

Revisiting Nature Through Literature: An Ecocritical Examination of Ruskin Bond's Selected Short Stories

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Abstract

An environmental crises gave rise to environmental ethics for mindfulness. People all around the world and the cosmos are impacted by environmental problems and associated challenges. The reason for the immediate urgency is that there was no ignorance on environmental insurance. Few individuals manage to keep the environment clean and green since humans have shifted toward self-centeredness. The number of authors writing on topics related to environmental problems has gradually increased during the last several decades. However, because of the continuing academic theories like ecocriticism, there is a general awareness of ecological concerns to the degree that the scholarly field is concerned. As shown by literary advancements, nature and literature have always had a cordial connection. Contemporary concerns are often reflected in literature, and it is this sense of concern and how it is reflected in literature that has given rise to "Ecocriticism," a subfield of literary theory. An abstract feedback method called ecocriticism looks at the relationship between literature and ecology. This essay examines Ruskin Bond's selected short tales' ecological concerns.

Keywords: Ecology, Environment, Awareness, Consciousness, Criticism.

1. INTRODUCTION

For many decades, Mussoorie, a picturesque and tranquil town nestled in the Himalayas, has nurtured artistic expression. It is here that the celebrated author Ruskin Bond, often regarded as a literary treasure of India, made his home. Known for his warmth and simplicity, Bond found inspiration not so much in Mussoorie as a bustling hill station, but in its mountains, forests, streams, and the people who lived there. His works offer a refreshing pause in today's fast-paced, competitive world, reminding us to appreciate the beauty of nature that we often overlook. His writings are as pure and delicate as dewdrops resting on leaves, flower petals, and blades of grass.

Bond's stories resonate with heartfelt charm, as though he breathes his soul into every line. In the preface to *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, he describes the region as "an immortal kind of a place," reflecting his deep emotional bond with its natural surroundings. The presence of oak, walnut, and maple trees left him spellbound, weaving themselves into the fabric of his imagination and writing.

Residing in the Himalayan town of Mussoorie, Ruskin Bond stands as one of India's most beloved writers, known for his short stories, poems, and works for readers of all ages—children, adolescents,

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and adults alike. A study of Bond's life and contributions reveals not only the trajectory of his literary career but also his unwavering commitment to enriching English literature in India and adding to the broader landscape of postcolonial and diasporic writing. His prolific output includes six novels or novellas, more than two hundred short stories, thirty-five books for children, four autobiographical volumes, several poetry and essay collections, as well as hundreds of articles for leading newspapers and magazines. Even today, he continues to contribute occasionally to prominent publications both within India and abroad.

Bond's journey as a writer began early at the age of seventeen in 1951 when he first published his stories. At that time, Indian writing in English was still in its formative phase, having emerged in the 1930s with pioneers such as R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand.

Ruskin sometimes spent a few days hunting with his stepfather, but he never enjoyed it since there were no man-eaters. One such hunting excursion is depicted cynically in the short novel *A Week in the Jungle*. Here, in the troublesome cottage, he discovered a book shelf brimming with works by Dickens, P.G. Wodehouse, Emily Bronte, M.R. James, and Shakespeare. He would sit and read books while adults went hunting, thus they were his sidekicks. He notes in the Introduction to *Ruskin Bond's Treasury of Stories for the Children* that he was intriguingly influenced by the short stories of Dickens' *David Copperfield*, whose tragic upbringing he identified with, *Walpole's Fortitude*, and A. E. Coppard, H. E. Bates, and William Saroyan. At the age of thirteen, he formally created his first piece of fiction at BCS, *Nine Months*, in which he illustrated school processes for an academic year and parodied certain instructors. "My father taught me how to write," he said. That was plenty inheritance.

Bond's early years are reflected in his short tales.

He has been a huge fan of nature from the beginning, which is appropriate. He says, "What else do I cherish and recall of the slopes scents again?" in the tale *Rain in the Mountain*.

The scent of falling pine needles, the smoke from cow dung, spring rain, injured grass, the pure cold mountain streams, and the depth and blueness of the sky.

Bond is obviously fascinated with the Indian air, and his works most accurately depict his amazing passion for India's nature, animals, and mountains. His devotion to Indian sights and sounds is unending, and even when he was in Europe, his mind and thoughts kept returning to Indian topics.

His short tale "The Window," which was first published in *Illustrated Weekly* in 1956, is a remarkable example of how he worked and how he incorporated everyday activities and companions into his writings. He first used the window motif in *The Room on the Roof*, and it represents a point of view in the narrative. The narrator observes the birds in the banyan tree, the people and traffic going by the building, including the postman, merchants, kids, and the city as a whole.

Bond has a deep love for the natural world, and this passion runs throughout his family. As a result, he has written more on the preservation and beauty of a broad variety of plants. His works, which

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highlight the beauty of nature, include *The Cherry Tree*, *When You Can't Climb Tree Anymore*, *Dust on the Mountain*, *My Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, *Time Stops at Shamli*, and others.

He has written tales on a variety of subjects, and although the settings are simple, they are intriguing. Among his well-known tales are *Miss Bun*, *Time Stops at Shamli*, *Love is a Sad Tune*, *The Box Man*, *My First Love*, *Untouchable*, *The Kite Maker*, and more. Several strange tales, like *Puma's Moon*, *Tiger*, *Tiger Burning Bright*, *Tigers' Forever*, and others, describe cunning jinns, phantoms, and demons that reside in trees, especially in their rough areas.

Bond's tales are written in a straightforward way that incisively outlines his perception of Indian societal structures and tendencies. His tales are readily readable and properly appreciated.

Bond's influence endures despite the fact that many authors have gone in all directions on the cultural landscape.

Even now, Ruskin Bond continues to write novels, and people all around the globe read and appreciate them. In his *Introduction to Studies in Contemporary Literature*, Prof. R.S. Sharma also affirms Bond's one of the two distinct dedications to Indian literature in English:

This is the media that works best for him since he is an excellent storyteller. Additionally, he provides us with reliable accounts of mountain village life, where the author's artistry and cheery mixture are based on the fact that, for the most part, his own unique experience is what molds the tale.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Elamparity (2015) Nevertheless, among the most often used words in our day and age, "nature" stands out. In her book *Language-The Unknown*, renowned etymologist Julia Kristeva once said that "Dialect is everywhere, but our understanding of it is comparatively beside nothing." Similarly, nature is not at all visible, yet we are surrounded by it, part of it, and in it."

Elamparity (2014) Many of us are unaware of how seriously endangered Mother Earth is. According to James Lovelock, one of the renowned scientists who developed the "Gaia" theory, "human creatures are excessively inept, making it impossible to deal with the environmental issues that we are looked with today." Despite the actions made by the global community, the situation remains dire, which is why the *Nature Writing* was published.

When Buell (2013) saw that Mother Earth was in danger, it became crucial to pay attention to the fundamental masses, which is how *Nature Writing* came to be. Scott Slovic defines nature writing as: "Scholarly true to life that offers logical investigation of the world, or reflects upon the political and philosophical ramifications of the connections among human creatures and the bigger planet."

Environmental reports indicate that the increasing demands on natural capital such as forests, water, soil, air, and biodiversity now exceed the Earth's ability to regenerate these resources.

Nature has consistently served as the backdrop for human beings, and it especially depends on the lives and circumstances of the populace. Here, the condition is referred to as "Topography." Any masterpiece, whether it be a drama, poetry, or book, must have both a social context and a physical

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setting.

The physical setting represents the land's terrain, while the social environment refers to the culture of that community. The best example of this is seen in Bond's tales. The local culture is essential to protecting the environment. In his article *Nature in The Cultural Geography Reader*, Raymond Williams states

According to Oakes and Price (2016), this specific sense of righteousness and blamelessness has been one of nature's most potent uses since the late eighteenth century. Nature has alluded to the countryside, unspoiled locations, and non-human flora and creatures. The use is most evident in the disparities between town and country: nature is something that man has not created, but if he did so long enough to create a hedgerow or a desert, it will largely be accepted as commonplace.

Furthermore, according to Raymond Williams (2015), man does not have the ability to create nature; rather, nature exists for him to comprehend, enjoy, and use. Its preservation depends on the local culture. Conversely, Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest" suggests that local culture develops in accordance with the environment or nature. People who adapt properly, as nature suggests, may live happily on our planet. Ruskin Bond's novels are the perfect example of this, since his characters respond according to their circumstances. Thus, we may say that there is a connection between nature and civilization. It was believed in earlier times that by returning to nature, one eliminates all chances for spiritual development and overall improvement.

3. THE ECOCRITICAL LANDSCAPE

As a critical approach, ecocriticism gives significant attention to writers who foreground nature as a central theme in their work and who incorporate ecocentric perspectives on sustainable progress, shared moral responsibility, and the realities of the world beyond humanity that is, the non-conscious, non-human realm. The phrase, which governs human collaboration and their natural state, is the newest of the revisionist movements that gained traction due to the environmental disaster that was developing. As a representative of nature, this work has been shaping the earth.

In reference to Meera Subramanian:

These elements, in all of their forms, frame the world in which we all live. In a never-ending harmony dance, they bounce off one another.

However, this natural adjustment has gradually been overridden by human impacts. Equilibrium among the constituents is disintegrating now, and if these ecological challenges are not addressed, people and wild life will continue to suffer. India is now serving as the staging location for a human survival trial.

Ruskin Bond discovers human interaction with the non-human world by fusing history, myths, experience, and imagination to create nature. Additionally, it tries to ascertain his conscious dedication while taking into account the impending world catastrophe. Investigating the connections between nature and human culture, ecocritical methods also look at the points at which the makers

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address their creations. The foundation of ecocriticism in the social realm is the idea that all of the ecosphere where matter, energy, and ideas go to cooperation—is involved.

Ecological imbalance has a significant and negative influence on human well-being in a number of ways. The thing that weakens human beings the most is the concern of each country to renew the declining factors of each other and their state. The whole world is facing a serious ecological problem at the start of the new millennium.

The most serious problems are the destruction of rain forests, constant asset shortages, the end of species, and global warming, which has increased the possibility that the weather will change and that every place on Earth will become artificial and man-made.

Ecocritics are crucial to the preservation of the natural world. Ruskin Bond addresses the problems of circumstance as an agitated and worried author. His love of trees, the mountains, the Himalayan greenery, and environment is evident in his short tales. His proximity to the Himalayas has given him access to celestial wisdom. Every question is a thread in the fabric of life, and each one is equally important. The shared co-activity of the entirety's components determines its sustainability.

Compassion ought to be the enduring rule of existence. Perception of each living being's intrinsic worth is necessary. collaboration, variety, and flexibility. In order for ecological awareness to be deep in its most fundamental content, each person must ultimately feel as if they belong and are linked to the cosmos.

One must strive toward the construction of a corporate society where the happiness of the whole population—rather than just the individual—is more important. This will help to preserve the integrity of the web of life.

His short tales cover a wide range of topics, from late environmental corruption to natural splendor. Environmental corruption and ecological imbalance have become very concerning issues in modern times, and it is crucial that people understand and find solutions for this significant worldwide ecological disaster.

In *Ecological Ethics and Politics*, H.J. McCloskey highlights a crisis that endangers not only the essence of human fulfillment but also the very survival of humankind. Ecological studies indicate that *Homo sapiens* is, or may soon become, an endangered species—posing a threat both to humanity as a whole and to each of its members.

Ruskin's love of the outdoors and concern for ecological imbalance on the slopes make him feel depressed when he observes the rapid deforestation and tree-cutting occurring all around him. Rapid urbanization is almost causing deforestation, harming the planet and destroying the ecological need of trees to maintain ecological balance and eradicate a lack of appreciation for environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Readers often like Bond's short tales because of their clear language, tasteful origins, and noteworthy significance. Regardless, conventional readers and commentators just observe that his novels depict

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a certain connection between humans and nature, but they do not identify this relationship or the author's implied ecological knowledge. All things considered, given that Frost is still widely read now, it is perhaps relevant to dissect his ecological awareness at such an ecologically dire period. As in the chain of biological communities, "Copperfield in the Jungle," "No room for a Leopard," and "Residue on the Mountain" discuss the significant chain of being that connects humans and nature, highlighting the mutually beneficial and harmonious relationship between the two.

We are concerned about ignoring everything material advancement in the present since "the world is excessively with us" and natural items don't speak to our hearts. Since "one motivation from vernal wood, can show you a greater amount of man," nature should be recognized as a teacher and guide.

Future Scope

One of the main themes of Ruskin Bond's writing is nature, which he loves. Through these tales, Bond challenges us to engage not only in understanding the nature of human and non-human interaction, but also in realizing that protecting the environment is essential from an ethical standpoint in order to ensure a better future. It is clear from reading these tales that Bond made the significant decision to take on the job of an eco-faultfinder.

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