



International Journal of Innovative Research in Science Engineering and Technology (IJIRSET)

(A Monthly, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Scholarly Indexed, Open Access Journal)



Impact Factor: 8.699

Volume 14, Issue 7, July 2025

Green Imaginations: Childhood, Nature, and the Legacy of Romanticism in Ruskin Bond's Works

Kiran Malav, Dr Hitkaran Singh Ranawat

Research Scholar, Sangam University, Rajasthan, India

Associate Professor cum Assistant Dean, Sangam University, Bhilwara, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT: Ruskin Bond, renowned Indian writer is praised for his creative abilities to eloquently convey the innocence of infancy and the spirit of nature. His short stories illustrate the profound impact of nature on the experiences and lives of his young heroes. A close bond between nature and childhood was envisioned by romantic poets like William Wordsworth and William Blake. Wordsworth idealizes juvenile innocence in nature, which he describes as a reassuring haven that provides respite and renewal. Blake contrasts the harsh reality of life with the innocence of childhood, frequently use nature as a metaphor for two diametrically opposed moods. Bond explores the value of nature in his books by showing how different parts of the world provide a backdrop for his characters' adventures. They examine the ways in which the unique flora and animals of the Himalayan region influence the characters' decisions and perspectives as they travel. They also concentrate on Bond's depiction of childhood, highlighting qualities like the children's callowness, strength, and curiosity. This essay explores how the youthful protagonists in Bond's novels navigate the difficulties of a rapidly evolving world and discover solace and wisdom via their encounters with the natural world. His narrative conveys a strong environmental message in addition to capturing the sweet and innocent parts of infancy. It inspires readers to respect, preserve, and live in harmony with nature.

KEYWORDS: Nature, childhood, Romantic, innocence, experience, storytelling.

I. INTRODUCTION

Youngsters frequently view nature as a place full with mystery and promise. For them, the untamed aspects of nature are a source of power and awareness. Our early experiences with nature frequently serve as the foundation for our adult connection to it. Children's exposure to the wonders of nature is influenced by their parents or guardians. But the thrilling sense of freedom is what really enthralls kids on their outdoor explorations. There are both classic and modern children's books that depict nature in an intriguing way. The meaning of the natural world is frequently conveyed by even the most straightforward tales. Particularly in folklore and fairy tales, the idea that nature is alive and deserving of our care is emphasized. Grimm's story "Mother Holle" serves as a perfect illustration of this, as the girl who works with nature receives gold, while others who don't face repercussions like becoming covered in tar (134). Nature is portrayed as heavenly, essentially benevolent, and full of inspiration and healing properties in several well-known children's books from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

One characteristic of nature that stands out in children's literature is its propensity to manifest itself in mysterious ways. The Wind in the Willows, written by Kenneth Grahame in 1808, masterfully conveys the author's love and reverence for the natural world. Similar to this, nature is portrayed as timeless and intriguing in A.A. Milnes' well-loved Pooh novels. But not every child's book presents nature in a positive light. For instance, in J.R.R. Tolkien's stories, some trees, like Treebeard, represent goodness and knowledge while others are evil. This dichotomy may also be found in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, where the Whomping Willow enjoys slapping and hitting anybody who approaches it. As demonstrated in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865), where animals take control of Alice and continuously taunt her, nature can occasionally even display irrationality and instability. When it comes to nature, the majority of children's book authors seem to be pantheists, regardless of their true beliefs.

This paper aims to reinterpret how nature functions in Ruskin Bond's short stories and how it interacts with kids. However, doing so requires a deliberate examination of the Romantics. As a result, this essay also examines Wordsworth's and Blake's perspectives in this regard.

The poets of the Romantic Revival (1798–1837) were motivated by Jacques Rousseau and consequently began to focus on nature as their subject matter. They discovered that the urban environment, which had been popular during the neoclassical era, was unattractive since it caused individuals to stray from their original state as per God's purpose, in addition to separating them from the embrace of nature. The poets were more focused on comprehending the essence of mankind than they were on social accoutrements. They found this essence in people who flourished in their natural environments and were untouched by outside influences. They were drawn to nature because, in contrast to the systematic man-made buildings, it looked closer to solving the universe's riddles. Wordsworth masterfully illustrates the contrast between the integrity and vibrancy of life in nature and the destructive tendencies displayed by humans in "Lines Written in Spring" from *Lyrical Ballads* (1798):

“The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.
If this belief from heaven be sent
If such be nature's holy plan,
Have I not the reason to lament
What man has made of man? (17-24)

Robert Mayo claims that this contrast between the tranquillity of nature and the disturbance brought about by humans is not creative but rather a "fulfilment of an already stale convention" (491). He also states:

Nature is beautiful and full of joy; that man is corrupted by civilization; that
God may be found in nature, and that the study of nature not only brings
pleasure, therefore, but generates moral goodness. (490)

Wordsworth and Coleridge praise the pure nature of the world and convey a romantic distaste for society in their *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth depicts nature in the poem "Tintern Abbey" in a way that mirrors the observer's mental experiences. In this setting, nature itself and personal perception are endowed with an ethereal importance that transcends personality and materiality.

Alan Richardson examines the age marked by experimentation and invention in the domains of practice and education in his book *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832*. Richardson mainly concentrates on the social, political, and intellectual elements that shaped debates about education in the Romantic era. This method sheds light on the formal elements and topics of modern literature, especially children's literature. This enables him to evaluate authors' works in light of conflicts between conflicting values. In general, there is frequently conflict between middle-class concerns about the political fallout from providing education to marginalized groups and their desire for reform and bettering their lot in life. But in practice, this dynamic is occasionally oversimplified because Richardson frequently bases his criticism on positive elements of Romantic writers' educational ideals.

As demonstrated by well-known authors like William Godwin, Anna Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Maria Edgeworth, the majority of discussions on the educational philosophies of the Romantic era frequently praise their consistent criticisms of the rationalist tradition. These writers all believed that writing was a vehicle for expressing moral and political realities. The Romantic celebration of literature, childhood, and imagination, according to Richardson, was primarily a reaction to these "new rational pedagogies" (31) and ultimately aimed to exclude political influence from children's education. Wordsworth's pedagogical theories are most negatively regarded in this context.

Richardson contends that the intersection of education and politics highlights childhood as a topic of political concern. He claims that Wordsworth's emphasis on the importance of nature in education is "both the response and a reaction to the contemporary politicization of childhood typified by (but by no means limited to) the new educational programs developed in revolutionary France" (39). Richardson also notes that Wordsworth was able to recall a transcendental conception of childhood by depoliticizing the subject, a return to the "ever more fragile and defensive alliance of church and state for managing childhood along traditional lines" (43)

According to Richardson's study, Wordsworth's poetry does not adequately acknowledge the ecological value of the child's relationship with nature. Wordsworth places a great focus on letting kids grow and develop on their own. The infant may become "unsocialized and frozen in a state of eternal innocence" as a result (72). In this way, Wordsworth's

notion of the "child of nature" and William Blake's notion of the "child of innocence" are very similar. Although Richardson links Wordsworth's poetry to "Christian Moralities" (59), it is equally reasonable to contend that his goal was to give kids some autonomy from people who wanted to control their minds. The assertion that Wordsworth's ideas about infancy prevent children from having a "prospect for intellectual development" as adults (106), however, seems to be a misreading of the poet.

William Blake (1757-1827) and nature have a complex relationship. Contrary to popular belief, his poetic response to the world of natural objects is more diverse. Blake constantly takes into account nature within the context of humans, which is perhaps the only generalization that can be made about his attitude toward it. Although Blake's interpretation of nature occasionally resembles that of Christopher Smart and James Thompson, these occurrences are rare and either include direct human interaction or very little human interference.

Blake frequently depicts nature as energy in his descriptive passages. It is based on the balance that has been made between the spiritual and the temporal. Blake, for example, examines the connection between spiritual insight and energy in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," emphasizing abstract traits above concrete ones:

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of the woman is the work of God. (33-36)

Blake's writings show a propensity to view nature from a human perspective. Songs of Innocence and Experience, The Four Zoas, and Milton all hint at the possibility of merging the worlds of nature and humans. The 'Night the First' segment advances toward a complex fusion in which the energy of nature prevails over human physicality. Following Urizen's descent, human souls transform into clouds and

The Horse is of more value than the Man, The Tyger fierce
Laughs at the Human form. The Lion mocks and thirsts for blood. (13-14)

Blake's earliest poems, such as "The Fly" and "On Another's Sorrow," highlight the interdependence of all living things. He frequently personifies the relationship between people and the natural world. Blake's examination of the harmony between people and nature in his legendary settings may help to explain his appeal.

Blake goes beyond endowing elements like the cloud, worm, and lily with human characteristics in "The Book of Thel." Rather, he uses an amazing design to make them come to life. The psychological effects of not being able to properly connect with nature are also highlighted by this method. Despite having the ability to communicate with natural elements, Thel ultimately decides to keep a distance from them. Accepting the certainty of her own death would entail embracing a full identification with nature. Regretfully, Thel lacks the understanding and the resolve necessary for such an act:

Dost thou O little Cloud? I fear that I am not like thee;
For I walk through the vales of Har and smell the sweetest flowers,
But I feed not the little flowers; I hear the warbling birds,
But I feed not the warbling birds; they fly and seek their food. (15-18)

Blake is not a pantheist, but in his prophetic novels, he frequently highlights the dangers of adhering to a religious system that worships plants. But he also opposes the notion of a division between the holy and the material, as well as between oneself and the natural world. In contrast to Thel, Vala is able to give up her uniqueness to the point that she can genuinely relate to nature. In the end, she achieves harmony and wholeness in "Night the Ninth.":

Alas am I but as a flower then will I sit me down
Then will I weep then I'll complain and sigh for immortality. (25-26)

Blake views the natural world as an essential component of the human experience in certain passages. The human element eventually begins to set itself off from the outside world and acquires some degree of control over it. Blake was adamant that it is Inhumans, not nature, who bear the obligation for bringing about oneness. This is where Blake most closely

aligned himself with Berkeley and rejected Locke's ideas. According to Locke, the mind serves as a receptor for the influence of the outside world on our senses, while the outside world is paramount. But according to Blake, nature adopts a passive position while the human mind becomes so active that thoughts and deeds have the power to actually affect and change the status of the world. Notably, *The Four Zoas* places special emphasis on how human actions alter the terrain.

However, human resolve can have both positive and harmful effects on nature. 'Night the Sixth' demonstrates this dichotomy, since Blake makes it apparent that confrontation with nature is neither inevitable nor ongoing. Blake does not suggest that people have control over all natural elements in "Night the Eighth." Rather, he emphasizes how nature can sense human impact and respond appropriately. The emphasis is on the natural world's flexibility rather than human control:

the rocks the deserts feel his power
They shake their slumbers off. (10-11)

In addition to altering how natural items seem, the ability to see can also affect the relationship between people and the natural world. *Songs of Experience* do a fantastic job of expressing this theme, especially in "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found."

Blake's capacity to turn natural energy into art is one way he responds to the world of objects. Nature was once thought to be a passive force that might be influenced by our senses or human volition. Blake now views it as a dynamic force, nevertheless. For instance, the lion's burning eyes in "The Little Girl Lost" begin to release "ruby tears" in order to impart knowledge. Blake's ability to explore a variety of options at various points in his works is what sets him apart.

Ruskin Bond, a writer from the post-independence era who was born in 1934, is familiar with Indian ancestry. Even though he is Anglo-Indian, his works eloquently convey the essence of life as he experienced it. His Indian character has merged in well with his European heritage. Bond's writings do not portray political and social unrest like those of his contemporaries, such as V.S. Naipaul. Instead, the beauty of nature captivates his thoughts, making it impossible for topics from the Indian Renaissance to capture his attention.

Through his works, Ruskin Bond has praised the wonders and splendors of nature for almost 70 years. He was attacked by a swarm of hostile bees during his first encounter with nature, which was extremely upsetting. Bond gained an appreciation for plants and animals as he grew up. He lost himself in literature like the *Jataka Tales*, Jack London's *White Fang*, the *Panchatantra*, and Ballantyne's *Coral Island* and *Hudson Bay*. Living in the hills of Mussorie has strengthened his bond with the natural world. Discovering and recording the wonders of nature and blending them into his stories, articles, and poetry is Bond's life's work. "Nature doesn't promise you anything...Nature is a reward in itself," argues Bond in the preface of *The Book of Nature* (2004) (viii-ix). Despite the fact that nature gives us everything we need, we do not give it enough credit. It can occasionally even turn against us. However, it stays loyal to its essence of giving, receiving, and giving again.

Bond writes autobiographical and intensely personal works. His writings, however, are devoid of sentimentality. His art's impartiality and detachment direct the experience and provoke strong feelings. Because of the events surrounding his parents' divorce, his mother's second marriage, and the death of his father when he was just 10 years old, Bond's early years were difficult as he had to learn how to live on his own. These encounters permanently altered his thinking. As memories fade from their formation, the burden of the past forces him to write about his activities. Deep in reflection, Bond constantly reorganizes his memories, offering insights into his relationship with time. His short story collections, including *Time Stops in Shamli* (1989), *The Man Eater of Manjari* (1974), and *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* (1991), offer realistic depictions of reality that showcase his creative brilliance, perceptive viewpoint, and inventive storytelling.

Ruskin Bond delves into the lives of regular people and distills the essence of ordinary occurrences. His stories, which are set against a plain setting, explore the lives of people who might not have well-known backgrounds but have fascinating tales to share. Bond, who views nature as a spiritual teacher, quietly expresses in his works his love of life and his capacity to find joy and knowledge in it. He is enthralled by the calm beauty of nature, which is enhanced by melodies and breezes. The majority of his works are set against this natural backdrop, which flows through the intricacies of contemporary civilization like a brook. Similar to Wordsworth, Bond views nature as a living thing rather than an ornament—a force that changes people and forges a deep bond with them. His stories of simpletons in their natural

environment reveal the hidden beauty of nature. Bond's heart echoes Wordsworth's view that "nature never did betray the heart that loved her" (312). He also possesses the eyes of a poet. While M.K. Naik notes:

Another special feature of Bond's stories is his acute responsiveness to nature. It is not simply a matter of nature description as a narrative technique, but a genuine feeling for the natural world which has somewhat of a Wordsworthian quality about it. (250)

Bond vividly captures the world's ageless beauty in his works, demonstrating his close relationship with nature. His writings evoke a captivating ambiance that enables readers to recognize the symphony of life. In his works, which frequently depict the fascinating unity of the person and the universe, nature both reflects and delineates a world of freedom. The towns in Bond's novels are surrounded by forests, undulating hills, and stately trees. In addition to being home to hardworking kids, free-spirited animals, and colourful birds, these villages also have their share of artistic personalities.

Bond claims that great fiction authors have never been as enthralled with mountains as they are with the sea. The sea has been honoured in the works of renowned novelists including Sir John Masefield, Herman Melville, R.L. Stevenson, and Joseph Conrad. However, mountains have rarely received the recognition they merit. Bond has been greatly inspired by mountains as a writer. He claims that "you have come very near to the borders of heaven when you have received love from people and the freedom that only mountains can give" (199). Through his captivating tales, he builds on what Byron stated years ago:

I live not in myself, but become a portion of that around me; And to me high mountains are a feeling, and the hum of human cities torture. (332)

Ruskin Bond tells stories in a unique way. He steers clear of overcrowding the story with happenings and concentrates on building his stories around well-defined characters. His stories are unique in that the plot is driven by the characters themselves, who are inspired and driven by emotion. Instead, then being abstract figures, his male and female characters are presented as real human beings. Romi, Rusty, and Sita—three of Bond's little characters—have a balanced relationship with the natural world and their surroundings. They have an adventurous and sympathetic nature that is exquisitely complemented by their encounters with the natural world.

Children's books by Ruskin Bond frequently take place in isolated Himalayan towns or villages. Trust, love, and honesty are still qualities that are upheld in these communities. Children roam freely, and parents don't worry about their safety. Bond uses this setting to depict his own and his characters' early years as an endless summer afternoon full of laughter, delight, and recklessness. His characters like to climb lychee and mango trees, ride bicycles down hillsides, swim in forest lakes, take cool naps beneath trees, and go on adventures along mountain and river trails. The stories effortlessly depict their endeavors, and his stories are subtly encased in the place's timeless and fascinating aura.

The Road to Bazaar (1980) is a collection of tales that masterfully capture the joyful and fun spirit of youth. It beautifully captures the joys and sometimes the struggles of those years, when our main worries were racing in the mornings while our parents were sound asleep, making it to the cricket team, and fearing our parents' wrath when we received a poor report card.

Nature serves as a shield for kids when they are confronted with hazardous situations. Romi rushes through a blazing forest in the narrative "Flames in the Forest," completely oblivious to the gravity of the situation. He is optimistic that he will reach the river in spite of the consuming flames. This stands in contrast to the fear that his friend, whom Romi rescues, feels, as well as the frightened animals that are dashing across their path. Similar to this, Rusty and his friend Daljit escape from their regimental boarding school in Simla and discover the mysterious land beneath the mountains in "The Adventures of Rusty." They navigate across streams, negotiate through the Himalayan jungles, and even come across a tiger but escape unscathed by using time-saving techniques.

In this friendly setting, children's social disparities are irrelevant. For instance, in the story "The Hidden Pool," a fifteen-year-old kid named Laurie, whose father is a British engineer in India, makes friends with Anil, the son of a cloth merchant, and Kamal, a high school student who sells small goods. When they go out on a journey to the Pindari Glacier,

they dismantle barriers of culture and economics. Laurie longs for the peace and quiet of the Himalayas and the secret pool tucked away in its slopes when he returns to England.

The use of a tree as a character is masterfully shown in Ruskin Bond's short story "The Cherry Tree." The story centres on Rakesh, a young kid who plants a cherry seed and watches it develop into a majestic tree. They both grow over time, one more than the other, and a strong bond is formed between them. It becomes clear that the tree and the sapling have an impact on Rakesh's feelings and behaviour. The following lines eloquently illustrate this theme:

Rakesh and Grandfather gazed at the tree as though it had performed a miracle.
There was a pale pink blossom at the end of a branch. (12)

It is clear from the fable "The Leopard" that people and environment should live in harmony. The abundant plant and animal life in the hills readily adjusts to human presence without viewing it as a disruption. In this narrative, Bond describes his numerous interactions with a leopard; the author is unharmed because he harbors no animosity toward the animal. Bond writes:

As I had come not to take anything from the forest, the birds and animals grew
Accustomed to my presence, or possibly they recognised my footsteps. (32)

Rusty in 'A Little World of Mud' finds a marshy pool in his garden, which becomes quite meaningful to him. Rusty meets buffalo herder Ramu in this environment and learns a lot about the intricate web of nature. The tree at Rusty's grandparents' house in Dehradun is another haven that gave him comfort. Rusty reads, plays with squirrels, and watches the interaction of human life and environment while perched in a tree. Rusty keeps his treasured belongings securely hidden in a hidden hole in the tree's trunk, just like the birds and squirrels that seek cover in its canopy.

A more comprehensive view of Bond's life and body of work can be gained by looking at his nature writings collectively. Over time, the distinction between the author and his characters becomes increasingly hazy. The fact that Bond is able to draw the reader into the narrative is what counts most. A close examination of his works reveals aspects of Blakean mysticism entwined with the investigation of experience and innocence. This idea is sufficiently supported by the characters we meet in Bond's stories. Mysticism seems to spontaneously arise from the author's relationship to nature in all of its complexity and forms. Young readers start to understand what the author is trying to say when they read these kinds of stories—that nature has the alluring power to change people's lives.

REFERENCES

1. Bentley, G.E, editor, William Blake: The Critical Heritage, Routledge & Sons, 1975.
2. Blake William. Poems of William Blake (1905), edited by W.B. Yeats. Routledge & Sons, 1979.
3. Bond, Ruskin. Complete Short Stories and Novels. Viking, 1996.
4. ---. The Book of Nature. Penguin-Viking, 2004.
5. ---. The Road to the Bazaar. Julia MacRae, 1980.
6. Compton-Rickett, Arthur. A History of English Literature. UBS, 2006.
7. Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. "Mother Holle". The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales, Pantheon Books, 1944, pp. 50-57.
8. Hunt, Peter. Children's Literature. Blackwell, 2001.
9. Khorana, Meena G. The Life and Works of Ruskin Bond. Praeger, 2003.
10. Mayo, Robert. "The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads". Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America. CUP, 1954, pp. 486-522.
11. Naik, M.K. A History of Indian English Literature. Sahitya Akademi, 1982.
12. Richardson, Alan. Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Readings as Social Practice, 1780-1832. CUP, 1994.
13. Saili, Ganesh. Ruskin: Our Enduring Bond. Roli Books, 2004.
14. Singh, Prabhat K, editor, The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond, Pencraft, 1995.



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

IN SCIENCE | ENGINEERING | TECHNOLOGY

 9940 572 462  6381 907 438  ijirset@gmail.com



www.ijirset.com

Scan to save the contact details