

Exploration of Dilemma of Young India in The Coral Tree

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Abstract

Today's youth do not want to be tied down to one place. They would like to travel the world, meet new people, visit new places and have new experiences. While most of them do live their dreams, a significant number of people are held back due to their circumstances. Ruskin Bond's short story *The Coral Tree* is a tale that shows the aspirations of Young India. It depicts the dilemma of majority of young Indians who want to make a mark abroad. The story very sharply brings to the fore the dilemma of the young protagonist whether to live his dream and go abroad or stay connected to his roots.

Keywords: exploration, dilemma, homeland, aspirations, conflict

Today's youth do not want to be tied down to one place. They would like to travel the world, meet new people, visit new places and have new experiences. While most of them do live their dreams, a significant number of people are held back due to their circumstances. Today's youth have very clearly defined aspirations and would like to fulfil them. Ruskin Bond's short story *The Coral Tree* is a tale that shows the aspirations of Young India. It depicts the dilemma of majority of young Indians who want to make a mark abroad. The story very sharply brings to the fore the dilemma of the young protagonist whether to live his dream and go abroad or stay connected to his roots. The story has two characters belonging to differing age groups. The protagonist is a young man in his twenties, whereas, the other character is a little girl. They both have desire to travel the world. They do not want to be bound to one place, but would like to explore the unknown and experience the unseen.

The story begins with the narration of the protagonists' thoughts. He was waiting for his tonga to take him to the railway station and then from Bombay he would sail for England. He wishes to begin a new life in a new land, leaving all his past behind. The bungalow in which his ancestors had lived was not merely a building of stone and bricks; but it was an important way to be connected to his forefathers. The bungalow had infinite memories of the precious lives spent there. But now he realized that with him gone overseas, it would just remain dormant in

his mind and would be remembered occasionally.

I was in my 20s and I began to earn a living and felt I had certain responsibilities as well.... There would be work, interviews a job, a different kind of life so many things that this bungalow of my grandfather would be remembered fitfully in moments of reflection.

His aspirations had taken prime place in his life. To him living his dream of living and working abroad on a foreign soil was more important than preserving his heritage. But even after making all the arrangements to move abroad and setting out to pursue his dreams, his heart was not happy. He woke up with a heavy heart. He was aware of his surroundings. He was fully awakened to the soil, rain, air and the colour of the morning.

When I woke up on the verendah I saw a grey morning smelling the rain of red earth I remembered that I had to go away.

The rain and the red earth are frequently mentioned in the story which shows that the protagonist is aware of his surroundings, the water and soil of his motherland which he is going to leave in a short while. Even his senses are reminding him of what he will be missing in future.

The interesting part of this short story is the conversation between the young man and the little girl. The girl comes to collect some flowers from the coral tree. When she is unable to pluck them the protagonist offers to help her. The little girl comes across as an independent child who at a tender age believes she can stay on her own. She expresses her desire to visit America, Africa, Japan, and Honolulu. The protagonist sees a reflection of himself in the little girl. In this conversation the readers get to know the conflicting emotions faced by the protagonist.

I felt a sudden nostalgic, longing for childhood and an urge to remain behind in my grandfather's house with its tangled memories of ghosts of yesteryears. But I was the only one left and what could I do except to climb the tamarind and jackfruit trees.

He is in two minds; he has an urge to remain behind in his ancestral house, but his desire to explore the world is

equally strong. He is arguing with himself that he has no option left but to leave. He is convincing himself that this is the best possible solution. There is an inner dialogue with himself.

...there's no one to help me. I am the last one to go. Not because I want to go but because I have to go.

He is not answerable to anyone regarding his decision of settling abroad, yet he is battling those thoughts. There is strong dilemma that he faces.

In literature, dilemma is a struggle occurring within the mind of a character. Therefore, it gives readers an insight into characters' lives. There may be a single or multiple dilemmas in a story.

<https://literarydevices.net/dilemma/>

Through these dilemmas we get an insight into the character's lives. It helps the readers to relate with their own situation and understand it better. In this instance, the dilemma is more of a moral nature.

A moral dilemma is a type of conflict that challenges a character's sense of morality and purpose. Moral dilemmas, also known as ethical dilemmas, occur when a character is given a chance to achieve a goal or to solve an external conflict-however, the action available to them runs at odds with the character's value system, effectively violating their own personal code of ethics. This dilemma sets off an episode of internal conflict, which can be the basis for a great story. Eventually, the protagonist will discover that their two types of conflict-external and internal-cannot be reconciled and a very difficult decision will be in order.

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-moral-dilemmas#what-is-a-moral-dilemma>

The protagonist wants to achieve his goal of working abroad and travelling the world, but his roots and native place are a great binding force which compel him to remain there. This leads to the internal conflict but in the end he does make a decision, a difficult one, to pursue his dreams. The process through which he goes through to reconcile with his conflict and arrive at a decision is fraught with pain, inner agony and misery. A reader who finds himself or herself in a similar situation can gain immense

comprehension and can make a wise decision regarding his or her own situation. When the readers relate personally to the characters in the story, they form a better connection with the story and can understand it even better. This can lead to a great insight into their problems and even help them in finding solutions.

A well-crafted moral dilemma will often improve your storytelling because it can connect your readers to the kind of ethical conundrums they often encounter in the real world. Every day, real people face moral dilemmas when their personal morality and point of view clashes with a municipal law, a company policy, or the prevailing beliefs of a group of people. Such clashes can weigh heavily on people.

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The conflicting emotion experienced by the protagonist in this short story is the story of many young Indians today. The inner battle of whether being rooted to one's own soil or to uproot oneself from it is something that is faced by a large number of Indian youth. All these elements are experienced by the new and young India. They would like to explore the world and make a mark in the West. So what could be the solution to this situation? Should they go out and explore and live their share of life or should they remain in their homeland. The answers to these questions are never simple. But stories like *The Coral Tree* help people to understand and possibly overcome their dilemma. It helps them realize that along with happiness and excitement, leaving the homeland also brings dilemma, internal conflict, mental anguish, pain and misery, all in equal measure; so one must be prepared to accept all these elements before making a decision.

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