents. His stories are critical of mothers who are either domineering or away at parties. When Bond does presents a father, he is not necessarily a traditional father; he is emotional, caring, sensitive, reminiscent of Bond's father. His grandparent-child stories touchingly portray the warmth of intergenerational relationships.

**Anne Priwitzer** in *Die Untersuchung der Kindheit Erich Kästner und der Rollen der Eltern basierend auf den Romanen,, Emil und die Detektive" und „Das doppelte Lottchen"(2007)* compares the childhood of Erich Kästner and the protagonists in his works. The role of mother played in his stories are influenced with his own mother. The intense relationship between mother and child, which he experienced throughout his life is the backbone of most of his writings .

In *Interpreter of Human Relationships* **Ram Kulesh Thakur** talks about different kind of faulty parent –child relationship. It is a fact that the family play a very crucial role in the development of an infant into a child and later an adult. If a child is not provided with a good and favorable atmosphere, it will defiantly result to an improper growth, both physically and psychologically. Rejection, Over protectiveness or restrictiveness, Over permissiveness or indulgence, unrealistic demands or faulty discipline are some of the examples he has mentioned to avoid such faulty relationship between parent and child .(pg 26-27)

The view or perspective of a child could be translated as an integral part of his/her personality. When we talk about someone's personality, we talk about what makes that person different from others. This aspect of personality is called individual difference. Ethocentrism, genetics, family structure, special

experiences, education, all these affect the way we think, feel and ultimately the way we interpret personality. **R.k Tondon** in his *Child Psychology* narrates different kind of personalities which are formed because of different reasons and backgrounds.

How does a child react with different relationships that is also determine by the kind of personality he /she has.(pg 15,16)

**Santrock John W.** in his book *Adolescence* shares the belief that as individual grow up, they acquire modes of relating to others. There are two main variations within this view, one of which emphasizes continuity and stability in relationship throughout the life span, the other emphasizes discontinuity and change in relationships throughout the life span (pg 275). In the first novel of Ruskin Bond one can see the second variation of relating to others, where the protagonist 'Rusty' meet different characters, each of these relationships is structurally different. With each new type of relationship the protagonist encounter new mode of relating. The first kind of relationship is seen with our parents, siblings etc.

Cultural values of independence and interdependence underlie many aspects of human development, interpersonal relations and parent child relations in specific, says **Giesela trommsdorff** in her article *Parent child relations over the life span: A cross cultural perspective* she further adds, it can be assumed that values of independence allow for more flexible and instable family and parent child relations. In contrast values of interdependence foster family orientations and obligations. Anton and Pünktchen a children's story by Erich Kästner could be an apt example of independence vs interdependence. The main character Anton ,who is a 10 years old boy, belongs to a humble family. His mother is sickly and poor. Anton knows his help is must to run the household smoothly. This shows feeling of responsibility and belongingness. On the other hand a same age girl ,who comes from a affluent family, gets all kind of comforts and independence ,does not show obligations and positive behavioral response towards her parents .Although both are friend of same age but respond differently due to their upbringing and family background .



I would like to find out with the help of above given and more studies the perspective of a child in Interpersonal relationships in the works of Ruskin bond and Erich Kästner.

### **Research Method**

In this study, I am interested in exploring the works of Ruskin Bond and Erich Kästner with a comparative perspective, whose focus was on Interpersonal relationships keeping the child as focal point. I will analyze these writings with the help of sociopsychology, the cultural and social backgrounds.

By referring to many published works including the ones mentioned above and with research work, I aim at presenting a clear and analyzed picture of interpersonal relationship. I hope that my research will add to the existing sources and shall prove useful for the future references.

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