

# Eco- Concern and Consciousness in The Selected Short Stories of Ruskin Bond: An Overview

PRABHAT KONAI

*State Aided College Teacher, Department of English, Nagar College, West Bengal, India*

*Abstract- The relationship between human beings and nature is harmoniously age-old and deep rooted. The human beings are all born to Mother Nature but now they themselves become the unforgivable enemy to nature. In present scenario, rapid growth of industry and modern technology not only makes man selfish and opportunistic, but also poisons human heart and soul. Ultimately people cultivate their inner 'void' with poisonous thinking. The people, the masked become the object of turbulent threat to nature, the sustainer. The modern lifestyle makes man unconscious and fickle minded to nature. The sense of modernity turns human beings against nature. At present, the human beings are lacking the embrace of nature and facing the ecological crisis in environment. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses how nature is portrayed in literature. It establishes the integral connection of Ecology and Literature. This paper focuses on how as a true naturalist and thinker of nature, Ruskin Bond delineates his ecological concern and consciousness in his short stories.*

*Index Terms- Ecology, Nature, Ecocriticism, Environment, Kautilya*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The humans are the product of Nature. Nature, through smooth order provides fundamental necessities. The seers of ancient India emphasised the need of environmental conservation. The study of "ecology" and "Ecocriticism" is an effective base in respect of overall environmental phenomena. In the philosophy of Ernst Haeckel, ecology is the study of correlations of organisms with their environment. Ecology is a body of knowledge that discusses the economy of nature. It talks about the relationship between inorganic and organic environment. Ecocriticism is an essential platform for the study of ecology in literature. It shows how the ecological issues are portrayed in literary writings. The term "ecocriticism" was coined in the late 1970s. It combines criticism taking a short form of "ecology".

It is a scientific study of the interrelations among flora and fauna and other physical habitats. It explores the connections between the biological and physical environment with literature. It also exposes a grave concern about the environmental damage by human actions. It is an interdisciplinary study that collaborates natural scientists, literary critics, anthropologists, historians and so others in a same row. In Vedic period, Kautilya produced his cult writing "Arthashastra". In this book he showed his naturalistic attitude and philosophised the function of protecting natural environment and ecological balance. According to Kautilya, if a man steals flower and fruits from flower garden, he is to pay 54 panas considered as fine. For lopping young branch of a tree is considered 12 panas fine. The Vedic seers instilled the spirit of duty and reverence for the presence of purity and harmony in nature. At past, the mountains, the flora and fauna, hills, rivers were worshipped as symbols of reverence. The cutting of trees, the pollution of air, water and land were considered as heinous sins and that sins were told the sins of human beings directly to the God.

## II. ECOLOGY IN INDIAN LITERARY SCENE

Indian writers have impregnated the theme of ecology in their writings. Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Rao, R.K Narayan, Bhavani Bhattacharya, Amitav Ghosh, and so other popular writers have felt in their heart and soul about the inevitable need of environmental stability and ecological balance in nature. Ruskin Bond also shows profound importance of ecology and environment in his short story writings.

III. ECO- CONCERN AND CONSCIOUSNESS  
IN THE SELECTED SHORT STORIES OF  
RUSKIN BOND:

Ruskin Bond not only thinks about the nature and environment but also discusses about ecological concern and consciousness from the philosophic point of view. William Wordsworth's pantheistic philosophy is relevant in Bond's short stories. He is gravely concerned about the inhuman activities to nature and thus he feels dejected about the ongoing destruction of natural environment. He is concerned about the future of environmental world. Recalling Rabindranath Tagore, Ruskin Bond deep delves into the world of human psyche and its environment. He, like Tagore also puts importance to cultivate and protect the 'culture of human soul' before nurturing the physical environment. Living in Mussoorie at the foothill of Himalaya, he has the integral experience of the natural objects (flora and fauna) and life in nature. He is the eye witness of 'harmony' in nature. His short stories express the responsibility of human being for the conservation of environment. The key issues in his short stories are the interdependent relationship between nature and humankind, the effects of the environmental loss and the human responsibility to the environment. In this paper, the four short stories of Ruskin Bond are selected and they are analysed from the eco-critical perspective.

IV. DUST ON THE MOUNTAIN:

In this story writing, the writer is so pathetic about the mountain and its natural phenomena that mountain transforms from green to dusty. Ruskin Bond delicately highlights the grim issues of deforestation on the mountains in the emergence of modernisation. The 'dust' on the mountain is the image of negativity and gloom of the greedy people. The story involves the pivotal character Bisnu who lives with his younger sister and mother in a very small village of Tehri Garhwal. To save his family from starvation, Bisnu travels Mussoorie disobeying the family's wish. Mussoorie is a place of tourists specially in summer. However, Bisnu gets a job of a tea seller in a cinema hall during the interval. Bisnu accompanies there two boys Chitru and Bali. Later, Bisnu and Bali become close friends as they take rest in a corridor and feel the chill night breeze from the

mountain. Unfortunately, the cinema hall closes for winter and Bisnu loses his job. He is forced to work in a mine but due to under age he is rejected. Pritam, a truck driver joins Bisnu as a cleaner boy on his truck. Bisnu gets enough salary but his heart gets rendered on the rapid destruction of forest of mountain. According to Ruskin Bond, Bisnu's heart and soul is full of green. Bisnu has not the capability to stop this heinous activity to nature other than mourning in heart. Like the dusty atmosphere on plain areas, he witnesses this on green mountain. This is so claustrophobic and unbearable to Bisnu. However, Pritam and Bisnu are brutally wounded in an accident and Bisnu comes back to his native village. Ironically, the green village calls Bisnu to his real abode.

V. DEATH OF THE TRESS:

In this story, Ruskin Bond explores the theme of 'loss' of trees. Here, he is not only concerned about the deforestation but also feels dejected that the life of birds is at stake. Deforestation is the primary issue for the developing countries like India. It is shrinking the areas of tropical forests causing loss of biodiversity and enhancing the greenhouse effect. In the name of development and civilisation people rampantly exploit the trees. Ruskin Bond, from the perspective of green philosophy, perceives that it is not only the 'death of the trees' but 'death of the life'. The story is about the brutal beheading of mountain trees and exposes the ecological balance that reinforces environmental pollution and dreadful consequences. Bond focuses how the loss of nature inevitably affects the animal world, that is nonchalantly overlooked by Public Works Department (PWD). It is an organisation that shatters the peaceful and harmonious lives of animals and birds. The mountain rocks are dynamited and the animals and birds hide in different parts. The brutal activities of PWD frightens Bond and forces to think about the future of environment of mountain. According to him, the green mountain turns into dusty. Metaphorically, the green heart of humankind transforms into gloomy and dusty. As a typical nature lover, Ruskin Bond is also optimistic that the other mountain family will be safe and will stand as glory of nature.

#### VI. THE CHERRY TREE:

The story is about the plantation, germination and growing of a cherry tree by a six aged boy Rakesh. One day, Rakesh coming back from Mussoorie bazaar eats cherries. As a pure nature lover, his grandfather advises him to plant the cherry seed and Rakesh follows accordingly. As the time goes, Rakesh completely forgets about the cherry seed. One day, suddenly he becomes surprised seeing the small twig of cherry sprouted on a spring morning. Then, by the direction of grandfather, Rakesh takes care of the little cherry tree. Later, the tree becomes laden with flowers and fruits. The birds, bees and other insects visit the cherry tree. Joy of Rakesh knows no bounds and this is truly universal joy. The cherry tree becomes the resting abode for the birds, bees and animals. Here, his grandfather plays the role of a guide of environmental conservation and Rakesh plays the role of a medium. In this way, Ruskin Bond makes us eco-conscious and spreads the message of harmony that is inevitably needed in nature.

#### VII. AN ISLAND OF TREES:

In this story, Koki and her grandmother are the representative figures who think that only through the process of excessive plantation the earth can survive. According to her grandmother, life is felt in each and every plant and so the relationship between them is reciprocal. The Grandmother of Koki is a tree lover. So, wherever she finds bare she plants tree. In the philosophy of grandmother, the plantation of trees will not only be necessary for earth but also for the birds and animals who will take shelter and collect food. Ruskin Bond visits the psyche of the father of Koki's grandmother that he would say if the destruction of the natural environment goes continuously, the earth will change its normal shape and an unendurable and gloomy atmosphere will pervade throughout the world. As a result, the earth will be transformed into a great desert. The story vivifies the minds and eyes about the plantation of trees in the desert by her Koki's great grandfather. Koki's grandmother becomes surprised and satisfied in the heart of hearts while walking along river bed that the emotional bonding between humankind and nature is beautifully portrayed in the story. Ruskin Bond feels ecstatic that whenever he observes dry

bed, his eye was enamoured immediately by the amazing red plumes of the coral blossom. In contrast with the dry river bed, the island is felt like a tiny green heaven. He also feels pleasant about sweet scenario of parrots and other birds.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION:

In the concluding section, it is no-doubt that Ruskin Bond is a true and passionate lover and thinker of nature. Throughout the short stories, Bond exposes the theme of eco-concern in one hand, and spreads the consciousness of environment among the people on the other. He also makes humans understand that nature and mankind are interdependent. For sustaining the environmental stability, people should nurture the nature and also the nature of human psyche.

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