



Petals, Pines and Paws: Exploring the Natural World and Conservation in Ruskin Bond's *Rain in the Mountains* and *The Book of Nature*

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Abstract

There is a gentle pain in Ruskin Bond's writing about how nature's beauty is changing. Most of his work is inspired by the variety of life that can be found in the beautiful Himalayan hills. According to the author, man gives value and significance based on his own needs and wants, not on the natural world as a whole and how it works. Every piece of writing by Ruskin Bond is a tribute to the beauty of nature and a discovery of something special in the people he meets every day. His readers should definitely pay attention to the way he uses his feelings to study, learn, love and write about people and nature in an objective way. Bond wrote about the many kinds of trees, flowers, and bushes that grow in the hills. He goes into detail about everything from the tiniest insects to the biggest animals like elephants and tigers. The main points of this paper are to talk in depth about the full world of plants and animals that Ruskin Bond wrote about and to look into the different aspects of biodiversity in his writings.

Keywords: nature, conservation, species extinction, humanness, destruction

Introduction

In terms of religion and culture, nature has always been at the centre for people. India's culture and ancient writings stress the part and value of nature and how it affects people. Many modern writers have written about 'nature' and how important it is in a variety of genres. Along the same lines, Ruskin Bond writes about how important nature is for maintaining a healthy environment. Ruskin Bond was aware of the natural world around him during his childhood days. He is a hero among Indian English writers and is called the Wordsworth of India. His works honour being local, being kind and being close with the

natural world where he lives. The surroundings around him will make feel better and inspire him to be creative. With a bit of fantasy and thought, he writes about the problems that come up because of pollution and cutting down trees. He did a lot of research on the plants and animals that live in the Himalayas, which is shown in his writing. In this study the flowers, trees, birds and animals that appear in Ruskin Bond's works are discussed in detail.



Discussion

Bond has always meant that people and nature are connected and can't be separated and people are an integral component of nature. He loves nature and all of its traits more than anything else. The Himalayan mountains, plants and animals and his longing for that place have become recurring themes in all of his writings. He is aware of different kinds of flowers and plants that grow in those regions. He is always trying to figure out how the silent animals in nature work, and he really enjoys watching them and picturing what they might be like. He and a girl named Usha, who was walking home from school one day, found one little butter-yellow flower. They've both never seen a flower such as this before. When Usha suggested picking the flower, "No don't I said. It may be the only one. If we break it, there may not be any more. Let's leave it there and see if it seeds" (Bond, 102). They were intended to protect the little flower because it looks like a new species. The flower turned pale and was ready to release its seeds after having to fight off goats and strom. After a few periods of time Usha saw the group of flowers that had opened. "not, perhaps, as spectacular as Wordsworth's field of golden daffodils but, all the same, an enchanting sight for one who played a small part in perpetuating their existence. May it multiply" (Bond, 103). Such is the mind of Ruskin Bond which shows his love towards nature.

In his book called *The Book of Nature*, he has dedicated a special part called "Flowers". In this part, he goes into great depth about things like when the strange flowers bloom and how they smell. He likes Cosmos flowers, which were twice as tall as him when he was five years old. He talks to the flowers as if they were his friend, and he greets it by rubbing its petals against his face. He even criticises people who go up to these flowers to get what they want commercially. It's not grown like other kinds of flowers since it's not used for wreaths or other things. His writings are records of many kinds of plants and animals. "Wild roses give me more pleasure than the sophisticated domestic variety" (Bond, 160). Variegated ivy is his loyal friend which spreads all over his bedroom wall. His act of

kindness to every plant makes his readers admire him. He brings to mind the scene of bees wandering around the flowers. With the beautiful flowers of a particular season, he makes his readers travel to his own living place.

"The trees stand watch over my day-to-day life. They are the guardians of my conscience. I have no one else to answer to, so I live and work under the generous but highly principled supervision of trees- especially the deodars, who stand on guard, unbending, on the slope above the cottage" (Bond, 121). "But the trees remember me. They bowed gently in the breeze and beckoned me nearer, welcoming me home" (Bond, 143). These lines were evident to show his relationship with the trees. He mentions his favourite trees like Peepal, Neem, Mango, Jackfruit, Papaya, Banyan, Java Plum, Chestnut which were grown with him. So for him they are like siblings. He makes his walk among all these trees and touches them to acknowledge his presence and love. He is impressed by the gentleness and hospitality of the Banyan tree which is the boardhouse of all creatures where they live peacefully without disturbing others' business. The inhabitants of Semul tree (silk-cotton tree) such as Bulbuls, king crows and Koels feast together in the evening which attract him towards it. In addition to it, Palm squirrels chatter on the branches of the tree. His closeness with nature makes his readers find solace in the lap of nature.

In "Good Day to You, Uncle", Bond talks about how the man's unfair treatment of plants and animals has been shown in a powerful way. A clever way has been found to show how selfish people can get in the way of other people's lives and the bad things that can happen as a result. People always think wrongly that taking advantage of nature and messing with the balance of the ecosystem is the easiest and fastest way to get ahead. Bond says that a while ago, "Ganga had provided food and shelter for some thirty or forty tigers.... and now there remained only one old tiger in the jungle" (Bond, 210). Simply reading this line shows how being anthropocentric can be bad. People thought that they were the most important thing in this world and that everything in



nature was there to serve them. The same mindset has also spread to younger groups of people. As a result, abuse kept happening over and over again. In the story, Ramu talks to his friend, "Perhaps we are a little better, in some ways. To be able to laugh and to be merciful are the only things that make man better than the beast" (Bond 217). This sentence makes it clear that people tend to be in charge and don't think much about the other parts of nature. The people and animals that dwell on Earth all own the same piece of land. Because of his sensitivity, humans have become the most powerful species on Earth.

The first part of "The Leopard" gives a lively account of the beautiful scenery of a ravine that stays in the shade for most of the day. Many birds and animals are drawn to the ravine because it is a safe place for them as humans don't enter because of the leopard. Mussoorie is the name of the place where the story takes place. Ruskin Bond lives in a house in the middle of nowhere with many birds, animals, and trees. The first couple of lines make the difference between the environment and the human world very clear: "Few people ever passed that way. As a result, the ravine had become a little haven of wildlife, one of the few natural sanctuaries left near Mussoorie" (Bond, 72). The birds and animals that live in this valley are afraid of people because they see them as a threat to their way of life. The atmosphere in the valley is pure and peaceful because it hasn't been touched by people or society yet. Fruits and blossoms only grow in certain times of the year because the valley has never been in a harsh environment or had weather that was hard to predict. The people who live in and visit the valley are amazed and happy as they see and experience its amazing beauty. Ruskin Bond experiences new strength and vigour when he is in nature. He hates living in the city because it makes him feel suffocated. In a place with floral scents and cool trees, happy birds and lively animals living together in harmony and accepting and recognizing everyone's inherent worth, he gets ideas for a book. On one of his walks through the bush, he even sees a leopard, but he doesn't get scared because he knows the animal will be friendly to him.

In the following scene, Ruskin Bond draws attention to the most important thing about how animals act. An animal will only attack another species if it is hungry or if it thinks its life is in danger. Animals are much easier to predict when it comes to how they will act. People are unpredictable because they are very picky, and their never-ending wants and needs are getting so big that they threaten the ecosystem's very survival. People see nature as something that can be bought and sold, but they don't see its true value. Through a crew of Shikaris who have gone on a fierce hunt for a leopard, Ruskin Bond shows how anthropocentric superiority works: "They said they knew there was a leopard in the forest. Leopard skins...were selling in Delhi at over a thousand rupees each! Of course there was a ban on the export of skins..."(Bond, 74).

The shikaris' constant gunfire quest for the leopard turns the canyon from a peaceful place to a lonely place with no life or happiness. "I thought no more of men...My attitude to them was similar to the attitude of the denizens of the forest. They were men, unpredictable, and to be avoided if possible"(Bond, 74). The disgusting way people act is shown very clearly in these lines. Unfortunately, the tale ends with anguished news that the shikaris were able to catch the leopard. The author feels bad about luring the leopard into a trap by being there, which caused the animal to fall for people's lies. These lines show how guilty he feels: "But did the leopard, trusting one man, make the mistake of bestowing his trust on others? Did I, by casting out all fear- my own fear, and the leopard's protective fear- leave him defenceless?"(Bond, 76). At the end of the story, Ruskin makes it clear that man has broken nature's trust in him. He is no longer a servant. As the author says "I walked home through the silent forest. It was very silent, almost as though the birds and animals knew that their trust had been violated" (Bond, 77). Through this narrative, Ruskin Bond stresses the duty that has been given to man, which is called care. Man is not making the environment more harmonious; instead, he is making cracks in it. "Mad pursuit of ruthless exploitation of nature to meet the demands of a misconceived model of development



has already started showing its devastating consequences” (Chandalia, 109). His sad ending to the story leaves the reader hope that man will change.

Bond writes like a scientist when he talks about animals, birds and bugs. The world of animals has been important to him and he has written many stories about them. He feels sorry for them and knows how they live and the things they do. They just flow into his writing when he talks about them. He draws animals so realistically that one feels like he knows them and has been their friend the whole time. He thinks they are an important part of the ecosystem and as a result, needed for life to be healthy on Earth. He talks about how cute little animals are, the butterflies, cicadas, caterpillars, ants, bugs, moths, mice, owls, and blue jays. In some of Bond’s animal-themed stories, there is love between an animal and a human being. Animals can feel love and return the love of people who care about nature and don’t hurt them. He thinks that animals experience the same things people do and have the same rights on earth as people.

Bond has also learned a lot about bugs. He knows everything there is to know about most of the bugs. He tells his people something useful by saying that the firefly is the world’s tiniest animal. Its body is so small that you can’t see it with your own eyes. It’s only a fifth of a millimetre long. Bond has written about such small things and called them “nature’s perfection”. Insects are one type of animal that lives all over. They live in the ground, the air, the water, the woods and even the polar areas, where they live with polar bears. They have strong bones and can stand up to almost any situation. They also have a lot of energy. They can hop all over the place. Some bugs are amazingly pretty, with lots of different colours and sizes. Bond describes that these insects can do amazing things. Wild animals usually sleep during the day and move around at night because they like quiet places. People sleep at night and do things during the day. People need to be careful to respect this natural order. People have no right to wake up animals at night. In the poem “Zone

for Dancing”, Bond makes this case for animal freedom.

“As I walked home last night,
I saw a lone fox dancing
In the bright moonlight.
I stood and watched; then
Took the low road, knowing
The night was his by right” (Bond, 47)

People think they are smarter than animals, so they treat them however they want. There’s the question of whether people are superior to animals. In many of his short stories, Ruskin Bond has spoken about ecological issues like how animals are slowly going extinct because of cutting down trees. Bond has also written a lot of tales about animals’ rights to exist on earth. Ruskin Bond does a lot to fight for animal rights. Bond lets us know about how bad things are for animals by means of his short tales. We will change how we feel about animals after reading Bond’s brief narratives. Bond is a strong supporter of giving animals the same rights as people to live on Earth. Bond says that people are only greater if they are kind to animals. It’s what Bond says in “Good Day to You, Uncle”. “A man needs the land as much as a tiger needs the jungle” (Bond, 216), he says . People are free to talk, and dogs should also be free to bark. People are so powerful now that they think the world is only for them. Other things that are important for environmental balance are animals. At the end of “The Leopards”, Bond says it all in one line: “There was room in the world for a mountain, lion and me” (Bond, 152). The rock in the sentence above represents nature, the lion represents animals, and mine represents people. In this way, Bond makes it obvious that animals are just as vital as the balance of nature and people.

Conclusion

Ruskin Bond has the sense of an ecologist who can hear nature’s voice in all of its forms. He is very good at hearing the sounds of the trees, birds, and animals. Flowers, trees, and animals are what the title “Petals, Pines, and Paws” refers to. These are the main themes in Ruskin Bond’s works. He is sensitive enough to enjoy the sounds of the bugs. It makes



sense, then, that Bond's works have a strong focus on the environment. People and nature should always be closely connected and friendly, trading goods and services and depending on each other. He suggested ways that people could live together in this world. Being kind to nature and understanding of the locals as well as their way of life without judging them always opens up a new world of happiness, excitement and vibrancy that is necessary for living a full life. He also shows a clear understanding of other living things in order to build the unity that is needed for living together and being healthy. He wants to show that all living things are important and each have a part to play in keeping the ecosystem in order. So, it can be said that Ruskin Bond's stories, articles, poems and travel writing have a huge amount of

potential to teach his readers about the importance of biodiversity while also making these individuals aware of the risks of cutting down trees and polluting the environment.

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