



A READING OF ‘MY TREES IN THE HIMALAYAS’ BY RUSKIN BOND: AN ECO- CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MAN- NATURE RELATIONSHIP IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

Dr. Amrapali Chawla Sapra

Assistant Professor, Department of English and Communication, Prestige Institute of Management and Research, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

In postcolonial India, conversations about nature have become more pressing due to rapid modernization and technological growth. People have gradually distanced themselves from their natural surroundings, leading to serious environmental issues like climate change, resource depletion, and ecological imbalance. In this context, Ruskin Bond emerges as a significant literary voice, stressing a close and harmonious relationship between humans and nature. His book, *My Trees in the Himalayas* (2018), demonstrates a deep ecological consciousness and expresses a strong emotional and spiritual connection with the natural world. This paper uses an ecocritical lens within a postcolonial framework to examine how Bond's narrative challenges human-centered modernity and revitalizes a cooperative relationship with nature. Through detailed textual analysis, the study reveals how Bond's writings act as a counter-narrative to environmental damage and foster ecological awareness. The paper argues that Bond's work reflects a longing for the past while presenting a sustainable ethical model based on coexistence and mutual dependence.

KEYWORDS: Ecocriticism, Postcolonial India, Nature, Environmental Crisis, Anthropocentrism

INTRODUCTION

The modern world is defined by significant technological growth and industrial expansion. While these developments provide comfort, they also worsen ecological damage. The relentless pursuit of progress leads to the overuse of natural resources, resulting in global environmental issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and pollution. As Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva point out, the belief in unlimited progress creates a harmful relationship with nature, ultimately threatening human existence. In this setting, literature plays a vital role in questioning human-centered views and reconsidering the relationships between humans and nature. Ruskin Bond's *My Trees in the Himalayas* offers an insightful perspective on ecological harmony amid modern disconnection. The text reveals a deep bond with the natural world, presenting it not just as a backdrop but as a lively presence.

ECOCRITICISM AND POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

Ecocriticism explores the link between literature and the physical environment. The term was first introduced by William Rueckert in 1978, who defined it as applying ecological principles to literary studies. Later, scholars like Greg Garrard expanded this idea to include studies of human interactions with non-human entities across different cultural histories. Postcolonial ecocriticism, defined by Swarnalatha Rangarajan, merges ecological issues with colonialism, globalization, and environmental justice. It critiques the blending of landscapes and cultures caused by colonial and capitalist actions and emphasizes the need for sustainable, local ecological practices. The founding of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment in 1992 helped formalize ecocritical studies and foster discussions on the environmental humanities.

MAN–NATURE RELATIONSHIP IN MY TREES IN THE HIMALAYAS

In *My Trees in the Himalayas*, Ruskin Bond presents a nuanced view of human coexistence with nature. The text consists of eighteen essays, each celebrating different aspects of the natural world, including trees, birds, insects, and mountains. These essays come together as ecological memoirs, emphasizing emotional connections and ethical obligations toward nature. Bond's narrative counters the alienation created by modern technological life. Living in the Himalayan landscape, he develops a close relationship with his surroundings, where trees become friends, and animals and insects are part of a broader ecological community. His depiction of trees as sturdy and reliable beings capable of silent companionship highlights a perspective that values non-human life. Furthermore, Bond underscores ecological interdependence, especially in his reflections on insects and biodiversity. He cautions that losing even the smallest organisms can impact the entire ecological chain, stressing the fragility of environmental balance.

ROMANTIC LEGACY AND ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Bond's environmental awareness aligns closely with the Romantic tradition, particularly with the works of William Wordsworth. Like Wordsworth, Bond perceives nature as a source of spiritual nourishment and moral direction. The Romantic view of nature as a living force shaping human consciousness is clear in Bond's writings. Yet, unlike the Romantic poets, Bond's perspective is shaped by current ecological crises. His work goes beyond mere aesthetic appreciation and engages with urgent environmental issues, placing him within a modern ecocritical context.

POSTCOLONIAL MODERNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Bond's ecological themes should be seen in the larger framework of postcolonial modernity. The legacy of colonial exploitation and the ongoing pursuit of Western development models have adversely affected India's environment. Vandana Shiva notes that modern development initiatives often act as instruments for ecological harm, displacing communities and exhausting natural resources. Bond critiques deforestation and urbanization, exposing the negative impacts of unchecked modernization. Additionally, his nostalgic return to the Himalayan landscape symbolizes a form of ecological resistance. By highlighting local ecosystems and traditional living practices, he challenges dominant narratives of progress and development.

NATURE AS IDENTITY AND BELONGING

A central theme in Bond's narrative is the sense of belonging to nature. His personal reflections reveal a strong connection to the Himalayan environment, where nature becomes an essential part of his identity. His descriptions of forests, streams, and mountains serve not just as observations but as expressions of his lived experience with the natural world. This feeling of belonging sharply contrasts with the alienation present in urban areas. Bond critiques the artificiality of city life, portraying it as deficient in spiritual and emotional richness. His preference for the mountains emphasizes the healing power of nature and its significance for human well-being.

ECOLOGICAL ETHICS AND POSTHUMANISM

Bond's work also resonates with emerging post humanist perspectives that challenge the hierarchy between humans and non-human beings. Cary Wolfe points out that posthumanism advocates for redefining human identity within a broader ecological framework. In *My Trees in the Himalayas*, Bond implicitly supports this ecological ethics by stressing coexistence, respect, and interdependence. His writing suggests that human survival depends on maintaining harmony with the natural world.

CONCLUSION

An ecocritical interpretation of *My Trees in the Himalayas* reveals that Ruskin Bond is a crucial literary voice promoting ecological awareness in postcolonial India. His work challenges human-centered perspectives and highlights the need to rebuild a harmonious relationship with nature. In an era marked by environmental crises, Bond's writings critique destructive modernity and advocate for sustainable living. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life, he provides an ethical framework focused on coexistence and environmental responsibility. Ultimately, this study showcases the importance of ecocriticism as a tool for addressing today's ecological challenges and rethinking human–nature relationships in a rapidly changing world.

WORKS CITED

1. Bond, Ruskin. *My Trees in the Himalayas*. Rupa Publications, 2018.
2. Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2012.
3. Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. Rawat Publications, 2010.
4. Naik, M. K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 2014.
5. Rangarajan, Swarnalatha. *Ecocriticism*. Orient Blackswan, 2018.
6. Rueckert, William. "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." 1996.
7. Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.