

Fleeting Encounter

- Sayali Darp



Anticipation built up in my veins as I stood in a queue outside the Cambridge Book Depot. Behind us, there must have been at least 500 people standing in that long, crawling queue. Even after waiting on the street for over four to five hours, people appeared cheerful and excited, their anticipation outweighing any signs of fatigue.

Being a summer evening, the sun still shone brightly in the sky as the cool breeze of Mussoorie blew on my face. It was 19th May of 2024. I had travelled all the way from Pune only to relish this special moment. As the minutes passed and the sky began to turn pink, eagerness was palpable in the air. Mussoorie's crowded Mall Road was all prepared for this event.

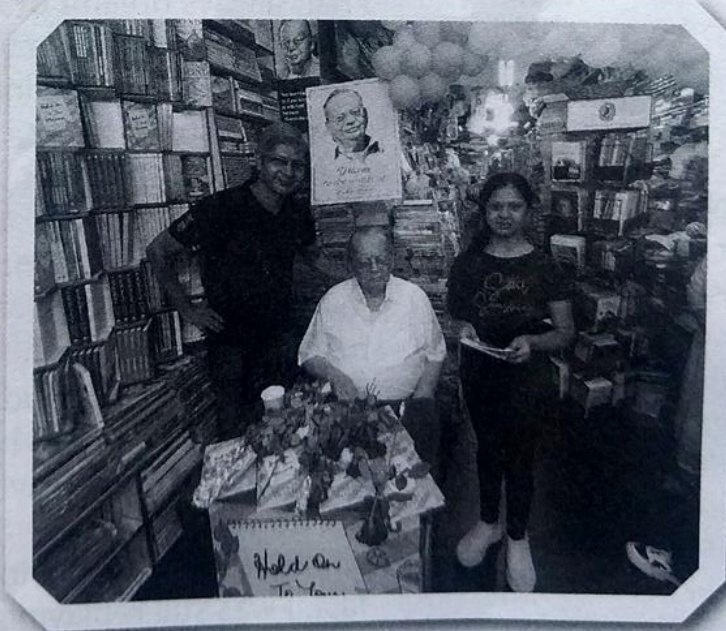
Cambridge Book Depot is a small shop

nestled amongst the chaos of restaurants, gift shops, convenience stores, and vegetable shops. That day, many shops had put up decorations, balloons, and music, adding to the jocund atmosphere. Tourists were loitering everywhere, and birds were chirping as they made their way back to their respective nests.

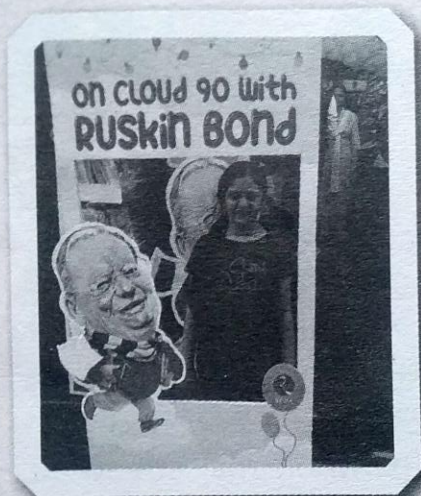
However, at that moment, all this really didn't exist for me. All my

senses were attuned to what I had come here for.

Finally, I heard the sound of a car's engine come to a stop, and the whole mall street cheered. The elderly gentleman got out of the car and walked with effort inside the shop, where a red carpet was laid. My world was frozen, as I could hardly believe that it was happening. Because we were third or fourth in the queue, we were soon taken into



Dream big. Start small. Act now.
- Robin Sharma



the shop and there he was, seated right before us! **THE RUSKIN BOND!!** Creator of several stunning characters that touched the lives of millions of readers.

My eyes welled up with tears of joy, and my voice drowned in thick emotion. I didn't know what to say or what to do. I had planned and rehearsed what I was going to talk about if I ever met him – nothing mattered now. All I could do was to stand basking in his warm presence and let my tears flow. Through the tears, my gaze finally settled on the old, wrinkled face with a soft smile still showing some exhaustion.

Our own "Rusty"!

Several minutes had gone by in my speechless state. The people in the book depot were getting restless. Someone took our photograph and promised to send it to us. I presented my book "Kaleidoscope". Collecting words with some effort, I tendered him birthday wishes before we were rushed out.

After I walked out of the Cambridge Book Depot, I suddenly started feeling light like a feather. I had finally met my role model and the most favorite author. I had always dreamt of becoming just like him.

I started sauntering down the street back to my hotel room, lost in my own thoughts. The breeze blew hair on my face as the leaves rustled against each other, creating a melodic symphony all around. I hadn't come out of my trance yet. While the whole world was moving fast, I was still replaying

my meeting with Mr. Ruskin Bond. The divine soul who wrote beautiful and intricate books like "The Yellow Umbrella", "The Cherry On The Tree," and many others.

Through his writing, he brought to life so many poignant stories and characters that soon became a part of my life.

Although it was a fleeting encounter, I would cherish that moment lifelong! This wasn't just a meeting with my favorite author, but a life-changing moment, which inspired me to pursue writing.

That night, I gazed at the moon, reflecting on the whole episode. The night passed by, and I just sat by the window, brooding and pondering...

- Sayali Darp, Std 10th,
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Listen to
Ruskin Bond's
reflections on
nature.



Must Know: Growing India: Maharashtra
Produces large quantities of cotton and sugarcane,
supporting major textile and sugar industries.