

AN INSIGHT INTO NATURE: EXPLORING HIMALAYAS IN THE WORKS OF RUSKIN BOND.

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Abstract

In the World of technology, nature has become a very important subject for the writers of the recent times. Nature has become the source of influence for human beings in many aspects. It provides abundant of freedom, innumerable devotion, crush, passion and enthralling beauty. This study shows how literature explores nature as the most powerful force in the life of human being. Ever since the expansion of the philosophical works began, it has become necessary for the writers to embrace the engrossing nature in their works. Ruskin Bond is one of the greatest Indian authors of the English Language has an inseparable relationship with nature. The connectivity between human and the world around him is so unavoidable that, it becomes a part of his story. As he is grown up in the hills, in the lap of nature, is a true nature lover and talks about it as the most dominating force that captivates his mind. He takes his ability to put his marvellous admiration in his stories, in which he reiterates a powerful impression upon mountain, landscapes, plants, animals and human beings. Indeed! Ruskin Bond takes his readers in to his imagination. His works venerate a mesmerizing description on the beauty of mountains with keen observation and intractable optimism made him to create excessive inspiration and delight, as well as much needed pull back from society. He is a great painter of words, uses simple language to pen down his observation and experience with nature.

Keywords: Nature, Devotion, Mountain, Delight, Imagination

Introduction

Nature is one of the most powerful and mysterious forces of the universe that greatly influences human beings as a set back from their routine life. Nature is so wonderful that it clasps all living, non-living creatures in this cosmos. It rules over the universe like a monarch and it is the known factor that human beings can't escape from admiring the beauty of nature at any point. In literature nature plays a predominant role in setting the mood of the text. The creative artist uses nature to bring out the effects on both comic and tragic aspects of human life. Nature at times acts itself as one of the most prime character in the text which exercises its powerful impression upon other human characters. It helps to expose their inner and abstract feelings. As the result, it is natural that every human being acquires knowledge through their simple observation on nature. We further analyse how nature and landscape very well dwell and influence the character and thinking of a person that which helps to shape his inward personality and one such person is Ruskin Bond.

In the due course we all know that, Ruskin Bond is an ardent nature lover and highly influenced by its beauty; he finds nature as the pure and original source of happiness. He feels as if he forgets all his unavoidable, depressing and sorrowful conditions fades away in the delightful company of nature. It enhances him to develop a sense of calmness, fills his heart with heavenly pleasure, which he can't get anywhere else in the world. Ruskin Bond is grown up in the hills, in the lap of nature was born in Kasauli, and grew up in Mussourie, Shimla, Dehradun and Jamnagar, India. He is known as a true lover of nature. Indeed! Nature enhances his ability to put his bewilderment into his writing. He is born as a nature's favourite child. He has rejoiced the beauty of nature very closely as few other contemporary writers. He is a fanatical optimist and believer in universal culture. When he was eight, his parents separated, after that his father's attention helped him to grow but it didn't last for a longer time, soon after his father's demise, he was raised by his grandmother at Dehradun.

This article focuses on Bond's relationship with nature, especially on mountain. He has contributed a lot on describing each landscape, particularly that of Mountains, its comprehensive beauty through his writings. Ruskin Bond in his childhood spent most of his time in solitude at mountain top that made him to develop intimate relationship inwardly and created a spark, to treat mountain as his fellow companion in his life. He develops strong perception towards mountain, that he describes it in various ways; as a loftier, constancy,

eternal firmness and stillness, a spiritual aspiration and the renunciation of worldly desires. He expresses mountain's shape as expansion of multiplicity of various plant and animal species. The mountain in his stories stood as a perfect backdrop, it looks as if he has plenty more insights left to tell in his stories, he also produces a feel that bounds to show how both of them are beautifully bonded in his stories.

Ruskin Bond also skilfully handles the issues on man's harmony with environment including animals and plants. In his stories, he brings human beings into close relationship with animals and plants and shows their interrelation. He respects all human beings in his stories despite their culture, religions and different sects. Ruskin Bond's stories show a great affinity with every individual, animals, trees and his love for the town Dehradun is cleverly envisaged. His writing unveils how deeply he is attached to the places and the mountains which surround him. Bond's stories are very simple, that talks about daily happenings on the way, his observation in a most light hearted and humorous way. Furthermore his stories tell how the narrator meet certain characters, what they did and speak about and how they parted away becomes the main theme in the story. He always envisages friendly relationship between man and nature and has brought before us our need for each other and their interconnection. Often in his stories 'Mountains' becomes his governing spirit and its reference to it in most of his stories are like a writer, who gives great description to introduce a pious mother, a brave father and a great warrior, in a similar way, his description on mountain brings out a unique way of depiction on it. The insight of his itemizing the mountain may be knowingly or unknowingly influencing his sub-conscious mind that's why he has developed cherished memories on it. To him mountains become a living paradise, he saw, felt and experienced his everyday people, the highland and the landscape which finely represents an extraordinary cross-section of society. In olden days, places like Mussoorie and Dehradun were rampart of the British Raj and though a lot has changed, these hilly heavens, with their unusual colonial houses and elite schools, reminisce the former era of India.

In the present scenario, due to marvellous growth in the field of science and technology, people fail to admire nature. Of course, many hill stations now run on tourist industries, as stressed-out urbanites flock to return to a less complicated time. Famously adverse to technology, Bond knew that even in his day, he was writing of a world that was rapidly slipping away. In *The Night Train At Deoli*, he makes a case for a value of places where "nothing ever happens". He knew that sleepy hill stations, gloomy atmosphere, where life happened in a way that it never unfolds in office blocks and five-star hotels. In this story, the train stops at Dehradun, for few moments in sleepy Deoli, where a passenger falls in love with a girl selling baskets on the platform. But after talking to her, the narrator, whose name we never learn, doesn't find the basket seller on the platform again. He feels confusion, grief, and a disproportionate sense of loss. He also knows that he will not stop at Deoli to look for her. Instead, he clings to an impossible ideal, a hope that he might see her, unchanged, as the train passes through the same station sometime in the future. This is exactly how our love with the hills unfolds. We take to the beauty of the mountains and each time we say goodbye, we live a part of ourselves behind. The girl in Bond's story is incidental; she is the symbol of everything we love about the ranges – simplicity, serenity, and the solace that they offer. And you and I, we are like a passenger who wants to hold on to the moment, knowing that it will slip away.

In his stories, he glorifies the mountain and the mountainous peaks with an innate passion. The beauty of his description of the mountains, the way Bond makes one to feel like they have a dozen of tranquilizer. Ruskin Bond's, *Dust on The Mountain*, In this story a boy named 'Bisnu' who goes away from home in search of job and learns about the importance of trees. That year there had been no snow fall. The winter was dry and Bisnu's mother could not remember when the last time it had been like that. As already discussed deforestation affects precipitation and if it continues the Himalayan peaks would be without their white mantle. This affects the monsoons rain also and Bisnu's place is shown to receive no rainfall. This is again one of the effects of rapid deforestation. The continuous change in the climate all over the earth is the result of reduced forest areas. The hillside was brown all summer and the fields were bare. Apart from deforestation trees have perished and are perishing because of our carelessness too. The campers make fires and forget to extinguish it which sometimes spreads and grows into a huge fire, "Thousands of Himalayan trees were perishing in the flames. Oaks, deodars, maples, pines trees that had taken hundreds of years to grow. And now a fire started carelessly by some campers had been carried up

the mountain with the help of the dry grass and strong breeze. There was no one to put it out. It will take days to die down by itself.”

Due to this carelessness on people’s part many valuable trees are lost. Such incidents often take place on the Himalayas, yet people have not learnt the lesson and they fail to do their duty without realizing that it is they who are going to be affected of such acts. Due to no rain there had been meagre production of food and fruit. The whole nature gets upset with the absence of trees,

“There were to be no downpours that year. Clouds gathered on the horizon but they were white and puffy and soon disappeared. True monsoon clouds would have been dark and heavy with moisture. There were other signs– or lack of them– that warned of a long dry summer. The birds were silent or simply absent.....Puja’s apricot tree usually gave them a basket full of fruit every summer. This year it produced barely a handful of apricots lacking juice and flavor. The tree looked ready to die, its leaves curled up in despair.”

In such cases when the produce is scanty, naturally the price of food increases and it becomes difficult for the producers to manage. Therefore, Bisnu had to go to town to earn. This situation of Bisnu is common with majority of the Indian farmers. Those who can opt out are leaving villages and moving towards town and those who failed to opt are committing suicide. Every year there is news of farmer’s suicide due to drought. The poor farmers are forced to perform all kinds of works to fulfill their essential needs. Just for profit the contractors are playing with the lives of all. On Bisnu’s surprise at the absence of trees on the hills an old man replies,

“There were trees here once, he said. But the contractors took the deodars for furniture and houses. And the pines were tapped to death for resins. And the oaks were stripped of their leaves to feed the cattle– you can still see few trees skeleton if you look hard and the bushes that remained were finished off by goats.

After the blast the whole area is filled of dust. Bisnu notices that their faces, trees, shrubs and leaves everything was filled with dust, but “it was a different kind of dust now– whiter, stinging the eyes, irritating the nostrils” Bisnu, was quite shocked to see the natural destruction. To him it seemed like murder. He was not much educated but knew that something terrible was being done to nature.

“They learnt the lesson through the hard way. One day When Pritam, the truck driver, met with an accident on the mountain road, it was a tree which had saved him from death. After the incident both Pritam and Bisnu realized, “it’s better to grow things on the land than to blast things out of it.” They both returned back home to work on their land for they understood the importance of growing. Through the innocent eyes of Bisnu Bond tells us a various serious issue which is destroying the planet earth.

In *Death of the Trees*, for Ruskin Bond, nature was like friend, a living being, equally important as humans. He refers to cutting down of trees as their death in this story. This shows that he mourns their death as loss of any human life is mourned. In fact, cutting down of trees is like killing them and killing earth and very sadly, but truly is like killing human beings. The narrator laments,

“The trouble is, hardly anyone (with the exception of the Contractor who buys the felled trees) really believes that trees and shrubs are necessary. They get in the way so much, don’t they?...And a young man remarked to me ‘You should come to Pauri. The view is terrific; there are no trees in the view.’”

Bond has laid bare about the other aspect of development in this story. There are many intricate interior areas in the Himalayan region which are not easily accessible. However, there are people staying in those challenging terrains. They remain disconnected from the rest of the world, since for the most part walking is the only means of transport as there are no proper roads. In the name of development roads are built so that people can stay connected with the rest of world and can communicate for the purpose of education, business and to fulfil other necessities. This, however, is provided at a very dear cost,

“The peace and quiet of the Maplewood hillside disappeared forever one winter. The powers that be decided to build another road into the mountains, and the PWD saw fit to take it....Already they have felled most of the trees....”

The narrator laments the loss and makes it personal. His personal cry reflects the sorrow of the future world. In fact this is what is happening today. Birds and animals are getting extinct and people have still not realized its side effects on their life.

“That is to say no birds near the house. No longer will it be possible for me to open the window and watch the scarlet minivets...The explosions that continually shatters the silence of the mountains–as thousand-years- old rocks are dynamited–have frightened away all but the most intrepid of birds and animals. Even

the bold langurs have not shown their faces for over a fortnight”...humanitarian feelings of the people. He uses cruel words like ‘slaughtered’ for felling of trees to emphasize the heinous crime of men. The death of the narrator’s brother is compared to cutting down of trees to emphasize the great loss, “It was just coming into its own this year; now cut down in its prime like my young brother on the road to Delhi last month: both victims of the roads; the tree killed by the PWD, my brother by a truck”. Though in the whole story Bond shows killing of trees yet at the end presents humans as subordinate to nature, reflecting that men will never outlive nature, “Never mind. Men come and go; the mountains remain”. Through this essay it is natural that every human being acquires a lot of live things going in and around, through his simple observation on nature and further the deeper analysis of it will certainly influence the character very well and also helps to shape the inward connectivity with it.

Conclusion

Ruskin Bond, a live icon who has made all of us to fall in love with mountains and made us realize that true happiness is in the smallest of things. The man with whom, we can associate love and recreate many memories with mountains. The picture of Ruskin Bond and his relationship with mountains emerges to show how much he is inclined towards it, treats them as his home, his guardian and kind enough to provide him a comforting sense of parental security. This is the place where he learnt so many things, became much more comfortable, can think, observe his existence and identity. Bond makes us to realise that mountains being the soul of India; must treat them like heaven on the earth due to its uttermost charm and quintessence. He sketches splendid pictures of extensive landscape of the mountains through his narrations. For him, mountains not only highlight the picturesque value, as an artist and a naturalist envisage the readers to sense a great source of spiritual enlightenment. He always writes for readers who are interested in the beauty of nature and dignity of life rather than speaking about stormy and provoking incidences and never chooses to write on the confrontational issues of society. Thus his stories generally deal with his observation of the Panorama of mountain, environmental conservation especially love for trees, animals, birds, and respect and a sense of justice for humans. His great strength lies in the realistic portrayal and depiction of characters as it is. It is the smell of the Himalayan soil that has crept into his blood has made him as an ardent lover of it ever and this may be one such reason behind all his works whether poems or novels or essays all of them revolve around the mountains and nature. His mesmerizing description about flora and fauna of the Himalayas cannot be missed in his short stories, essays and novels. He creates awareness regarding issues like ecology and the environment and by doing so he fulfils his responsibility as a nature writer.

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