

Ecological Imbalance and the Value of Nature in Bond's the Cherry Tree

Mrs. G. Giriya, (1)

Ph.D Research scholar in English (part time)

KandasamiKandar's college, P.Velur

Namakkal

Dr. M. Krishnaraj (2)

Associate professor in English

KandasamiKandar's college,P.Velur

Namakkal

Abstract

Ruskin bond records his own experiences of life and observation of things and people which leave an abiding effect on his mind, hence he creates stories from his surroundings. There is a variety of themes he employs in his short stories. They mainly pertain to love, nature and children. Many of his stories emerge from his imagination and bear upon his emotional attachment to Indian society. It was after coming after coming to Mussourie that nature became the object of his attention and his writings reflects the deep kinship and serenity that experiences in the midst of the mountains. His stories breathe his great love and sincere concern for nature which takes care of us like our mothers. Through his short stories for children, he presents a very significant message to everyone- the importance of nature in our life. Hence, we need to prove sincere, selfless, honest and loyal towards it by inculcating in us a true sense of environmental ethics and ecology.

Key Words: Nature , Indian culture and values, Himalayas, environmental ethics,ecology

Ruskin Bond constructs nature by using interweaving legends, experience, myths and history to reveal human interaction with the non-human world. It also makes an attempt to find out his conscious engagement with the natural world that draws people's attention to impending calamity of the global environment. Ecocritical approaches make inquiries into the connections between nature and human culture and it also views at what instant the authors represent its effects. The whole of the ecosphere where energy, matter and ideas come to an interaction is the basis of ecocriticism in the social world.

Ecological imbalance impacts human health in a number of ways, both positively and negatively. It is the concern of every country to replenish the diminishing factors of 'ecology'.It is defined as the way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other and their environment, which threatens human beings the most. At the dawn of the new millennium, the whole globe is facing serious ecological crisis. The most urgent issues like global warming, chronic resource shortage, rain forest destruction, and species extinction indicate the 'end of nature'.

According to Peter Barry, an eco-critic might study a text from different perspectives, but his major concern is to "to re-read major literary works from an eco- centric prospective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world" (Beginning Theory 264).Ecocritics have an important

role to play in the protection of the environment. Ruskin Bond as an agitated and concerned writer highlights the issues of environment. His short stories show his insatiable love for nature, trees, the mountains and the flora and fauna of the Himalayas. Closeness with the Himalayas has blessed him with divine insight.

Love of nature and concern for ecological imbalance in the hills make Ruskin Bond sad as he sees the felling of trees and the rapid deforestation going on all around him. Deforestation is closely followed by rapid urbanization causing damage to the environment and creating ecological imbalance to the region. Bond's aim is to stress the significance of trees to maintain ecological balance and eradicate the lack of understanding towards nature. To quote John Ruskin:

Though the absence of the love of nature is not an assured condemnation, its presence is an invariable sign of goodness of heart and justness of moral perception, though by no means of moral practice; that in proportion to the degree in which it is felt, will probably be the degree in which all nobleness and beauty of character will be felt; that when it is originally absent from any mind, that mind is in many other respects hard, worldly, and degraded;... (Landscape Mimesis and Mortality 29)

Ruskin Bond is the master raconteur of the present age because he has developed his individual style of narration. His narration is admired for its simplicity of tone and depth of meaning. He is a conscientious writer. He strongly feels that obscurity or waywardness in narration may affect the charm of a story. A story is basically associated with the softness of heart. Ruskin Bond has purposely chosen the short story as the fittest medium to narrate his tales because they echo the heartbeats of the people.

Ruskin Bond does not intentionally try to arouse realization towards the harm they have done to ecology or he does not consciously assume the role of a preacher who has the moral duty of preaching to mankind the value of natural heritage. The vivid and minute descriptions of nature in his writings are spontaneous and at the same time portray the concern in his mind which he feels about nature and ecology also comes out naturally.

Ruskin Bond's works are projected against the backdrop of the natural scenic hills of Dehradun and Mussoorie and they reflect his invincible faith in the healing power of nature. He frets and fumes at the destructive actions of man towards nature. Through his short stories he has tried to reveal an important message to everyone, that is, the significance of nature in human life. He always emphasizes the amicable relationship between man and nature as both are interdependent and interrelated. His works will forever preserve the tranquility, beauty and serenity of the Garhwal Himalayas.

His short stories are mostly about things which have crossed his path and with which he has fallen in love: man, bird, beast, tree etc. The integral aspect of Bond's stories is their atmosphere. The backdrop of his stories is the hilly topography he knows and loves so well, he writes constantly about the natural scenes such as the flowers, the sunshine, the clouds, the streams and the benign and furious aspects of the Indian monsoon. He is much delighted by the place he knows that even mud and mire and slush appear beautiful to him. Bond also sees human lives intertwined with the passing moods of nature.

Bond's fiction is the celebration of nature in all its hues. Being in perfect harmony with nature, he is replete with goodly emotions and feelings. He believes that nature is a pure bubbling life force, which quickens every object and creature to act, to respond, to grow and to die. Anything that vibrates with life is beautiful.

Colour symbol dominates in the story *The Cherry Tree*. Green colour refers to happiness, rejoice and pleasantness. Red colour refers to danger, threat and indirectly he says that people run the risk of their life by destroying the natural resources for constructing houses, establishing corporate companies, and most of the agricultural lands have turned into deserted lands as in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*.

The writer beautifully describes the growing of a tree stage by stage with magical power of words. Likewise, he enunciates the growth of a man and his maturity to change a modern world by destroying dense forests and its natural wealth. Through words in his fiction, Ruskin Bond unfolds the message echoed through voice of nature to the human world that they should be preservers of nature and not its destroyers.

Bond exclaims the beauty of the Himalayas and its weather conditions in this work. In mid-August, the monsoon rains are heavy and the plants sprout everywhere even in cracks in the walls of houses. There is no need to look after the seeds and seedlings. When it is winter, a cold wind blows down from the snows of the mountain. In spring season, the V-shaped formation of ducks flies towards Siberia.

It is a scientific truth that when people take care of the plants, it perceives the vibration of the humans. If they do not care of it, even it may die soon. It is no easy task to grow a tree. One day, Rakesh spots a goat enter the garden and chew the leaves of the cherry tree when it is about two feet high. He becomes angry and chases the goat all the way down the hill. His grandfather consoles him that the stem of cherry tree is strong and sturdy, Day by day it will become better and better.

Ruskin Bond has a passionate love towards nature; express his deep association with nature from his childhood through this story. Deforestation should be strictly banned and the government should create awareness in the public. The fruit of the cherry tree is red in colour and it warns the human world for their betterment.

Man is born free and his life is to love, rejoice and enjoy peace in this universe but instead, he is yearning for money and destroys nature. Many of the people do not know the purpose of existing in earth and their life will become bitter like the first fruit of the cherry tree. While growing, man is innocent like the green leaves of the tree but after getting lots of experience in his life he wants to change his mindset and devotes his life towards getting and spending money. He does not know the importance of nature for the past two decades, and wants to live a sophisticated modern life.

Ruskin Bond is known as the 'resident Wordsworth' of India because he portrays the various moods and shades of nature in his writings. He generates the significance of nature through his works and lives accordingly. The issues of ecology are deeply chewed over in the midst of the people so that they know the impact of nature. Our late President

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam dreams that every individual should plant a sapling. If the advice is followed, one day the cherry tree will produce green fruits full of sweetness and it won't turn red.

People should be gentler with birds and animals and they should not kill them for sports or profit. Humans cut down trees from the forests, birds and animals find it difficult to survive in this world. Ruskin Bond talks of the trees especially deodar and he call them his companions. Bond reveals that not only he is aware of the presence of nature but nature too regards him as a friend. As dwellers of concrete jungles, video games, television, cell phones and movie entertainments have replaced many of the simple joys of life. Ruskin Bond depicts wherever he looks at nature, she is abundant and glorious.

Most of the writers are satisfied with a mere description of nature, with a mere external view of its beauty. While Ruskin Bond does not regard nature as a mere background but at the same time it is a powerful tool to influence the mindset of thereaders. He allows the birds and the flowers, the tree and the river to speak and convey their own messages. He not only sees things clearly and accurately but also penetrates into the hearts of things and always finds some meaning in them. When his thoughts become mature, he believes that the nature is the reflection of the living Supreme Power.

Nature is the mother and teacher of mankind. It is a bounteous treasure of emotions and feelings. The stories of Ruskin Bond are touching and pleasing because he writes out of love, compassion and sympathy for the flora and fauna. They deal mostly with the ecological principles and its value to the human beings to enrich their life in our country. Nature and its dependent animals are Gifts of God and people should preserve it. Reading his stories is an invitation to pleasure and peace because one can know the various perspectives of nature. Through his short stories, he asks the human beings not only to find out how human and non-human interdependence acts, but also to ascertain that protecting ecology is essential from an ethical perspective for better and prospective future. Bond's noteworthy gesture to play the role of an eco-critic is clearly visible overambitious advancement and pinpoints the needed rectification, puts us vis-à-vis a mundane reality to rethink, and glorifies Nature to make us realize that Her benediction takes part as an active participant in human-nature interplay.

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