



## A STUDY OF RUSKIN BOND'S SELECED SHORT STORIES IN THE LIGHT OF ECOCRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

Today, the planet Earth is facing the ecological crisis which has been widely accepted by scientists, politicians, environmentalists and academicians around the globe. Information about these challenges has been widespread for several decades now, but very little has been done to address them positively. But as far as literary field is concerned, there is widespread awareness towards ecological concerns through the recent literary theories like Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism. Nature & Literature have always shared a close relationship, as it is evidenced in the works of literature. Literature is well known for reflecting contemporary issues and it is this sense of concern and its reflection in literature that has given rise to a new branch of literary theory, namely "Ecocriticism". This paper presents an outline of ecocriticism, followed by an Ecocritical study of Ruskin Bond's selected short stories.

### KEYWORDS

Ecocriticism, Ecology, Ecological Consciousness, Ruskin Bond

### Introduction:

Ecocriticism, a new movement or school of literary criticism, has started developing in the 1990s. Eco is short of ecology, which is concerned with the relationships between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with that environment. By analogy, ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature. The term "criticism" in literary studies means "the scholarly study and interpretation of" literature. Ecocriticism is a fairly new field in literary studies: the study of literature with a special attention to the significance of nature in literature.

### In the collection 'The Ecocriticism Reader', Glotfelty explains:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its readings of the texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.

Ruskin Bond's works mainly depict children growing up and maturing through adversity and experience. The natural scenic hills of Dehradun and Mussoorie almost invariably form the setting of his works and reflect his ardent faith in the healing powers of nature. He said in a recent interview, "I don't always write professionally or for money. It is something I feel I have to do to relate my impression in the day to day life that I see around me. I have selected following three short stories here for the eco-critical analysis in this paper:

- Copperfield in the Jungle
- No Room for a Leopard, and
- Dust on the Mountain.

'Copperfield in the Jungle', is an autobiographical story. It tells us how the young Ruskin Bond could never get interested in the hunting expeditions of his Uncle Henry and some of his sporting friends. Killing for food –most animal's die that could be a justified to an extent but killing just for the fun of it could not be justified or understood. "Copperfield in the Jungle" also reconstructs the jungle atmosphere. The young protagonist accompanies his Uncle Henry and some of his sporting friends for on a shikar expedition in to the Terai forests of the Siwaliks. We are not told his name but we know

that he is 12 years age and have inherited his deep of hunting and killing for the fun of it from his grandfather. So, here we can see the feelings of small child for the innocent animals, and also we can see the kindness, and lovely nature of the child.

'No room for a Leopard', is about deforestation and its accompanying aftermath. It presents the pathetic condition of the animals after deforestation. It is a very moving account of the killing of a trusting leopard by a group of shikaris. Because of deforestation taking place in the hills and surrounding areas, many animals have been driven into the valleys inhabited by human beings. This exposes them to grave risks and fatal encounters – one such encounter has been described in this story. The story also reveals the difference between the children's thinking and the adult thinking has also been brought out. Children love nature. They love all the creatures. It comes naturally to them. No ulterior consideration enters their innocent minds. They can never ever think of harming the animals or exploiting them for their personal gain or profit. But the adults are solely driven by mercenary considerations. If a leopard's skin can fetch them a good price, they would not think twice before killing him. Compassion, trust, loves... these mean nothing to them. An idyllic world stands shattered because of this selfish cruelty.

Dust on the Mountain was first published in "Dust on the Mountain – Collected Stories" in 2009. The stories, 'The last Truck Ride' and 'Dust on the Mountain', have much similarity. Actually the subsection V (p 497) to VII (p502) of 'Dust on the Mountain' is almost the same as that of 'The last Truck Ride' with the notable exception of the main character's name being Nathu in the first and Bisnu in the latter.

'Dust on the Mountain', focuses on Bisnu, a boy, whose search for job enabled him to learn the importance of trees. In this short story Ruskin Bond emerges as an environmentalist explaining the importance of trees an important characteristic of his stories dealing with environmental concern. We have already discussed above deforestation affects. Bisnu's place is shown as such to receive no rainfall as the outcome of ruthless deforestation. Other than deforestation, trees have perished and are perishing due to our carelessness, too. The campers make a fire and forget to extinguish it which sometimes becomes the cause of huge fire. This way, thousands of Himalayan trees perished in the flames. Oaks, deodars,

maples, pine trees that had taken centuries to grow get now ruthlessly damaged and destroyed in the fire. There was no one to extinguish it. It takes days to die down by itself. Due to this carelessness on people's part, many valuable trees are lost. Though such incidents are common on the Himalayas yet people have not learnt the lesson and fail to do their duty without realizing that it is they who are going to be affected of such acts. At the end of the story both Bisnu and Pritam realized the importance of nature after Pritam the truck driver survived from serious accident on the mountain road due to a tree on road. They understood the significance of growing trees and safeguarding not only their own essence but also posterity.

#### **Conclusion:**

Bond's short stories, characterized by its simple language, graceful conception and profound meaning, are well received by readers. However, traditional readers and critics only notice that his stories mirror a certain relationship between human beings and nature, but they fail to specify what relationship it is, let alone the writer's ecological consciousness implied in the stories. Actually, in such an ecological-crisis-ridden time, it is very realistically significant to analyze Frost's ecological consciousness, as he is still widely read even today. 'Copperfield in the Jungle', 'No room for a Leopard', and 'Dust on the Mountain' are all about the great chain of being which binds man and nature, as in the chain of ecosystem, showing interdependence and all inclusiveness which emphasizes on the ecofriendly, cohabitative and symbiotic relationship between man and nature.

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