

Ecological Sensibility in Selected Short Stories of Ruskin Bond



Smt. Swati V. Mane

Assistant Professor

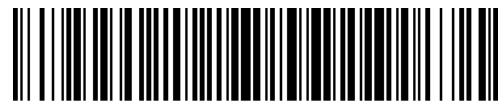
D.D. Shinde Sarkar College Kolhapur

Email – sm89777@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Ecology is defined as the study of the relations of organisms or groups of organisms to their environment. It is the science of the interrelations between living organisms and their environments. The term 'ecosystem' was coined by A. G. Tansley in 1935, who defined it as 'the system resulting from the integration of all the living and non-living factors of the environment. Ruskin Bond's poems and short stories reflect his love of nature and concern for wildlife, ecological balance in the hills. It is painful for him to see felling of trees and rapid deforestation going all around him. He depicts life of wild animals Deforestation results into depletion of wildlife, tigers, and panthers are on verge of extinction. Poaching, hunting for skins was increased and Bond is witness of such destruction. It

makes him restless and uneasy. Bond has pictured beautiful nature and its vivid scenes and landscapes of various seasons. He meditates on wildlife. He has sympathetic attitude for animals, birds, and all other creatures. Tiger is vanishing from the forest. It is out of country. It is painful to see that animals are being shot for skin and meat he is writer of extra ordinary sensibility. His poems are spontaneous and candid expression of his genuine feelings. His short stories reflect his concern for forest wealth, ecological sensibility. He appeals to preserve nature, love nature because it is valuable for future of humanity .He expresses regret for animals are being killed for skin and other commercial purposes. At same time he also appreciates Indian foresters through his poem, who takes care of forest and animals.



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RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction

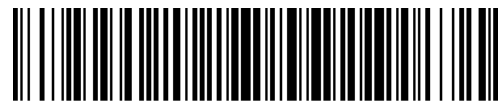
‘The universe is the creation of the supreme power meant for the benefit of all His creations. Individual species must therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not only one species encroach upon the other’s rights.’ *Ishopanishad*

Born in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh in 1934, Ruskin Bond was a child of first generation British migrant, grew up in Jamnagar, Dehra Dun and Shimla. He spent his childhood in the lap of Himalaya. He describes beauty and bounty of nature of Himachal Pradesh. He is known for his signature simplistic and witty writing style. He is author of several bestselling short stories, novellas, collections, essays and children’s books.

At the age of twenty-three, he won the prestigious John Llewellyn Rhys prize for his first novel. ‘The Room on the Roof’. He was also the recipient of the PadmaShri in 1999, Lifetime Achievement Award by Delhi Government in 2012 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014. He probes deep into natural elements. He is ardent worshipper of nature. He lives in Mussoorie and writes spontaneous poems and short stories, novels on beautiful surrounding, forest, scenes and landscapes. Beauty and bounty of Flora and fauna of Himalayan foothills is major theme of his stories. His father motivated him to set up relations with nature and this is how Bond developed the habit of tramping along the meadows with hands in his pocket. He tramped with a great creative impetus even today he says “I was really a walking person and was to remain so my life”

Ecology

Ecology is defined as the study of the relations of organisms or groups of organisms to their environment. It is the science of the interrelations between living organisms and their environments. Ecology is the science which treats the organisms in relation to their environment



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[Moore]The whole earth and it as parts, viz. Land surface, water bodies, atmosphere as well as living organisms are working in an integrated system, which not only directs but also determines the pattern of life and is also an indicator of environmental relationship with living organisms. The term ‘ecosystem’ was coined by A. G. Tansley in 1935, who defined it as ‘the system resulting from the integration of all the living and non-living factors of the environment. Eco-critics, who regard literature as a model for life focus on the work of individual authors, search for those authors whose work manifests ecological vision. Co-criticism focuses on literary (and artistic) expression of human experience primarily in a nature and consequently, in a culturally shaped world: the joys of abundance, sorrows of deprivation, hope for harmonious existence, and fears of loss and disaster.

Present research paper aims at analyzing selected short stories of Ruskin Bond from ecological perspectives. This research work is intended to showcase Ruskin Bond’s ecological sensibility and concern and love for nature.

For all literary artist nature has been source of inspiration since time immemorial. Bond’s work is characterized by ecological consciousness. He excels in word painting of picturesque beauty of glaciers, rivers, various flowers, all his poems are reflection of excellent craftsmanship.

Ecological Consciousness in Culture

Ruskin Bond’s poems and short stories reflect his love of nature and concern for wildlife, ecological balance in the hills. It is painful for him to see felling of trees and rapid deforestation going all around him. He depicts life of wild animals. Globalization has created an adverse effect on nature. Rapid deforestation has deprived animals of their natural habitat. Eco consciousness and deep concern for ecology can be seen in detail and in depth in the origin and growth of our culture and civilization and all religious texts, be it Bible, the Kuran and Hindu religious scriptures, Vedic literature, the Geeta, the Bhagvad Mahapurans, the Ramayan and Upnishdas. Rivers and trees have been the Gangotris of human civilization all over the world. Whole of our



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civilization, culture, religion and spiritual philosophy have grown and expanded under and from trees. Spiritual ecology emerged as an ideology which connects with sacred dimension of life.

Holiness of place, natural elements :

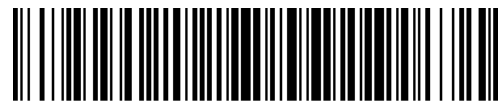
India has longest history of rivers, trees, and water worshipping. People worshipped five elements of nature, earth, water, fire and sky and air as Gods forests were an integral part of the integral civilization . They were shelters of of Rishis and Munis and those who took vanprasth and Sanyas. Combining awe and reverence for nature India enjoyed ecological wealth and affluence and learnt to cherish Nature's bliss devoid of which the modern day world began to suffer the slings and arrows of pollution.

Ruskin Bond, ardent lover of nature, writes short stories about birds, wild animals, rivers and encounter of human being with animals. He has also written stories of pet wild animals. His live for animals and trees is inherited by his father and grandfather. Grandfather developed kindness and love for animals in Ruskin Bond.

Rivers : Sacred and spiritual connection

In 'A Song of Many Rivers ' writer describes Doon valley and Suswa river silver in setting sun, meandering through fields and forests on its way to its confluence with the Ganga. It is a little river, flowing down from the ancient Siwaliks and running the length of the valley until , with its sister river the Song, it slips into Ganga, just above the holy city of Haridwar. Ruskin Bond narrates charming legend about Suswa river. Every river has its own legend and folktales. It has special connection with holy place and people around it worship them with spiritual devotion. Ruskin Bond describes his own subjective experience of nature. He was enthralled to see beauty of rivers and mountains. He finds celestial power in heart of nature.

Ruskin Bond appreciates and enjoys special moment when he beholds a river for the first time at its confluence with another great river. It was at Rudraprayag where waters of Mandakini joined with the waves of Alaknanda, the one having come from the glacial snow above



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kedarnath , the other from the Himalayan height beyond Badrinath. Both sacred rivers destined to become the holy Ganga further downstream.

Ganga emerges from the majestic Himalayas rustling over rocks and through ravines and winding through valley till it reaches plains. Bhagirathi and Alaknanda join to become Ganga at Devprayag. Their path held writer in thrall for decades. He has special fascination for water of river which keeps him spellbound. Swift yet deep water of Bhagirathi hold out the promise of peace and serenity. There is special fondness and spiritual connection with river.

Alaknanda valley in its higher reaches in a deep and narrow gorge where precipitate outcrops of rocks hang threateningly over the traveler .The Mandakini valley is broader, gentler, the terraced fields wilder the banks of the river, a green sword in many places. He describes large sketches of thick forests on left bank of Ganga.

In the story ‘ **Sita and the River**’ there is flooded river and Sita is alone in her home. Bond has shown aggressive form of nature. At the same time Sita could save herself due to a huge peepul tree. Nature is kind as well as dangerous. It takes care of those who takes care of it.

Animals : on the verge of extinction

In the short story ‘**Tiger Tiger Burning Bright**’ writer points out exploitation of forest and its implications

‘ Hunters, however have found the area an ideal hunting ground during the last seventy years and as a result the animals are not as numerous as they used to be. The trees, too, have been disappearing slowly and as the forest recedes, the animals lose their food and shelter and move on further into the foothills. Slowly they are being denied the right to live.’

‘There was a time when the forest on the banks of the Ganga had provided food and shelter for some thirty tigers, but men in search of trophies had shot them all and now there remained only one tiger in the jungle.’[Bond 1]



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Men coveted his beauty-his strips, gold of his body, his fine teeth, his whiskers and his noble head. They coveted his skin to hang on a wall with his head stuffed and mounted, and pieces of glass replacing his fierce eyes; they would have boasted of their triumph over the king of jungle. The tiger had been hunted before, so he did not usually show himself in the open during the day. Tigers –unlike other cats-are fond of water and on a hot day will wallow in it for hours. He was seldom in hurry when he ate or drank. A tiger is tiger; he has dignity to preserve even though he isn't aware of it. Two friends Ramu and Shyam while talking about animal expressed their concern about scarcity of water and existence of animals there was not enough water in pool as there was no rain since January. More knowledgeable boy Ramu's prediction is important.

‘ some will stay here and die. Others will go to the river. But there are too many people near the river now- and temples houses and factories- and the animals stay away. And the trees have been cut, so that between the jungle and the river there is no place to hide. Animals are afraid of the open- they are afraid of men with guns.’[Bond 1]

Deforestation results into depletion of wildlife, tigers, panthers are on verge of extinction. Poaching, hunting for skins was increased and Bond is witness of such destruction. It makes him restless and uneasy.

In the story The school among Pines' Sonu, Bina, Prakash witnessed landslide. They saw several trees shudder, tilt outwards and begin to fall. Earth and rocks bulged out from the mountains, then came crashing down into the ravine. It carried away. With tremendous roar rocks, trees, and bushes fell away and crashed down the hillside. Hills, green , blue mountains creates beautiful landscapes but there is constant fear of natural calamity like landslide, mist, rain, cold..

Ruskin bond is worshipper of nature. He gets love and relief in company of nature. It provides him new themes for short stories. It helps to relax and feel comfort. Trees, rivers animals , flowers, birds are his best friends. When he went England he remembered Himalayan



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hills and landscapes. That love of Himalaya brought him back to India. His love of nature is like Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, he has wandered in forests, foothills, valley, mountains, banks of rivers. He is minute and keen observer.

He studies mythology of hills and rivers. Confluence of rivers keeps him spellbound and flabbergasted. He has personified trees as human being. It is his love of trees which finds that trees whisper in night. They stretch their limbs as they are standing whole day. There is simplicity in theme and diction of Ruskin Bond. It reminds Wordsworth's style of composition. Free verse is his forte. Therefore readers enjoy appreciate all his poems. There is no obscurity, vagueness and glossy words.

Birds : voices in Chorus

Ruskin Bond has nicely interpreted various voices of the bird and its connotative meaning what they say, what they give message, Ruskin Bond gives them human voice and human qualities.

During the Rain banyan tree becomes noisy place. Forest became green stage where birds musicians add various sounds. Brain fever bird made music by night. Crickets and cicadas orchestrated during the day. As musicians the cicadas were in a class by themselves. All through the hot weather there chorus rang through the garden, while a shower of rain, far from damping their spirits only roused them to a greater vocal effort. Forest reverberates with different types of cheering sounds.

Birds and their various shrill sounds create orchestra in forest like musical festival. Their melodious twitter creates soothing and happy feelings. During his stay at his friend's house everyday he was awakened by throaty chuckles of the red billed blue magpies, as they glided between oak and medlar. The gurgling sounds of streams gently created temptation to touch it and feel its coolness.



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In the poem 'Listen '

Listen to the night wind in the trees
Listen to summer grass singing
Listen to the time that's tripping by
And the dawn dew falling
Listen to the moon as it climbs the sky...[Bond 3]

Bond appeals to lend ears to listen to whispering woods and feel the silence of great mountains. He expresses gratitude to Lord for silence.

Thank you lord for silence
The silence of great mountains
And deserts and forest

Conclusion

Bond has pictured beautiful nature and its vivid scenes and landscapes of various seasons. He meditates on wildlife. He has sympathetic attitude for animals, birds, and all other creatures. Tiger is vanishing from the forest. It is out of country. It is painful to see that animals are being shot for skin and meat he is writer of extra ordinary sensibility. His stories are philosophical and didactic. They give us a valuable message. Through his short stories, one can appreciate beauty and bounty of Himalayan foothills, especially Shimla, Dehra Dun, Mussoorie and its ecological richness. Bond's thoughts given through his short stories are enlightening. His poems are spontaneous and candid expression of his genuine feelings. His short stories reflect his concern for forest wealth, ecological sensibility. He appeals to preserve nature, love nature because it is valuable for future of humanity .He expresses regret for animals are being killed for skin and other commercial purposes. At same time he also appreciates Indian foresters through his poem, who takes care of forest and animals.



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