



DEEP ECOLOGY AND ECOSOPHY: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF NOVELS THE ROOM ON THE ROOF AND VAGRANTS IN THE VALLEY BY RUSKIN BOND

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ABSTRACT

The frequent flooding, cyclones, droughts, desertified state of world provide an alarming vision towards downfall of the entire living kingdoms in the universe. Neither amending treaties in International forums nor discussing and debating the catastrophic effects human beings made upon the world will never going to change anymore. On the contrary in the name of liberalism and excessive commoditization, the world, people and the environment was entirely destructed to the core. Nature and its significance become lost and human life is based on a human centered approach (anthropocentrism), where human life seems to be more dull, puzzled and absurd. In order to rejuvenate and save the planet from the crisis there is a need or demand raised to understand about the nature and its well being. In the process of realizing the importance of external environment (Nature), Deep Ecology and Ecological wisdom is inevitable. Because for understanding the self one needs to know who they are likewise to seek and gain knowledge about the world is possible by understanding nature. It can be achieved through creating one's own Ecosophy which means gaining wisdom from nature. So learning from nature and creating a meaning from it will vary according to each and every person. Ruskin bond one of the few writers of the era who sketches the beauty of nature and portray the importance on human lives by a hidden wrap through his novels. Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* and *Vagrants in the Valley* are considered to be his masterpieces. In the two novels the protagonist Rusty undergoes several phases in understanding about the nature and self. The research attempts to portray the ecological wisdom gained by Rusty in the respective novels as well as how it transformed his life and provides a meaning and harmony for his existence.

KEYWORDS : Anthropocentrism, Deep Ecology, Liberalism, Commoditization, Ecosophy

In the modern era, nobody is witnessing a world which consists of huge mountains, chirping sounds of birds and the wildness of nature. Even the term 'Nature' had lost its significance. The huge technological apparatus, multiple and artificial intelligence took over the entire physical as well as mental space of human kind. But in earlier days people try to connect themselves with nature in one way or other. The consciousness of our mind tries to witness the tranquility of nature where our human race starts progressing and it is how it's evolved and nurtured so far. Now all human beings experiencing a world in a digital medium, where one can connect to people in multiple ways. One can share, gather and assimilate knowledge in various ways. But the human (thinking species) starts to move away from nature. The materialistic attitudes and greed for money changed humans into ruthless invaders, where people start to destroy, plunder the wealth of nature abundantly. This results in downfall of nature as well as all living kingdom existing in the universe.

In order to create awareness and build a sensible people in future generations. Ecology and its importance need to be insisted. So the initiation has been taken by Arne Naess a Norwegian philosopher coined and developed the concept Ecosophy which means through attaining ecological wisdom in one of the best ways to preserve and understand the nature. Beyond scientific, economic and materialistic knowledge one has to develop a conscious understanding about nature and self is important, it creates a meaning for our existence.

Deep Ecology is an umbrella term which considers human life as equal as the other lives existing in the earth. Many activists and theorists contributed in deep ecology with various perspectives. The most significant contributor of the movement was Arne Naess, in his research paper titled "Deep Ecology Eight Points Revisited" he insisted through ecological understanding one needs to understand the Self and he portrays it as an ideology and people need to understand the concept of deep ecology to build a harmless world. For that development, people need to reinterpret and rebuild the existing Economic and Technological representations.

To create a sustainable world it is possible only by preserving all human and non-human life. The quality of non-human life should be improved and their habitat should be restored. Development or

progress from one part is not feasible enough to erect a quality life for all. For example, while taking the case of Population growth only through stabilizing the population growth one can't expect a harmonious life on earth, on the contrary there are other catastrophic factors affecting the world namely Human's materialistic and sophisticated ideals, constant wars and so on, all the factors produce an imbalance in the ecological bonding of earth.

The phases of human life have close connections with nature. It is constantly depicted in the novels, *The Room on the Roof* and *Vagrants in the Valley*. In order to maintain the Nature's equilibrium, a philosophical wisdom need to be incorporated in the minds of people and it is termed as Ecosophy. It will provide a better solution for the existing crisis. Ruskin Bond in his novel attempts to present a character named Rusty with Ecocentric ideals. It is evident, that the way Rusty observes, portrays and understands nature is in a typical manner no other characters in the novel did. Ruskin Bond took Rusty as his mouth piece to portray his affinity towards Nature.

"The light spring rain rode on the wind, into the trees, down the road; it brought an exhilarating freshness to the air, a smell of earth, a scent of flowers; it brought a smile to the eyes of the boy on the road" (*The Room*, 1). The novel *The Room on the Roof* opens with the above mentioned lines where Dehra's beautiful scenery is described. Nature represents people on earth in different scales one among them being Rain. Even though the cause of the rain has scientific reasons, it has some connections to people's feelings and emotions. Here the protagonist Rusty is living a desperate and imprisoned life, so he took walking as a hobby to escape from the world in the endless valleys of Dehradun frequently. He loves the rain in a melancholic tone. While moving in the meadows filled roads he says "He liked the rain as it flecked his face, he liked the smell and the freshness; he did not look at his surroundings or notice them- his mind, as usual, was very far away- but he felt their atmosphere, and he smiled." (*The Room*, 3).

Rusty tries to feel the rain and admire it. Rusty throughout the novel seems to be a clear observer of nature. Even though his mental health is not well he opens his heart and soul to the nature through his frequent walks. Rusty develops a conscious understanding

about nature through his clear observance. Rusty tries to seek for comfort and to move away his soul from the existing chaos, while standing in his home he sees that. Nature can be a solace it has the capability to personify itself as a mother's lap. The warmth and comfort can be felt when a person becomes one with nature.

The rebellious and liberal spirited Rusty moved away from his guardian's home to feel the ever glowing freshness of nature. He creates a livelihood as an English teacher to Kishen Kapoor, he stays in the room provided in the roof top, where he can endlessly gaze at nature and lost himself in it. "From the window they could see many things. In the distance, towering over the other trees was the flame blue of the sky. Through the windows came a shoot of pink bougainvillea creeper" (The Room, 85). Then he falls in love with the mother of Kishen named Meena. He compares her beauty, innocence, warmth and softness with nature and its tranquility. When Meena and Rusty went to woods she asked Rusty to listen to the silence of the forest, "They surrounded by silence; a dark, pensive silence, heavy, scented with magnolia and jasmine. It was shattered by a piercing shriek, a cry that rose on all sides, echoing against the vibrating air" (The Room 109). These lines explain how people had started to observe nature and their inner selves there is tranquility but a fear outnumbered it a fear of penniless nomadic life and Meena's fear for her family. Their fear resonates with the sudden cries and vibrant air around them. All of a sudden things start turning upside down, after the departure of Meena from his world. She met with an accident, and her loss made Rusty break the shackles of harmony once he experienced. He feels exhausted and meaningless which is evident in the following lines "Every night the jackals could be heard howling in the nearby jungle, but tonight their cries sounded nearer, much nearer" (The Room, 135). He considers Meena as his God who provided food a new perception towards life but soon made him left alone. The joy, zeal of rusty and nature turns its tide; everything seems to be gloomy and absurd. Even the nature sets its tone in a frightening way. Ruskin radiantly weaves the thread of Rusty's loneliness and nature transformation for the other season through these lines "Dust, it blew up in great clouds, swirling down the road, clutching and clinging to everything it touched; burning, choking, stinging dust" (The Room, 154). The above mentioned lines signifies the arrival of autumn season, the bright colors in the life of rusty faded away and all things with him starts to withered away. The Nature and Rusty simultaneously, shedding their feelings with utmost pain and penury. Rusty lost his sanity and starts to move away to a distant place for bringing back his harmony and peace in his life.

The other novel *Vagrants in the Valley* tells the tale of Rusty's vagabond journey with Kishen. The novel portrays the hardships faced by Rusty; he started being part of the nature's wildness. He states that "If our thoughts agree, the miles are not so long" (Vagrants, 129). These lines stand right to the adage, where there is a will there is a way. All cannot become nature lovers, only those who have aesthetic feel can love and be one with nature. It is the aesthetic sense which adds more beauty to the nature. All things present in nature are beautiful; it is always in the eyes of the one who sees it. People turn to nature when they are happy, there are the other few who turn to nature when they are sad. Nature adds more beauty when the looker enjoys and appreciates it. Nature has been a haven for many, it has played the role of a comforter, solace mother, enemy at times during natural disasters. In the eyes of nature there is a romantic eye that of a lover as well it has a ferocious eye that of an enemy. Rusty tries to face their challenges in an optimistic manner because in their vagrancy they are not having their basic needs such a good appetite, clothing and shelter. This situation enables rusty to develop closeness with nature and starts to understand about the nature and its distinctiveness. In his journey with Kishen, he faced lot of difficulties and his past haunting memories of Meena and the world one he lived were constantly recollected and he equipped himself with pinches of hope and faith for a better future built from his learning from nature. "They grew light-hearted as they walked into the fertile valley that lay between the Siwaliks and the Himalayan foothills" (Vagrants, 133). Farer miles are also walk able

when it comes to walking with a bosom friend. Distance never creates any tiresome in between the friends, they readily tries to exhale and inhale the beauty of nature and readily accepted the hardships they going to face ahead in the vagrancy. This continuous ongoing twists and turns in his life makes one feel little bit weird and confused but still in the presence of nature he is constantly gets healing his soul and mind. Then the departure of Kishen also makes him lonelier then he turns to nature as his only companion to be with. His wanderings starts when Mr. Pettigrew gave an assignment to search his aunt in the hills of Lansdowne, he struggled hard with his new friend named Sudheer by the end they can't find her and left empty handed. He feels tired and distressed with his new expeditions and with nature he enjoying the serenity of nature.

In the novel, *Vagrants in the Valley*, Ruskin Bond tries to set an example with Rusty to explore oneself and the nature simultaneously to generate the Ecosophical premises. This understanding acts as paradigm shift in which the narrow anthropocentric values had lost its significance and provides a new and fresh space to brood over the Ecocentric Ecological Wisdom. An individual changes his way of thinking and this altered perception affects the profound society's entire behavior. So people need to be conscious and collectively conceptualize the present existing crisis to provide a better solution through drawing and developing a refined knowledge about nature and its functions. Living with environment and feeling its warmth is always bliss. All cannot become Ecosophies. One with profound knowledge and aesthetic feeling towards nature and environment can become one such. Nature is like a human being with all emotions. It shines brightly over hills and valleys when it is happy. It drizzles when it is emotionally happy with a few rays of sunlight and drizzles of rain. It pours like cats and dogs when it is extremely angry. It throws away its scorching sun on us when we destroy its trees. Human beings are dependent on nature; nature is not dependent on human beings. Though we are most of the times rude and rough to it, it always caresses with love and warmth. The universality of nature provides an inner light (Ecosophy) to Rusty to move ahead in life.

In the present scenario the people around the globe promotes commercial strands of people and persistently tries to revive the old existed things and provides to the society in a newer dimension. For example in Arts and in films remaking things again and again and never tend to produce any new, original and aesthetical ideas. The entire society turns to be the replica of the older societies. So in order to tackle the difficulties in the society is achievable only by coming out from the existing dogmas and propagandas in the society. In order to move for a better and rightful future, one needs to have a basic understand about self and its influence upon the society. And at the same time one have to realize the importance of nature. One needs to deconstruct, unlearn things. Altogether in the two novels, Rusty provides a space to indoctrinate the ideals of Ecosophical wisdom to the world. In order to lead a harmonious life and to get answers for the existing crisis a proper and conscious understanding about Ecosophical wisdom is necessary.

Nature is an indestructible asset. The more human destroy it, the more it grows. Nature is far better than the human beings in the matter of helping and forgiving. Nowadays people had forgotten the value of nature. It is high time that people must understand that nature is not only nature; it creates an identity to lead a good healthy life. In order to fully access, enjoy and profit from environment, one has to look into something that does not exist. To put it other way, we are best served by our environment, when we cease thinking about its hospitality human beings can realize that the material things around them is all from the gift of nature. Human beings have awareness about the value of nature, in an individual's life everything is compared to infinity. There is no doubt that our environment is in the face of crisis. The threat that the ambiance suffers is the product of man's exploitation of nature. However, whether the answer to this problem is to completely change our worldview remains controversial. In life on earth and its relation to other creatures on earth, the central concept is harmony. To

maintain and preserve the harmony human beings must walk in the path of beauty.

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