



AN ECOPSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHT OF RUSKIN BOND'S AN ISLAND OF TREES AND MARGARET ATWOOD'S SURFACING

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ABSTRACT

Ecopsychology is a new area of psychological study and its aim to use established psychological principles to help the humans to understand the tendency Ecopsychology is a new area of psychological study and its aim is to use established psychological principles to help the humans to understand the tendency, to the love the environment and to change one's behaviour. It allows living take over responsibility, live harmoniously and sustain the environment. Nature always seems to be friendly to us leaving a feeling of warmth and security in the heart of the readers. The humans' dependent on nature for their survival and the healing powers of nature on humans show the need for serious ecological concerns in today's literature since nature is in destruction. This questions our responsibility towards the planet when we read literature and also gives rise to the answer that literature has to be seen within an ecological vision. Ruskin Bond, a true son of the Indian soil, exploring the relationship between man and denizens of nature in his stories, comes under the influence of various ecological concerns. Both Margaret Atwood and Ruskin Bond's proclamation of robbing nature's wealth by humans is the need of the hour.

Key words: Ecopsychology, nature, concern, psyche

Ruskin Bond (b.1934) has been an accomplished Indian English writer of British descent. Bond is a Sahitya Academy Award Winner for his book, *Our Trees still Grow in Dehra* (1992) and is also honoured with the prestigious Padmashree (1999) for his lifetime contribution to Indian English Literature. He has written short stories, novels, poems, essays, travelogues and many other things. When Bond started writing short stories, his mind was preoccupied by the nostalgic rustic life in the hilly areas and also the rustic people who he came in touch with when he stayed during his early age. His memories get reflected in almost all his works with the charm of the country side and the rustic environment with a lot of philosophical description touching the reader's heart. Bond's characters are also drawn from the society of people who live in close association with Mother Nature. He earnestly pleads to save the green layer of earth through his works and in which the relationship between man and tree is clearly revealed through the ancient belief, 'A blessing rests on the house where the shadow of the tree falls'.

'Ecopsychology' becomes highly relevant in the field of literature. Ecopsychology is a new way of approaching nature. It studies the relationship between human beings and the natural world through ecological and psychological principles. This worthwhile nature is explored and viewed without judgment in this discipline. It gives the sensations of harmony, balance, timelessness, and stability. It is an analysis of the relation between humans and the natural world in literature.

The connection of man and tree gives the essence of Ruskin Bond's treatment of nature: the life around them. Bond feels a heavy pain in his heart when he thinks of human life without trees since nature is under threat. He points out that man has caused ecological imbalance which in turn will harm mankind spelling disaster someday. Also Bond shows a great path for the betterment of mankind by going green in his stories insisting on the need to grow trees everywhere: The thought of a world without trees became a sort of nightmare for me. It's one reason why I shall never want to live on a treeless moon! (Island 58). Ruskin Bond's *An Island of Trees* is a beautiful example for this kind of attitude in which he picturises the island full of trees.

In *An Island of Trees*, Ruskin Bond insists on not only the need to plant more trees to make this earth survive but also to love them through the characters of Koki, a girl of ten and her Grandmother. Through the use of plain and simple language, Ruskin Bond makes it easier for everyone to take home the valid points of making our environment green. The story opens with Koki and her grandmother talking about her great

grandfather who had abundant love for plants and trees. Koki's grandmother describes how her great grandfather feels life in each and every plant and also about the reciprocal love they had towards each other: Sometimes when I sat alone beneath a tree I would feel a little lonely or lost. But as soon as my father joined me, the garden would become a happy place, the tree itself more friendly (Island 54). Being in perfect harmony with nature, Bond abounds in goodly emotions and feelings which are perceptible in almost all the characters he has drawn. This emotion and feeling towards nature is very well expressed through the words of Great grandfather of Koki who always goes on planting trees wherever finds bare: We are planting it for the earth and for the birds and animals who live on it and need more food and shelter (Island 58). Ruskin Bond feels heart broken when he witness people destroying the world of trees and animals everywhere. Bond believes and makes us believe that nature is the pure bubbling life force responsible for the birth and death of mankind and his thoughts are obviously given life in Koki's grandmother's words: Father told me why mankind, and not only wild creatures, need trees – for keeping the desert away, for attracting rain, for preventing the banks of rivers from being washed away. But everywhere people are cutting down trees without planting new ones. If this continues, then one day there will be no forests at all and the world will become one great desert! (Island 58) The story brightens our minds and eyes when the great grandfather plants trees in the desert in a promising note that someday the trees will enliven us. This unconditional act is rewarded after some years when Koki's grandmother walks along the river bed and the emotional bonding between nature and mankind is picturised in the story through Bond's words:

I remember, and as I looked across the dry river bed, my eye was immediately caught by the spectacular red plumes of the coral blossom. In contrast with the dry river bed, the island was a small green paradise. When I walked over to the trees, I noticed that a number of parrots had come to live in them. A small spotted deer scampered away to hide in a thicket. And a wild pheasant challenged me with a mellow 'who – are – you, who – are – you?'. (Island 61).

Ruskin Bond's life at woods in early age has built up a strong emotional bond between him and nature which urge him to take necessary steps to safeguard nature. Being a visionary, Bond recognizes the need for ecological balance and calls to turn towards the essential need of the hour i.e. recognizing human-nature interdependence: The destruction of forest means death of flora and fauna, and finally death of man. When

man shows no mercy towards nature then someday nature will show no mercy at all leading to a complete disaster insists Bond. It is in the hands of mankind to preserve or spoil earth and hence it is the duty of every individual to cherish and nurture the life giving force for the future generations and with a positive note Ruskin Bond concludes *An Island of Trees*: The trees had multiplied! The forest was on the move! In one small corner of the world, my father's dream was coming true, and trees were walking again.

Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* highlights multiple experiences that the protagonist undergoes especially in relation to nature. Ecopsychology forms a bridge between human psyche and nature. In the wilderness, the protagonist transforms herself with the support of her ecology. She never shared her thoughts to anyone but with nature. Humans hope to find harmony, equality, wholeness and mutual benefit by getting close to nature, which indicates the closeness between humans, and nature, as well as nature's healing power upon humans. She is healed because of her closeness with nature though she has suffered from exploitation, guilty conscience, alienation and immaturity in the beginning of her journey. But her discovery of likeness with nature gradually breaks the barrier of communication that she creates between herself and the world.

Towards the end she realises that, she cannot turn from society but can be cautious. She has been recovering the part of herself she had lost. Because she is cured by the Mother Nature, which is the core of ecopsychology. Finally she is healed and ready to live in the society. She seems prepared to return to the city with new courage which, she has got from the nature and is prepared for challenges of life. She emerges as a brave woman who is capable of establishing her identity.

The psychological approach with environmental activism results in greater effectiveness. Thus, Margaret Atwood, calls her readers to relate with nature in the perspective of psychology. To become one among the nature is noteworthy and it gives peace to one's heart and mind. Nature, by its nature, is therapeutic. Humans are healed by nature in the times of troubles and distress. The special value of Margaret Atwood in the novel lies in the relationship between nature and humans in the technological society. She triumphantly amplified the relationship between Ecology and Psychology through her protagonist. The article clearly depicts that the humans are a part of the nature. It heals the human mental and physical illness and which is closely connected to the health of environment. In this view, Ecopsychology is very important to relieve oneself from

the turmoil in the world. Connecting with nature in a conscious and experiential way will enable the mind and soul to experience the therapeutic effect of nature

Nature is whole and complete in itself. It is creative and restorative; for many people, time spent in nature helps them to feel the divinity. It teaches that humans are not alone and cannot survive without it. Humans should embrace the Mother Earth to live a harmonious life. Thus, the significance of the present study is to awake the ecological consciousness, to generate the feelings and emotions as well as to promote a more ecological life style that humans live harmonious with nature. To conclude, Nature is the great solace for the humans. Plants and trees have feelings towards us. It is the duty of the humans to show the love and concern to nature in order to heal them.

