



# ECOCENTRIC APPROACH IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF RUSKIN BOND

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**Abstract:** Eco is a prefix, with its combination various words are formed. Like ecology, eco -feminism, eco-tourism, eco hero, ecosystem, eco type, eco blink, eco anxiety etc. Here this paper is concerned with ecological concerns only. Centrist means pointedness or being focused on one point avoiding other points. Ecocentrism thus means being concerned about the environment, nature, its biotic and abiotic components. Literature is a work of art. It is a writing in the form of poetry, drama, novel with artistic fervour. Literature expresses its society in the form of sociological literature. When expresses about someone's life is biographical literature, if it is teaching moral value, it is ethical literature, the same way when the writing is written with the focus on female characters is known as feminine literature. Just the same way the literature with its focus points on nature, it's flora and fauna, its whole ecology, such work of art is defined as ecocentric literature. Eco centric literature spreads the whole story with the center point as the human and nature relationship. Sometime talking purely about nature and its five elements as earth water fire sky and air, climate, weather conditions, landscape, scene and sceneries natural beauty, natural disaster, it's cause etc. ecocentrism is an umbrella term in which biocentrism, zoo centrist are also counted. It is a theory in opposition of anthropocentrism. Notable eco centric writers in English literature are William Turner, John Ray, William Durham, American ornithologist Charles Darwin, Susan Fennimore Cooper, Henry David Thoreau, Jim Corbett, Rudyard Kipling and Ruskin Bond etc. In India Ruskin Bond is a famous name. Children are mostly introduced to nature with his writings. Sunrise, sunset, lush green forest, butterfly, tiger, pinewoods, oak and deodar trees, streams, rivers, sea, ocean, goldfish, cat, dog, nuts and fruits, fireflies and fox all have found characters in the writing of Ruskin Bond. Ruskin bond's writing not only describe the nature creatures but his writing is full with different shades and colours of nature, deep concern about conservation, less disturbance and due respect to Nature. Nature conservation is the burning point of discussion today. Literature as always provides a great scope for awareness. This is apparent in the writing of Ruskin Bond too. His writing shows the pros and cons of one's being with nature and ones being without nature. In Ruskin Bond nature centric writing tiny to giant creatures all have provided stories. It shows how nature is full of exposure an opportunity. It has not only human relations to be disclosed but lots more to be talked, sung, observed and felt. The present paper looks at the eco centric approach in the selected short stories of Ruskin Bond. And how nature has played a vibrant part, presented in his work.

**Keywords:** ecocentric, nature, scope, opportunity, conservation

## Introduction

Eco centrist is a word in combination of three i.e. eco +centr+ism, that gradually means ecology centered practice or philosophy. In Greek OIKOS means house and "kentron" means center, house centered. For an Eco centrist the natural environment for all living and nonliving things is like a house. They all have their rights to live there. Ecocentrism is also studied in comparison to anthropocentrism, in which human is at the centre. All living non- living resources belong to him

for his use. In opposition to anthropocentrism, ecocentrism gives equal value to all organisms and element of nature. There are some definitions of ecocentrism:

“Ecocentrism is an ethical worldwide view that recognizes the inherent value of all life forms and ecosystems themselves which are in turn to be considered morally.” (Washington, Taylor, Kopnina, Cryer piccolo, 2017) (Drew, 2023)

“Ecocentrism is a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of all living things including the importance of their environment” (Amendolare, 2022)

“Ecocentrism sees the ecosphere – comprising all Earth's ecosystems, atmosphere, water and land – as the matrix which birthed all life and as life's sole source of sustenance.” (Joe Gray, 30 August 2017)

An ecocentric literature whether it be prose poetry or drama, fiction or nonfiction, is created with the focus or central idea of nature, its minutest organisms, its physical components. These living, non-living elements are artistically woven with variety of colours, emotions and feelings. Such ecocentric literature leaves its impression not only on the mind but on the heart of the reader.

The origin of the term ecocentric comes from Aldo Leopold. He was an American philosopher, conservationist, naturalist, scientist, ecologist and environmentalist. His work *The Sand County ALMANAC* proved to be a milestone in the field of ecology and environment ethics. This is a collection of essays. It talks about the relationship of man with his environment. Ecocentrism has been existing on earth even before the existence of human being. Even studies have proved that human being is the result of gradual evolution from the complex network and interrelation of the earth ecosystem. With the continuous development by men in the form of machinery and industry, the deep connection of human being with nature turned into shallow relation. The relationship of forest that provided habitat to the aboriginals changed into gentleman with car in his bungalow by the roadside in the posh area of the city. Where there used to be earthworm, today the underground electric broadband telephone cables run.

Researchers have proved that the man and nature relation gap is taking the man himself towards danger. Government have taken into account this unseen, unfelt flow of future danger. Various declaration came into existence as, the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 that natural resources must be safe guarded, the World Charter for Nature 1982, The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987, The Earth Charter in 2000 and Johannesburg Declaration 2002 etc. (Haydn, 2017)

### Ecocentric literature

Dr. Jeo Marshalla in one of his YT videos talks about ecocentric reality -the polarization that is occurring as public canon, democratic, patriot, atheist, Christian, Jainy, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist is all just a confusion. All these designations are polarizations. Everyone wants to convince the other side and to prove that other sides are wrong and only one side is right. It is an anthropocentric view that man is over nature. Nature is there for man to manipulate and control for his well being and his good only. This concept opposite to ecocentric reality which is the very fact that every cell in one's body, everything that exist is nature. Man, himself is nature. There is no separation between man and nature. Whether it be any genre travelogue or memoir, the writer or the poet expresses deep concern with nature, besides researcher have presented its devastating effect as industrialization on nature, the vast Jungle fires and their good and bad results. In an ecocentric literature all the small and big, loving and dangerous, biotic or abiotic elements of nature, rain, river, lake, pond, sea or ocean offer a whole new scope for story. Ecocentric literature draws the reader's attention that what the society is doing to nature, is actually doing to itself only because man is not separate from nature. Such writers created an awareness that removing oneself from polarization and working towards unification and understanding of one's being with nature, extracting oneself from the following polarity of different identification and grabbing an idea always in mind that human on the planet earth is to show peace, love and happiness for all living, non-living things, has no alternatives.

Notable nature writers in English literature who wrote about nature in a detailed way are William Turner, John Ray William Darham American ornithologist Charles Darwin 1809-82, Susan Fenimore Cooper 1813 -94 Henry David Thoreau 1817 -1862, Jim Corbett, Rudyard Kipling and Ruskin Bond etc. these writers not only entertained but informed their readers too with the realities of ecological wellness.

### Ecocentrism and Ruskin Bond

Ruskin Bond is known as the writer on the hill. The jargon itself expresses the deep impression and relation of the writer with nature. In the thief story when Romy's helper and by profession a thief Hari Singh runs away stealing his bundle of notes, bearing guilt feeling not only returns back home but keeps the bundle of notes on the same place. Bond describes that night “The night was chilly — it was early November — and a light drizzle added to my discomfort.” In one of the excerpts in *The Room on The Roof* gives a flicker start of nature with sunrise very beautifully as “And truly, that day there

was an out break of spring. The sun came up, and the bazaar woke up. ,The walls of houses were suddenly patched with splashes of colour, and just as suddenly the trees seemed to have burst into flower; For in the forest there were armies of rhododendrons, and by the river the poinsettias danced; The cherry and the plum were in blossom; the snow in the mountains had melted, and the stream were rushing torrents; the new leaves on the trees were full of sweetness, the young grass held both dew and sun, and made an emerald of every dewdrop. The infection of spring spread simultaneously through the world of man and the world of nature, and made them one.” (BOND, THE VERY BEST OF RUSKIN BOND,WRITER ON THE HILL, 2022)

In The Crooked Tree, Bond has sketched a word picture of a crooked tree which was rooted inside against the old well wall. “It had a crooked trunk and crooked branches and was clothed in thick broad, crooked leaves, like the leaves on which food is served in the bazaar. In the trunk of the tree there was a hole... a pair of green parrots flew out, and went dipping and swerving across the field. There was grass around the well, cropped short by grazing cattle.” A crooked tree is a totally neglected, unidentified object of nature. It is only an artist or a creative writer whose eyes are drawn towards the tree as it is a shade and shelter giver to both man and birds. This tree has its own importance. Talking about the month of October, Bond peels off the activities of tourists in the hill station as they can enjoy any of the hill with godly décor. He says, “the hills are covered with wild dahlia's, the sun is delicious and might you can sit in front of a log fire and drink a little Brandy.” (BOND, THE VERY BEST OF RUSKIN BOND,WRITER ON THE HILL, 2022)

In the short story The Fight, Bond colours a beautiful picture of a pond discovered by Ranji in the forest. Here Bond refreshes the reader by drawing the readers attention towards the abiotic beauty of nature. “Ranji found the pool in the forest. The water had a gentle translucency, and you could see the smooth and round pebbles at the bottom of the pool. A small stream emerged from the cluster of the rocks to feed the pool. During the monsoon this stream would be a gushing torrent, cascading down from the hills, but during the summer it was barely a trickle. The rocks however held water in the pool, and it did not dry up like the pools in the plains.” (BOND, THE VERY BEST OF RUSKIN BOND,WRITER ON THE HILL, 2022)

In The Cherry Tree, Bond collectively talks about the nature. He says,” the soil was stony, and the dry cold winds stunted the growth of most plants. But on the more sheltered slopes there were forests of oak and deodar.” Bond keeps observing the winter and spring weather in hills. He symbolizes cherry tree as the inner power of nature and gives message that ecosystem itself has the power to regrow and rejuvenate if not intentionally ruined.

### Wildlife

There is a big world of creatures in Bond. Which is spread in his short stories, poems, novel etc. One can see wild animals in Bond’s writing as leopard, jackals, barking deer, night jar, owls in the short story School Among the Pines. The readers get the chance to watch the whole Jungle activity through the picture of Bond. In the same short story “A night jar went *tonk- tonk* in the bushes, and somewhere in the forest an owl hooted softly. The sharp call of a barking deer travelled up the valley, from the direction of the stream. Jackal kept howling.” (BOND, 2022)

Through the following line from The School among the pine a reader would never miss to understand that men and nature is one. Mr. Mani’s mood, “only improved over the coming week as more and more dahlias flowered- crimson, yellow, purple, mahua, white-button dahlias, pompom dahlias, spotted dahlias, stripped dahlias’ grew.

Tiger My Friend, Monkey Trouble, Snake Trouble, Those Three Bears, The Tunnel, Grandfather Fights An Ostrich, Timothy are such stories that affirm Bond’s deep interest in wild animals. Such stories convince that these creatures are self- sufficient to provide interesting stories which never lose the attention of the readers.

### Domestic animals and pets

The Black Cat, The Parrot Who Would Not Talk, The Black Dog, Goldfish Don't Bark, The Monkey are such stories in which Bond serves not only interesting stories but they have great message that nature protects us, teaches us, suggests a lot of lessons if we are ready to observe and learn. How sincerely Bond suggests “never shoot a monkey it is not only that they are sacred to Hindus but they are rather human you know.” Further in the same short story ‘The monkey’ he portrays black mouthed monkey as “they were handsome creatures, their fur a silver- grey, their tails long and sinuous. They leapt gracefully from tree to tree, and were very polite and dignified in their behavior towards each other” (BOND, THE VERY BEST OF RUSKIN BOND,WRITER ON THE HILL, 2022)

Ruskin Bond's Friends From The Forest, All Time Favorite are such wonderful work of art in which the writer very minutely observes even the very small insects around us in an artistic and joyful way. Romi was a boy who was “recovering from an illness, and his parents thought a month in the hills would do him good”. The boy was on the hillside cottage with his parents in that cottage there is a window. Romi sit near that window and joyfully watched number of visitors from

forest as eagle, crows, squirrels, water flies, mantis, little lizard, bees, cricket, deer, leopard, nightjars, mellow, owl, bat, moths, beetle etc. The boy keeps sketching all the insects, birds and animals. This short story is a picture of eco rich forests with beautiful lines “great achievements have a small beginning”.

### Five elements

Ruskin Bond not only talks about the forest activities it's creatures but some unnoticed things are also put into words as natural pond, pebbles, tiled huts, people living in good bonding with nature and they don't want that a tiger or leopard should be killed or should leave the forest for their sake. They can live in distance from one another.

Bond has talked about the five natural elements as earth, water, fire, sky, air too in his stories. His stories have the balance of five elements. He suggests this idea that walking in the fresh air, lying on the earth under the open sky, enjoying get together in open beside the log fire with friends, growing flowers on the earth and smelling earth after rain has great importance. It releases its impressions on the reader certainly. For this mutual goodness, being human and being responsible is equally important. Bond accepted in ‘The Yellow Umbrella’ “I was a good walker and had done some tracking over the year I decided to take a long walk to Dhanauti.”

### Destructions for development

Ecocentrism not only focuses on should be but also towards should not be, Bond has directed the attention of his readers towards the after affect: of reckless deforestation and benefits of afforestation. For a rich eco system and good health, the environment should be clean and clear, full of oxygen, without pollution, without much interference and much disturbance. In ‘the dust on the mountain’ a village boy on the hill Bisnu keeps waiting for good monsoon. He keeps his seeds ready to be sown but every time he gets disappointed because of less downpour and not a good rain. Bisnu plans to go to Mussoorie to earn money for his house. He was a small boy but dares to go there and work hard. On his way to Mussoorie he sees that the mountains have less tree. On his enquiry a fellow passenger answers him “there were trees here once, “he said, “but the contractors took the deodar for furniture and houses... And the oaks were stripped of the leaves to feed the cattle-you can still see a few tree -skeletons if you look hard.” The young boy Bisnu gets shocked to see the blasting in the mountain for the sake of limestone. “The dust hid the next mountain from the view. When they did see the mountain, they found the top of it was missing- blasted away by dynamite enable the quarriers to get at the rick strata of limestone rock below the surface.” The story goes further and faces an accident. The truck driver Pritam got injured and immediately taken to the hospital where this Bisnu goes to meet him. In the hospital Pritam Singh says to Bisnu “but for that tree, that truck would have finished up at the foot of the mountain and I wouldn’t be here, all bandaged up and talking to you. It was the tree that saved me. Remember that boy. (BOND, STORIES OF WISDOM, 2019)

### Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that from the ecocentric point of view we find a rich active ecocentric and ecological world in Ruskin Bond’s writing. His stories are registered with nearly all the visible creatures. Ruskin bond's short stories provide his readers a jungle safari experience. He convinces his readers very impressively that our life is just nothing without trees, birds, nature and its beauty. It can be said that even not a single work of bond is untouched with natural extracts but it is noteworthy that his book Great Trees I Have Known is a wonderful collection of stories. It is devoted to nature solely. Maples, oaks, rosebuds, river, water, sea-sound, Himalayan trees, mountains, ferns, pines, deodar, tree shades, coconut tree, music of tree, chestnuts, cherry tree, coral tree, wild fruit, crooked tree, rhododendrons, insects, flowers, mountain streams, clouds, greens, winters, gardens, hills, Garhwal village etc. all have been picked to be framed as a story. In the Introduction of his book The Great Train Journey he quotes the following lines of William Henry Davis:

“What in this life if full of care

We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs

And stair as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see when Woods we pass,

Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.” (bond, 2022)

Quoting these lines Bond fosters the idea of ecocentrism. He wants to see nature in balance. Nature and creature both are important and they are not two but complementary to each other. There needs to be a symbiosis between earth and its living and non-living elements.

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