

CONCLUSION

The child, the book and the author trying to find a home within the boundaries of literature form the basis of this study. In the conclusion, we have to consider the basic question of whether home has been achieved or not. The problem in answering this question with a definite “yes” or “no” lies in the three distinct categories that we have to consider. In order to find an answer to the question of home we have to ask whether the child’s definition and concept of home are similar to that of literature and of the author too. The child in Indian English children’s literature (at least those texts that have been studied here) has been examined from various time-frames. Rusty inhabits the pre-independence and the immediate post-independence period, Dhanai, Jonti and, Bubul, Ramu, Lila, Hari, Dinu, Minu, and Polly; and Haroun, though are not definitely mentioned as belonging to a particular period, yet, from the original publication dates of the books, can be assumed to belong to the post-independence developmental period of India. It was a time when the nation was struggling to find its position in the world at large. Paloma, Arnab, and Bompa along with Luka, can be said to be the children of a globalized India. The children also belong to various social, cultural and economic groups, too, and the diversity in their status reflects the diversity of the texts. On the other hand, the authors themselves are the product of varied social and cultural milieus. Both Bond and Arup Dutta inhabit the fringes of society so far as the concept of the “centre” operates in India or, for that matter, where Indian English literature is concerned. Rushdie, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande not only constitute the mainstream Indian English writers but are also socially well-placed, products of the middle-class that has played a defining role in the development of the English language primarily through its zeal for an “English- medium” education for its children. Rushdie, in this respect, makes a fitting remark:

What happens in India is if you come from a well-off, middle-class background, you get sent to private schools, which all use English as the language of instruction. They are what’s called English Medium Schools.

And so, from the age of five, I began to be educated in English, and my parents started making a bit of an effort to begin speaking it at home. (qtd. in Hitchens)

This difference in position also reflects the diversity of the literature written by them and, therefore, to account for a single, well-defined, precise concept of home will be problematic here. Thus, we would have to go back to the same piecemeal method taken up earlier in defining home.

The child's anxiousness and urgency for home is extensively dealt with in literature and to negate it would be like negating the most basic of human desires. Home may not be a single concrete structure to which children or, for that matter, anyone will keep returning, again and again. Rather the notion of home, wherever that might be, serves as the controlling force of man all through his life. Man is a social animal and like all animals who return home at the end of the day, the impetus in the mental makeup of man has been always to enter the boundaries of home as early as possible, with all activities outside the home being a temporary phase which ends with the person's return. Seen from this perspective, home serves as the centripetal force of human life and regulates man's activities throughout. But for many there may not be a home to return to and therefore homelessness serves as the basic human condition, as opposed to the condition of being at home. Interestingly, while home acts as a recurring theme in literature it is in fact homelessness that is stressed, which accentuates the necessity for home. Children's literature too emphasizes the condition of homelessness to reflect the lack of home and therefore absence serves as the means through which home is desired for.

Haroun, Hari, and Sita leave home and move towards homelessness because home has stopped functioning for them. Haroun leaves because home has been rendered unsafe and loveless by his parents; Hari because home has become dysfunctional due to poverty, drunkenness and ill-health; and Lila, because the physical structure called home has been demolished along with the emotional ties too. Both Rushdie and Desai position their protagonists at a point where the realization sinks in that the parents have failed in their

responsibilities and the child knows it. The fact that the parents are ill-equipped to run their homes can be read in the broader perspective of the loss of adult control in keeping the reins of the household under control. Thereby the child is provided with agency to move beyond the threshold of home and to find itself out in the world. Home, in this sense, is a constraining place and it is only by leaving it that the child can find freedom and gain control. So why does the child return home? It does so because the knowledge pervades that the very control that the child wants to gain can in fact be attained only at home. The phase of homelessness for both Haroun and Hari makes them understand not necessarily that home is the best place in the world but rather that home will allow them to exercise the control that adults have withheld from them. Bond's Sita, on the other hand, finds the journey with Krishnan better than home, but she too returns to act as the anchor for her grandfather. All three children, along with Lila, have in fact become miniature adults in their attempt to recapture the lost home and mould it according to their wishes. The journey outside therefore provides the child with power to control the very site of subjugation and homelessness; thus the journey acts as a source that lends authority to the child. With regards to the necessity and ability to control home, R. E. Pahl says that there is an "overall set of values concerned with homeliness, cosiness, domesticity, and a belief that, if one can control just a small part of this large and threatening world, then one has achieved something worthwhile" (qtd. in Moore 149).

The reassessing of power relations that the child takes up once it returns home is also evident when the child goes outside home, too. Like the home, the external spaces are adult controlled and, in inhabiting spaces outside home, the child again finds itself in confrontation with adult control and restrictions. Rusty, Luka and Ramu in their attempt to occupy adult spaces (or, rather adult controlled spaces) have questioned the adult authority over those spaces and have tried to appropriate them as their own. In the process, they have realized the means through which control and restriction of spaces is attained by adults. For Rusty, inhabiting external spaces signifies not only his own struggle but also the Anglo-Indian community's means of sustaining itself in a country which has suddenly become alien. The transportation of home to an unknown place and the subsequent grappling for space within the known home is a recurrent theme that

underlines the community's existence in India. On the other hand, Rusty and Daljit in fact want to inhabit other places which are not home for them; but here too adult control restricts them from doing so. But Luka exhibits dexterity in his movement through the adult-constructed reality and reflects on the adult appropriation of the child's space and not vice versa. The immediate environment of home, which should have provided space for the child to move about freely, is increasingly being engulfed by adult manifestations of economic progress and development. In such a scenario, the child withdraws inside home rather than going outside. But this withdrawal is not into the confines of home but rather into the liberation that virtual spaces provide the child with. Luka thus exemplifies the fact that home for children is no longer constituted by confinement and adult supervision but, rather, can be the means of opening up boundaries. While Luka willingly inhabits adult dominated space, Ramu is reluctant to do so because of his inability to negotiate very successfully within those spaces. But Ramu does so despite all odds and proves that his blindness is not an impediment but rather a handy tool in his assessment of external spaces. He can "see" what others with sight cannot see properly and this is the power that is invested in his hands through his exploration of external spaces. Rusty's, Luka's, and Ramu's transgression into adult spaces reveals that the confines of home have not made the child incapable of negotiating outside. This idea, in itself, is a problematic one because it opens up the possibility of further movement outside home as the child has realized its capacity. The child, therefore, becomes increasingly adult-like in its ability to negotiate both home and outside.

Spaces, when construed in the form of the nation, are all the more problematic for the child because the child, despite being its citizen, is not considered to be capable enough to perform for the nation. Children's mystery and adventure fiction is important in this regard as it provides children with enough space and agency to exhibit heroic acts for the nation. Dhanai, Babul and Jonti; Arnab, Paloma, and Bompa; and Dinu, Minu and, Polly along with Ravi have all contributed towards saving the nation and in the process have realized that the nation belongs as much to them as to the adults who have not taken them seriously. The means of claiming the nation through their initiatives have proved the power that the children can exercise when the need arises. When the child has been able

to appropriate the space of the nation as its own, it can be said that the child is successful in negotiating and appropriating all the available spaces—the home, the external spaces, and the largest of available space, that of the nation. In doing so, the child has been able to negate the notion that neither home nor the spaces outside belongs to it and that it is only in becoming an adult that it can occupy homes or spaces outside as its own. The ability to occupy and control has rendered the child powerful but, on the other hand, has also placed responsibilities on the child's shoulders, making it lose its own childhood.

If the children in children's literature have become adult-like in their demeanour then has the genre of children's literature gained in stature as a result? The genre of children's literature when interrogated in the light of Indian English literature reveals that it has remained a poor relation only. Despite the authors studied here, Indian English children's literature has always remained marginalized and seen as a deviation from the general writings of authors. Except for Ruskin Bond and Arup Kumar Dutta, the others (Rushdie, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande) take up children's writing as an occasional venture. Despite that, children's writings have provided a platform for someone like Rushdie to reinvent himself and reconsider his position of marginalization. Thus he says in the context of the fatwa:

I began to entertain a thought which I never entertained—that I no longer wished to be a writer. This wasn't to do with fear; it was to do with the disappointment about the response. You work and do something for five years and that's what happens. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, the children's book I wrote, rescued me from that attitude. I discovered through writing that I enjoyed doing it and wished to go on doing it, but it was very hard. (qtd. in Hitchens)

But in spite of that, children's writings in English remain an occasional venture not only for Rushdie but also for other mainstream authors and it is only in the efforts of Ruskin Bond and Arup Kumar Dutta that we see any hope for the genre achieving popularity

and, success. Has the genre then failed to find its position in mainstream literary output and as a result, will always occupy the margins of literature? There have been efforts to develop children's literature in India from time to time and thus we have publishing houses like the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Book Trust (NBT), Children's Book Trust (CBT) which were set up categorically to enhance the standing of children's literature. But sadly, they have not been able to cater much to the imagination of the child reader or, more importantly, the parents who buy books for children. Despite being very low priced and many of them being well illustrated, the child's imagination is yet to be fascinated by the books published by these publishing houses. It is probably only the comics series, *Amar Chitra Katha* and *Tinkle*, that have maintained popularity for a long period of time in the mind and heart of Indian children. Does it mean that children's literature or Indian English children's literature is a dying genre which will exhaust itself out in a few years to come? Going by the views of Jaya Bhattacharji Rose and M. Venkatesh, it seems just the opposite. The thrust has always been on children's literature in India but government agencies and government run publishing houses have not been able to sustain the genre. With India keeping pace with a globalized world, children's literature too has started to rise up to the challenge. Jaya Bhattacharji Rose in "Children's Literature—Publisher's Perspective" says that there is a definite expansion in the market and one of the prime reasons for this is Pottermania. Along with it, she says that the decline in oral storytelling by parents and grand-parents has also led to the growth of indigenous children's literature and initiatives, like the one taken by Anwasha for holding children's literature festivals in Guwahati annually, go a long way in its development. M. Venkatesh in "The Kids are All Right" feels that children's literature in India is making great strides and Indian authors are no longer being by-passed for foreign authors. Various authors and illustrators like Payal Kapadia, Sudha Murty, Roopa Pai, Aniruddha Sengupta, Khyrunnisa A., Ranjit Lal, Priya Kuriyan and Shabnam Minwalla, have taken the initiative of writing in new ways. At the same time, children's book festivals, like Bookaro, Junior Writers Bug Festival, Ghummakkad Narain, Kahaani, have taken children's literature to a better platform. Publishers like Duckbill also organize book-writing workshops for children

where unconventional ideas are thrown up which, in a way, break the pattern that children's literature in India has been following. The mindset of the readers needs to change which can accept that children's literature and particularly Indian English children's literature can sustain itself on its own and like Indian English literature, Indian English children's literature also needs to belong, to be a part of a literary tradition and to find its home. It is also necessary for mainstream authors like Rushdie and others to contribute more so that the fame of the author can carve the niche for the literature too. The limited scope of this study has not incorporated works of people like Poile Sengupta, Paro Anand, Nilima Sinha, Ranjit Lal and many others who have been steadily writing for children but are yet to project this literature into the mainstream. Their writings are still in the nascent stage and efforts should be made from all quarters to project this literature onto the national platform as well as the international platform.

The postmodern world has not been able to secure the home for the child because families and homes are failing all over the world. And the failure to provide homes for the children has in fact made the children behave like adults and share the adult burden too in securing home. In the same way, the failure to provide Indian English children's literature has lured the child towards western children's literature or towards other forms of entertainment which completely replace literature. This failure to belong, to make a secure home has blurred boundaries between the adult and child and the homogenizing effect has made children devoid of their childhood. The way ahead should lie in the hope that societal conditions would incorporate the child into its fold as a child rather than as an adult in the making. The same sense of belongingness should be applied to children's literature. The Indian mindset that emphasizes knowledge production rather than pleasure reading should change too. The need is to provide the child with good literature with which it feels a sense of oneness and can identify with the author as one writing *for* the child. As Australian author Miles Franklin has argued, "without an indigenous literature people can remain alien in their own soil" (3), therefore a literature that belongs to the child and arises out of its own nation brings a sense of pleasure and identity too. A child's (Harper's) words about being at home sums up the situation here:

As I lay in bed that night, I thought about that alluring word [belong]. To belong did not mean ownership. You were not some-one's property. The “be” syllable was about existence: “to be” your-self and “to be” in a special place that no one else could occupy within your family except you. The “long” part was about the heart, a place in the heart where a family met and lived together. They just didn't put up with each other. They longed for each other. To belong was not a state of mind but a state of heart. (Lasky 161)

Indian English children's fiction has a long way to go and time is the only factor that would determine its future position. The need of a child for a secure home is one that is universal and the necessity to do so lies with both the parents and the society. Similarly, the responsibility of Indian English children's fiction to find a home lies squarely on the shoulders of society and authors.