

# Nature and Super Natural Elements in Ruskin Bond's Works

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**Abstract –** In today's fast paced era of technological innovation and scientific intentions and discovery, dwelling upon the paranormal activities that results into horror sensation and scary feelings appears a bit unusual kind of task as to whether people in general are readily available to accommodate their open minds full of latest updates of world's smartest gadgets with those supernatural, mysterious and eerie kind of elements. It all seems credible when we come across Ruskin Bond's sharing his own experience of seeing the apparition of his late father Aubrey Bond. Bond's selected stories replete with elements of terror have undoubtedly been successful in drawing his peruses from that beautiful ambience of oak and pine and cedar to the mysterious woods witnessing the frightening environment full of creepy horrifying surroundings. Bond has given a realistic touch to the description of the scenario making the readers awestruck and his quality of making unbelievable a believable one made him the Connoisseur of the mysterious and macabre. Ruskin Bond has won the hearts of millions of readers with his countless charming short stories and introspective novels. From biographical tales about acting as a grandfather to children, to tales of unrequited love, the cross-cultural dimensions of Indian society, and the power and beauty of nature, Bond's more than forty novels and short story collections have made him an internationally acclaimed author. In *Ruskin Bond's World*, Indian scholar Gulnaz Fatma, Ph.D. sheds light on one of her country's greatest and most beloved storytellers, tracing the influences in his stories from a childhood in colonial India through his time spent in Britain and his life today among India's hills and mountains. She explores the biographical as well as the imaginary elements of his fiction and explores in detail the themes of nature, children, love, and animals in his novels and short stories.

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## INTRODUCTION

**Ruskin Bond** (born 19 May 1934) is an Indian author of British descent. He lives with his adopted family in Landour, Mussoorie, India. The Indian Council for Child Education has recognised his role in the growth of children's literature in India. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*, his novel in English. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014.

The literature of Ruskin Bond is a harmonious combination of the tales of innocence and the ceremonies of experience. It is an attempt to rouse the world to the delight of the 'Unseen Player', to set the reader in tune with the dance of life itself. The noblest aim of art and literature has been to realize and communicate the essential joy and immortality of the truth. Bond like a true artist and an ascetic, sees the vision, of the paradise in the sunlight and the green of the earth, in the beauty of the human face and the wealth of human life, even in objects that are seemingly insignificant. Like Bruno, one of the great Italian Romantics, and also as given in Bhagwada Gita Bond seems to believe that 'all reality is one in

substance, one in cause, one in origin, and God and this reality are one.<sup>^</sup> As an artist he has been striving consistently through his writings to unravel this mystery about God, nature, human beings and the world. By attempting to perceive and suggest unity in diversity, mind in matter and matter in mind. Bond has tried as a philosopher to find the syntheses in which opposites and contradictions meet, mingle and merge to rise to the highest knowledge of universal unity which is the intellectual equivalent of the love of God. Nature, life, sense, innocence, love and secret of the divine power seem to be the key words to his credo as a writer.

His writings are born of the deep inner experience of the soul and mind. He is concerned with human psychic, positive values of friendliness, affection and compassion, he believes in humanity, and opines that human beings are the same everywhere. His short stories are entirely based on real life incidents and feelings. His vision of childhood, his affinity with nature, his respect for values and gentler virtues, his inoffensive neglect of vices, his sympathy for animals and pets, his taste for eternal music from the varied aspects of Nature, his historical and cultural sense as one radiates from innocence to experience, his touches of good

humour and gentle irony and above all his truly religious attitude are the aspects that matter most in his literature and are going to be probed in the present thesis.

These articulate the inherent spiritual tendency of his mind and art. When he says, that he cannot write unless he is in love with his subject, the divine nature of his love becomes explicit. Underlain by a strong note of optimism, the literary world of Bond is like an oasis, a green patch in the dreary desert of modern feverish literature. In this age of science fiction, crime fiction, pornos and cheap thrillers, Ruskin has extended an uncorrupted world of simple but delightful and absorbing stories narrating life in a new healing order. His words are capable of brightening all life and transforming this awful world of ours with its startling facts and gruesome daily phenomena into a castle of dreams not fantasized but realized. The tales of innocence and experience are revealed through his fiction and poetry to comfort his readers, not to lull them to sleep but to usher in an awareness of the realities that lay around unnoticed like the chirping of birds, the clattering of rain-drops on the roof tops, the fragrance of the flowers, the smell of the earth, the dancing of plants in breezy air, the musical gurgling of brooks, the whispering of trees, the silent appeal in the eyes of animals and insects, and the varying shades of lives of men, women & children. As an intelligent observer of human life and a perceptive student of human character, Bond displays the maturity, sophistication and case of a master storyteller.

### Bond's Life and Literary Works

Ruskin Bond was born on May 19, 1934 at Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh. This was the time of the period between the World Wars. India was drawn into the war by Britain and Indian soldiers fought along with British soldiers. The World Wars I and II created an economic crisis throughout the world. The Indian administration was streamlined by Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy. The economical recession affected the people throughout the world and led to a drastic change in their life style. Both the material wealth of India, as well as its manpower were at the disposal of Britain during these wars. In recognition of India's services, the British made changes in the administration and allowed Indians to participate in it. Local self-government was manned by Indians. The post war period was marked by acute problems of financial recession and reconstruction; the 1943 famine in Bengal affected poor people especially (Majumdar et al 1932).

### Bond's Literary Style and Technique

Bond's father played a major role in teaching him how to enjoy reading and writing, which later shaped his creative talents. As Bond states, "I learnt to read from my father but not in his classroom" (Scenes from a Writer's Life: A Memoir 4). The author's words show that from his childhood days he developed this habit.

This reflects the autobiographical elements found in Bond's work. Nature plays an important role in Bond's writing. Moreover, it acts like a silent character and forms the background in his stories. Bond's description of natural surroundings of northern India and foothills of the Himalayas has romantic beauty. Like Rudyard Kipling, Bond projects nature as a living being and animals play an important part in his work.

### NATURE AND SUPER NATURAL ELEMENTS

The Boy from the Hills, Rusty Runs Away, Rusty and the Leopard, Rusty Goes to London and Rusty Comes Home are grouped under the term Rusty fiction. The stories clearly narrate his life from the time he is seven years old. They give an account of his family members, friendships and memorable incidents; the various places connected with his life form the settings of these narratives. Many incidents, characters and events in Rusty fiction parallel those in Bond's autobiography. To write Rusty stories, Bond uses experiences gained from incidents and characters from his own life. He blends these incidents in his fiction around Rusty as a protagonist.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "autobiography" as "the story of a person's life, written by that person" (2012). When the autobiographical genre entered into the arena of literature, authors started using the genre to speak about their life and their literary works. This is how the genre of literary autobiography developed. In Bishop Cotton, Ruskin was put in charge of the library and there he frantically read every book, reading a vast range of novels of Hugh Walpole, R.M. Ballantyne, Dickens, Bernard Shaw and many others. Ruskin also kept a diary, from school days for which he received a dressing down in school but in the long run it helped him a lot in his writing career. As Ganesh Saili puts it in his book: The school records show that his skill in writing won him the Hailey Literature Prize in 1949 and 1950; The Shakespeare Award in 1949, the Anderson Essay Prize in 1948-1949 and 1950. Ruskin was only student in the history of the school to have won this prize for three consecutive years.<sup>^</sup> Ruskin buried himself in the books to fight the loneliness surrounding him. He had read a lot of books in his Grandmother's house and also borrowed books from the Ideal Book Depot, which had a lending library. Sometimes, his step-father would take him for hunting trips in the jungle but Ruskin preferred to stay back in the Dak Bungalow to read the books, lined on the shelves of the room. These books implanted the seeds of ghost story writings in his mind as he read ghost stories of M.R. James. In winter of 1951, he finished Senior Cambridge, and had to return to Dehra, to his step-father and mother, resentfully as he never wanted to be with them. Bond says 'There was never any desire to go to college or get more degrees.

Both the material wealth of India, as well as its manpower were at the disposal of Britain during these wars. In recognition of India's services, the British made changes in the administration and allowed Indians to participate in it. Local self-government was manned by Indians. The post war period was marked by acute problems of financial recession and reconstruction; the 1943 famine in Bengal affected poor people especially (Majumdar et al 2012). This period is called "British India period" or "British Raj period 1858- 1945." Ruskin Bond's forefathers were living in India during this period. The stories *Rusty*, *The Boy from the Hills* describe the service rendered by Bond's father as a member of RAF in 1932. In the aftermath of the world wars, the British in India faced a peculiar situation. While many chose to go back home, some chose to stay back in India. Back home in Britain too, they faced severe economic recession and unemployment. Those who stayed back too had to reconcile with social as well as economic slump. Their social attitude is described by Meena Khorana:

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Mary Dale's *Gyn / Ecology* (1978), Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature*, *The Roaring Inside Her* (1978) are some of the fundamental texts that have been able to contour public perception about ecology. In the late 1950's, Gary Snyder, the American poet, called for a "gentle guardianship" of nature, for a more susceptible consciousness of our place in "ecosystem". He propounded the 'Gaia' theory. However, depletion of nature has dawned the attention of many writers only after losing considerable amounts of natural resources. Cheryll Glotfelty mentions that literary studies has appeared nonchalant to environmental concerns. Though, ecological criticism and theory have, in fact, existed through the sixties and seventies but was lacking proper organization. This aroused the desperate need for the organization so 'Association for the Study of Literature and Environment' (ASLE) was formed. This application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature is named 'Ecocriticism'. It was William Rueckert who coined the term 'Ecocriticism' in 1978. In the beginning, the focus of ecocriticism was too narrow. Nature writing alone was considered the most environmental genre. Hence, the scope was very restrictive. Later, as it gained footage, ecocriticism began to include a multiplicity of approaches and subjects. Few years later, it becomes a literary and critical tool.

## CONCLUSION

In today's time, we are unhappy in spite of all material advancement because "the world is too much with us" and the objects of nature do not touch our heart. Nature should be accepted as a guide and teacher because, "One impulse from vernal wood, can teach you more of man. Of moral evil and of good, than all the sages can." (Wordsworth, *The Tables Turned* ! ) Most of us deem the earth to be just an orb of rock with a thin layer of air, water and life covering its surface. Whereas, our ancestors considered science

and theology as one and maintained harmony between both to safeguard nature. But slowly and gradually this warm relation got tarnished and science started dominating the earth. This deplorable condition of the environment, arose the cognizance of the writers which made them comprehend that 'Gaia' is not to be subdivided instead it is to be potted. At present, the entire world has become global village, we are living in the fast moving, modernized society. Humanity is facing the customary mammoth of social and environmental incongruity. The majority of people in the world lived through the culture of fracas and vehemence. In this new century, we the human race is standing at the junction of all the transition formula and facing unanswered query linked to the destiny of the earth particularly ecological challenge and environmental degradation.

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