

Supplementary

The Woman on Platform 8

Ruskin Bond



Section-I

It was my second year at boarding school, and I was sitting on platform no. 8 at Ambala station waiting for the northern bound train. I think I was about twelve at the time. My parents considered me old enough to travel alone and I had arrived by bus at Ambala early in the evening. Now there was a wait till midnight before my train arrived. Most of the time I had been pacing up and down the platform, browsing at the bookstall, or feeding broken biscuits to stray dogs: trains came and went, and the platform would be quiet for a while and then, when a train arrived it would be an **inferno of heaving**, shouting, agitated human bodies. As the carriage doors opened, a tide of people would sweep down upon the nervous little ticket-collector at the gate and every time this happened I would be caught in the rush and swept outside the station. Now tired of this game and of ambling about the platform, I sat down on my suitcase and gazed **dismally** across the railway tracks.

Trolleys rolled past me and I was conscious of the cries of the various vendors -the men who sold curds and lemon, the sweet meat seller, the newspaper boy-but I had lost interest in all that went on along the busy platform, and continued to stare across the railway tracks, feeling bored and a little lonely.

'Are you all alone, my son?' asked a soft voice close behind me.

I looked up and saw a woman standing near me. She was leaning over, and I saw a pale face, and dark kind eyes. She wore no jewels, and was dressed very simply in a white sari.

"Yes, I am going to school," I said, and stood up respectfully; she seemed poor, but there was a dignity about her that commanded respect.

'I have been watching you for some time,' she said 'Didn't your parents come to see you off?'

'I don't live here', I said. 'I had to change trains. Anyway, I can travel alone.'

'I am sure you can,' she said, and I liked her for saying that and I also liked her for the simplicity of her dress and for her deep soft voice

