



03

**THE UPANISHADIC AND VEDANTIC INFLUENCES ON RUSKIN BOND'S
PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS NATURE: A JOURNEY FROM A LITERARY
ARTIST TO AN ECOLOGIST**

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Abstract:

The present research article is to understand the ecological messages in the ancient Indian religious texts- Upanishadas with superficial study of Ruskin Bond's "green" issues. This is an attempt to apprehend the wide spectrum of Indian ecology over the decades in context with "Lone Fox Dancing: My Autobiography" by Ruskin Bond which documents the mass destruction of ecology during the period of British colonization and then to the post-independent ecological crises of India -the different phases of ecological change and development that has affected the Indian environment as a whole. This is an attempt to understand ancient Indian literary influences on Ruskin Bond's worldview, and his creative writings with ecological perspective with special reference to his autobiography- Lone Fox Dancing: My Autobiography and have been referred only to those sections which deal with the importance of preservation and conservation of nature.

Keywords: Ecology, Environment, Upanishada and Vedantic Philosophy, Literature, etc.

Introduction:

Ruskin Bond was born on 19 May 1934; he is an Indian author of British descent. and lives with his adopted family in Landour, Mussoorie, India. The Indian Council for Child Education has acknowledged his part in the development of children's literature in Indian English. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in 1992 for his novel in English *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*. He was awarded the Padmashri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2014. Ruskin Bond- an Anglo-Indian author- is internationally considered as one of India's most creative writers in English for children, young adults, and adults in Post-colonial era in India.

The present research article is to understand the ecological messages in the ancient Indian religious texts- Upanishadas with superficial study of Ruskin Bond's "green" issues. This is an attempt to apprehend the wide spectrum of Indian ecology over the decades in context with *Lone Fox Dancing: My Autobiography* by Ruskin Bond which documents the mass destruction of ecology during the period of British colonization and then to the post-independent ecological crises of India -the different phases of ecological change and development that has affected the Indian environment as a whole. This is an attempt to



understand ancient Indian literary influences on Ruskin Bond's worldview, and his creative writings with ecological perspective with special reference to his autobiography- lone Fox Dancing. He begins his story with a beautiful description of the nature, "Sitting in the mountains, I remember the sea: Tinsel on a vast field of water, and sunny white sheets billowing in the wind. I remember a forest of nodding flowers and patches of red, yellow, green and blue light on a wall" (Bond, 7).

Ruskin Bond's innovative work in the field of children's and young adult literature in India is remarkable as his contribution to diaspora and postcolonial/post-independence literatures is immense; is ingenious, imaginative, and graceful writing in a range of genres that continue to ingratiate him to his readers; following extract is well fitted for the argument; he describes, "...an ever changing landscape, bridges over mighty rivers and khuds, forests and farmlands, everything sun-drenched. The air was crisp and unpolluted- and we let it rush in, for those were the days before sealed window and air conditioning..." (Bond, 32).

Being an Anglo-Indian, he does not write about India from a Eurocentric perspective, lived the majority of his life in India, he knows the country as an insider, writing with a truthfulness and sensitive engagement about the land and the people of the Himalayas and small-town India. The regional elements in Bond's writings his connectivity with the Indian soil offer insight into universal themes such as the tension between past and present, city life versus rural values, the dignity of ordinary folk; and predominantly preservation of the environment, and living in harmony with nature. "It wasn't the family that brought me back but it was the country, the land itself, and all that lived and grow upon it....In the still of the afternoon, the deodars stand like sentinals on the northern slopes of Landour. It is late April and the oaks and horse-chestnuts are in new leaf. There is a certain tenderness in the air, and in today's world this is something to be valued... Friends and families come and go, the earth still revolves around the sun, the world is once again in the crisis, but the cricket chirping on my window-sill sounds optimistic about it all" (Bond, 276-277).

In his pledge for "green" issues, Bond separates himself from the European imperialist tradition of exploiting and conquering the environment. The break from the European inheritance seems permanent as Bond embarks upon the role of an Indian environmentalist, protecting and conserving the much-destroyed Indian ecology. In his "epilogue" to Rain Bond writes: "My life can really be divided into two sections. The first thirty years, when I was fairly restless and on the move, never long in one place or with one set of friends, and the second thirty years, almost entirely spent in the mountains, when I became about as fixed and permanent as the horse chestnut that I can see from my window" (Bond, 240).

The ecological messages enclosed in the ancient Indian religious texts- the assertiveness to nature as exemplified in *The Upanishads*, and *The Vedas*, is synthesis and harmony with nature. This tradition is mainly Cosmo centric; where creation and destruction take place simultaneously and similarly Bond's approach to nature is effortlessly in accord with the Upanishadic and the Vedantic concepts of the duality of gods, perceived both in terms of the creator and the destroyer. Ruskin Bond imagined as a recluse living in a cottage full of eccentric birds and animals and surrounded by trees...is a perfect description of a *Vanprastha* or a *Sanyasi*. He further admits,



Perseverance does pay. Men who work steadily for money get rich; men and women who work for day and night for fame or power reach their goal. And those who work for deeper, more artistic or spiritual achievements will find them too. What we seek may come to us when we no longer have any use for it, but if we have been willing it long enough, it will come!... I have never desire fame, and I have never wanted to be the lone, loud man on the summit. I no longer scorn money, but wealth doesn't interest me very much once my needs and needs of those who depend on me have been met. I'm happiest just putting pen to paper- writing about a dandelion flowering on a patch of a wasteland... (Bond, 271-272).

By admitting this Ruskin Bond seems a *Karmayogi* whose focus is on 'doing' and not on achieving. In The Upanishads, it is mentioned that the Supreme Being is perceived in three phases - Brahma (The Maker), Vishnu (The Protector) and Shiva (The Demolisher); the complete knowledge of the Supreme Being can be attained by retreating the sanities from the outer objects and by cumulative consciousness about the meaning of being. In Bond, too, the appreciation of nature is more than mere sensuous appreciation; it is an attempt to know the Supreme Being in all its dimensions. In an interview, Bond enunciates, "I believe that nature has both the faces - gentle and destructive..."

The ancient Indian classical literature of *The Upanishads* and *The Vedas* propose an ostentatious systemized vision of the Indian environment and its necessity for cherishing and conservation. Harmony with the natural world is strongly emphasised in Indian spiritual beliefs and rituals which leads to co-existence, a discipline of environmental ethics has developed which communicates man's code of conduct in his relationship with nature.

Bond too prohibits manipulation or annihilation of nature and reassures selfless love and respect for Mother Nature. Since the Vedic period, *rishis* who lived in the forests and devoted great importance to the flora and fauna for the well-being of the animals- through their teachings, they have passed on an age old Indian tradition of valuing trees, plants and other animals, necessary for maintaining a perfect ecological relationship between the human and the surrounding environment.

Conclusion:

Therefore, Ruskin Bond, who has lived so close to nature in India, that it has immense influence on his work. Through his work, he articulates his affection and concern for nature; he states his deep concern for the vanishing of wildlife in India and also for the ruin of the environment in the Himalayas. The focal point of Bond's Indianness is his craving for the Himalayas. Though his roots were in England yet he was attached to the Indian soil and prospered by the Indian air and water; he likes to designate with uncommon observation and compassion the landscape of the area.

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