



Eco-Critical Reading of Ruskin Bond's Poetry

Salutation

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Abstract

Ecocriticism, as an interdisciplinary approach, studies the relationship between literature and the natural environment, emphasizing how literary texts shape ecological consciousness. The poetry of Ruskin Bond presents a compelling exploration of this relationship through its vivid portrayal of nature and its ethical engagement with environmental concerns. This paper offers an eco-critical reading of Bond's poetry, focusing on his representation of nature as a living and dynamic presence, his critique of ecological degradation, and his emphasis on harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world.

Drawing on poems such as "The Trees Still Grow in Dehra", "Rain in the Mountains", and "Coming Home to Dehra", the study demonstrates how Bond's poetic imagination is deeply influenced by the Himalayan landscape. His work reflects an eco-centric worldview that challenges anthropocentric ideologies and underscores the intrinsic value of nature.

The analysis further reveals that Bond's poetry functions both as a celebration of natural beauty and as a subtle warning against environmental destruction. By fostering emotional and ethical connections with the environment, his work contributes significantly to eco-critical discourse. The paper concludes that Bond's poetry encourages readers to adopt a more sustainable and respectful relationship with nature.

Keywords

Ecocriticism, Ruskin Bond, Nature, Environmental Ethics, Indian English Poetry, Ecology, Sustainability

Introduction

In recent decades, ecocriticism has gained prominence as a literary approach that addresses the growing environmental crisis. It investigates how literature reflects, shapes, and critiques human interactions with the natural world. Within Indian English literature, Ruskin Bond occupies a unique position as a writer whose works are deeply rooted in nature.

Bond's poetry emerges from his lifelong association with the Himalayan region, particularly Dehradun and Mussoorie. His writing captures the rhythms of rural life and the beauty of natural landscapes, presenting nature not merely as a backdrop but as an active participant in human experience. His poems

reflect a profound sensitivity toward ecological balance and advocate a harmonious relationship between humans and the environment.

Objectives of the Research

- To examine Ruskin Bond's poetry through an eco-critical framework.
- To analyze the depiction of nature and landscape in his poems.
- To explore the relationship between human beings and the environment.
- To identify ecological concerns reflected in his poetic works.
- To evaluate Bond's contribution to eco-literary studies.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of ecocriticism was significantly shaped by Cheryll Glotfelty, who defines it as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty xviii). This framework is particularly useful for analyzing Bond's poetry.

Lawrence Buell emphasizes that environmentally oriented literature often portrays nature as an active presence influencing human life (Buell 2). Bond's poetry reflects this idea through its vivid depiction of natural elements as living forces.

Similarly, Greg Garrard argues that ecocriticism challenges anthropocentric perspectives and promotes ecological awareness (Garrard 5). Bond's work aligns with this perspective by emphasizing coexistence rather than domination.

Scholars such as Ramachandra Guha and Vandana Shiva have also highlighted the importance of environmental consciousness in Indian literary and cultural contexts. Their insights help situate Bond's poetry within a broader ecological discourse.

Theoretical Framework: Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism provides tools for analyzing the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of nature in literature. Key concepts include:

Deep Ecology: Advocates intrinsic value of all living beings.

Ecocentrism: Places nature at the center rather than humans.

Sustainability: Promotes balance between development and conservation.

Bond's poetry embodies these principles by presenting nature as sacred and emphasizing interconnectedness.

Nature as a Living Presence

Bond's poetry frequently portrays nature as animate and resilient. In "The Trees Still Grow in Dehra", he writes:

“The trees still grow in Dehra,
Though the city spreads around them” (Bond).

These lines highlight the endurance of nature despite urban expansion. The trees symbolize continuity and resilience, reflecting the eco-critical idea that nature possesses its own agency.

In “Rain in the Mountains”, Bond observes:

“The rain falls softly on the hills,
Whispering through leaves and streams” (Bond).

The personification of rain enhances the sensory experience and reinforces the idea of nature as nurturing and alive.

Human-Nature Relationship

Bond’s poetry emphasizes a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. In “Coming Home to Dehra”, he writes:

“I return to the hills,
Where the wind knows my name” (Bond).

This line suggests an intimate connection between the individual and the natural environment, where nature becomes a companion rather than a resource.

Critique of Environmental Degradation

Bond’s poetry also reflects concern over environmental destruction. The expansion of cities and the loss of natural spaces are recurring themes.

The phrase “the city spreads around them” symbolizes unchecked urbanization, highlighting the tension between development and ecological preservation. This critique aligns with eco-critical concerns about sustainability.

Symbolism of Nature

Nature in Bond’s poetry is rich in symbolism:

Trees represent life and endurance.

Rain symbolizes renewal and continuity.

Mountains signify stability and permanence.

These symbols reinforce the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Eco-Spiritual Perspective

Bond’s poetry often reflects a spiritual connection with nature. His descriptions evoke calmness and reverence, suggesting that nature is sacred.

This eco-spiritual dimension aligns with ecological ethics, emphasizing respect for the environment.

Ecological Lament

Alongside celebration, Bond's poetry expresses concern over environmental loss. His nostalgic tone reflects awareness of ecological degradation and serves as a warning for future generations.

Role of Landscape

The Himalayan landscape plays a central role in Bond's poetry. His vivid descriptions create a strong sense of place and identity, reflecting the concept of bioregionalism.

Discussion

An eco-critical reading of Bond's poetry reveals that his work integrates aesthetic beauty with ethical awareness. His poems promote environmental consciousness, critique ecological destruction, and encourage sustainable living.

Conclusion

The poetry of Ruskin Bond offers a profound exploration of the relationship between humans and nature. His work highlights the importance of ecological balance and encourages readers to adopt a more sustainable way of life.

In the context of global environmental challenges, Bond's poetry remains highly relevant, fostering awareness and inspiring action.

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