



Ruskin Bond's Bond With Nature: an Eco Critical Approach

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ABSTRACT

Man is wildly misusing natural resources, and the exhaustion of these resources is a matter of deep concern. After exuberantly and lavishly misusing the natural resources environmentalists and scientists showed the apprehension about the exhaustion of fresh air and water in the entire globe. It is the time to understand and realize that all beings are crucial to retain the beauty and health of the earth. Man being considered the most powerful social animal, must not turn into terrorist to usurp the territory of other beings to fulfil his greed. Ruskin Bond's stories echoes his concern towards the devastating environment which is the result of the ignorance of man, and his approach to lead a luxurious life. Bond's stories are an imaginative and honest revelations of his sensitivity towards nature. In the name of development man plays a mean and wicked game with the creatures and has started invading their homes by cutting mountains and roads. Bond reiterates in almost every story of him about the moral duty of man towards nature and above all his stories inculcate a sense of duty and responsibility towards the nature.

KEYWORDS : Ecocriticism, Environment, Scientists

The term Ecocriticism was coined in the late 1970s, it is a combination of two words Ecology and Criticism. The word Ecology means the relationship between air, water, plants, animals, human beings and the word Criticism means the act of analysing and evaluating therefore Ecocriticism is analysing and interpreting the relationship among the air, water, plants, animals and human beings. Man is wildly misusing natural resources, and the exhaustion of these resources is a matter of deep concern. After exuberantly and lavishly misusing the natural resources environmentalists and scientists showed the apprehension about the exhaustion of fresh air and water in the entire globe. It is the time to understand and realize that all beings are crucial to retain the beauty and health of the earth. Man being considered the most powerful social animal, must not turn into terrorist to usurp the territory of other beings to fulfil his greed. Ruskin Bond's stories echoes his concern towards the devastating environment which is the result of the ignorance of man, and his approach to lead a luxurious life. Bond's stories are an imaginative and honest revelations of his sensitivity towards nature. In the name of development man plays a mean and wicked game with the creatures and has started invading their homes by cutting mountains and roads.

Ruskin Bond, the most acclaimed short story writer was born and brought up in the foothills of Dehradun, had the privilege to play in the lap of nature. The pleasure and the love he gets from the nature and the animals are very well woven and expressed in his stories. He also expressed his apprehension about exhaustion of greenery through his works. Bond in his work shows that nature has a great healing power. The nearer one goes to nature the greater the fascination is. If a person is in love with nature he can never be a pessimist because of nature's fecundity. His stories show his unquenchable love for nature, trees, the mountains and the flora and fauna of the Himalayas.

He portrays marvelous pictures of trees, mountains, birds, flowers, insects, and animals with his pen on the canvas of the reader's mind but he does not forget to express his concern for deforestation and loss of greenery on the stake of industrialization and development. The town of Dehradun is the backdrop against which his characters struggle and achieve their dreams and destiny. Bond is very close to nature since birth and he gives them life with great intensity. In *Death of the Trees* he showcases not only the death of trees, mountains and animals but also the death of the humanity. "the explosions that continually shatter the silence of the mountains—as thousand year-old rocks are dynamited—have frightened away ..." (493). Bond makes us feel that trees and mountains are one of the most significant factors in our environment and is required for ecological balance. He expresses his concern that

"... they have felled most of the trees. The walnut was one of the first to go. A tree I have lived with for over ten years watching it grow just as I had watched Prem's little son Rakesh, grow up Looking for-

ward to its new leaf-buds, the broad, green leaves of summer turning to spears of gold in September when the walnuts were ripe and ready to fall. I knew that tree better than the others." (*Death of the Trees*, 492).

The narrator relates the death of trees to the painful death of his own brother in an accident: "It was just coming into its own this year, now cut down in its prime youth like my young brother on the road to Delhi last month: both victims of roads, the tree killed by P.W.D., my brother by a truck" (*Death of the Trees*, 492). The sight of ravaged hills is so pathetic that no bird comes to warble. Only the crow is seen because they have learnt to live with man. Thousand-year-old rocks are blown by dynamite. The dust is layering trees, grass, shrubs and flowers everywhere hiding their beauty. Horn of the truck, dynamite explosions tolls the dangerous bell of death and disaster in the hills bringing the normal life to an end imbalancing the ecosystem. Thus Bond's attitude to nature begins from simple sensory delights and culminates into humanism; his fiction gently brings us back to nature in order to recuperate our primitive innocence and faith.

Bond through his one of the most touching stories *Dust on the Mountains* raises the issue of indiscriminate exploitation of nature. Mr. Bond canvassed Bisnu, a twelve year old boy, who leaves his village and comes to Mussoorie, to earn money as it has become difficult to earn for bread and butter. At first he works in a theatre for some time, and then works as a cleaner with a truck driver, Pritam Singh, who carries limestone from the quarry to the depot. In this story Bond answers the question, why are there no trees here?" and discloses the fact that:

There were trees here once, but the contractors took the deodars for furniture and houses. And the pines were tapped to death for resin. And the oaks were stripped of their leaves to feed the cattle—you can still see a few tree-skeletons if you look hard—and the bushes that remained were finished off by the goats! (*Dust on the Mountains*, 291).

Other than deforestation, carelessness of tourists is also responsible for the loss of trees. There are many cases where trees like Oaks, deodars, pine trees and acres of jungle were burnt and destroyed in the fire left unextinguished by the campers. This way, thousands of Himalayan trees perished in the flame. Bisnu, the protagonist, discusses this irresponsible attitude of the people with his family at night:

They sat outside their small house, watching the fire spread. A red line stretched right across the mountain. Thousands of Himalayan trees were perishing in the flames. Oaks, deodars, maples, pines; trees that had taken hundreds of years to grow. And now a fire started carelessly by some campers had been carried up the mountain with the help of the dry grass and strong breeze. There was no one to put it out. It would take days to die down by itself. (*Dust on the Mountains*, 293).

Pritam Singh eyes were open when he met with an accident on his way to depot. Pritam Singh has to make two trips daily and drives his truck ruthlessly, honking loudly as he moves on the steep road. There is a terrible accident, and the truck goes tumbling down. A tree checks its fall and the life of Pritam Singh and the others saved. The tree is the savior. He says, "It was the tree that saved me. Remember that, boy." (302) Bond reverberates that though man harms nature, yet it always saves man. In the name of development of roads and hospital he is sneaking into these peaceful regions and exploiting it for monetary gain.

My Father's Trees in Dehra, a sensitive and emotional story recounts the author's visit to Dehra after many years. In this story he has shared the time spent with his father. His father loved trees and planted many, and was happy among them. His father grounded love of nature in him when he was quite young. After the death of his father nature brought him up like a guardian. Bond recalls a childhood incident when a tendril from a creeping vine moved away from him and after about twenty minutes touched his father's feet, as they sat together on the veranda steps. His father not only planted trees in his own garden, but also in the woods around Dehra. He remembers going "armed with cuttings and saplings", into the jungle, "planting flowering shrubs between the sal and sheesham trees"(300). His father had said,

If people keep cutting trees, instead of planting them, there'll soon be no forests left at all, and the world will be just one vast desert. "The young Bond spends an entire day, planting trees on a small rocky island, and his father tells him that the trees used to move and they will move again." See how they reach out with their arms.(300)

His father passed away, and it is after many years that Bond revisits the land of his childhood.

Going across the dry river bed, he tries to locate the island, and his eye is caught by the spectacular red plumes of the coral blossom", and he sees that koels and parrots live there, and a number of other shrubs, grasses and plants have grown up under the trees he and his father had planted. The author feels that the trees "know" him, and they "whisper", and "beckon" him near to them. He says, "They have multiplied. They are moving. In this small forgotten corner of the world, my father's dreams are coming true, and the trees are moving again.(301)

Bond's proclamation of right appropriation of nature by humans is the need of the hour. He has been called a writer who celebrates nature, and also wants to warn his readers about the threats to the environment caused by industrialization, urbanization and commercialization. In an Interview with Amita Aggarwal, he says, "Problems of deforestation, pollution, and environmental decay of wildlife have been the subject matter of most of my stories and essays." In ancient times people revered nature and worshiped it. They believe that the panchmahbhutas: Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Space are the elements of Prakriti. The epics and all the holy scriptures of India are full of invocations to the myriad powers of nature. Man and Nature share a deep bond. Now with the change of time and the so called modernization, the modern people think about themselves and their luxury which is causing adverse effect on the ecosystem. Bond reiterates in almost every story of him about the moral duty of man towards nature and above all his stories inculcate a sense of duty and responsibility towards the nature.

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