

RUSKIN BOND'S *ANGRY RIVER*: A STUDY ON BIOPHILIA HYPOTHESIS

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Abstract

Biophilia Hypothesis talks about the inherent affinity that human beings possess for nature and other living organisms. From the day God created the world and human beings He wanted him to live along with nature and that is why he kept him in the Garden of Eden to protect it and enjoy spending his time in the lap of nature. But man disobeyed God and was driven out of the Garden of Eden. Even after that God wanted him to toil in the land and earn for his livelihood. So it is the divine purpose that man has to live in connection with nature. Biophilia hypothesis suggests the fact that man's well being is closely knit with his relationship with nature. People who live closer to nature are having a strong psyche and physic. Nature teaches them and they learn from nature and so they are physically and emotionally matured. This paper studies the fact the life of the villagers on the banks of the rivers or the shores of the sea are very much strongly connected to nature. Whether it is life or death they cannot be separated from nature. Their lives are so closely intertwined with nature and that is what, is the prime focus of biophilia hypothesis.

Key Words: Biophilia hypothesis, creation, harmony, power of nature, relationship with nature, nature connectedness

God created the world and found that it was good. Even before the creation of man God created trees, plants, animals, worms and all organisms in the world. Creations reveal the glory and power of the Lord. God created the earth and all that is in it and kept man also among his creation, that is, nature. So man's relationship with nature is inevitable. Man has become part and parcel of nature. Creation of human beings is the crown of God's creation and so God gave the full world under the control of man. He has given man, the command to protect and preserve his creations.

Biophilia Hypothesis refers to an innate tendency in human beings to connect themselves with nature and others forms of life. The term 'biophilia' was used by German-born American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), which described biophilia as "the passionate love of life and of all that is alive." The term was later used by American biologist Edward O Wilson in his work *Biophilia* (1984), which proposed that the tendency of humans to focus on and to affiliate with nature and other life-forms has, in part, a genetic basis.

All human beings are having an inborn instinct towards nature. Researchers believe that there is an attraction towards living organisms in nature and it is only because of this attraction men are having the interest to grow pet animals and keep gardens and preserve and protect them.

The Biological attraction principle suggests that there is an inherent attraction between biological systems, and "this biological attractive force is intrinsic to living organisms and manifests itself through the propensity of any living organism to act, without necessarily any direct contact, on other living organisms" (Agnati et al., 2009, p. 554).

Human beings often run to nature to find solace and comfort in nature. They are awestruck at the magnificent creations found in nature such as multiple colours, wide variety, peaceful movements and attractive designs.

Early human beings' life is centered around nature. There is no technology and modern inventions to spend their time with. From the rising of the sun to its setting, and through the moonlit night they are exposed to nature and they are one with nature. From knowing the time to eating and relaxing they lie in the lap of nature. They see the sun's position to know the time and from the sounds of the animals and birds they predict the forthcoming weather. Animals can sense the impending danger many hours in advance. They will leave their dwelling places and become restless before strong earthquakes. By observing these men understood nature and learnt to live their life.

Man's intricate relationship with nature did not escape from literature. Men write their living and lively stories with nature in their writings. Later when technology improved and when population increases men use nature to the maximum and begin to corrode the wealth of nature. If nature is corroded thus it is only human who have to reap its consequences. Understanding the importance of nature many writers started to write on nature, protection of nature, harms of man towards nature and so on.

Writers in India and abroad, having understood the importance nature wanted to enlighten the world through their writings. So their concern for nature changes Indian literature from destruction to reverence. Ruskin Bond has the same concern and reverence for nature. He expresses it in his writings. His writings deal with the beauty and power of nature. He has experimented with the traditional Indian art of storytelling and European impressionism in order to impart innocence and richness to his narration. His sense of loneliness in early childhood, loss of parental care and love, trauma of belongingness, escapism to the world of books, nature and children-all expressed in the form of stories and novels. Nature is present in its full vibrant, colorful, soothing and peaceful appearance in the novels Ruskin Bond. His novels emphasize, as Rashmi Jain observes,

the local color of Himalayan region stressing on the ambiance including the beautiful forests, scenic beauty, cascading rivers along with the dialects, customs, faith and frustration of simple minded folks of that region. Indianness is always visible, his description of nature is authentic and like an environmentalist he is concerned for nature and presents varied moods of the protagonist through its wild and mild aspect, showcasing love, loss, pain, happiness, and struggle. all in all he focuses on humanity.(365)

Raymond Williams, (2015) says that nature is something that is there for man to acknowledge, understanding and use yet he doesn't have the ability to make nature. Its security depends on the way of life of the spot. Or then again, the way of life of the spot makes according to environment or the nature, as Darwin has proposed the theory of the 'survival of the fittest'. The people who alter well as demonstrated by nature can survive happily on this planet and Ruskin Bond's stories are the perfect instance of this since his characters moves according to the need of their condition. Along these lines, we can express that nature and culture are interrelated. In the obsolete conditions it was believed that by turning one has come back to nature one destroys all of the conceivable outcomes of complete augmentation and profound development.

Sita, the protagonist of the story *Angry River*, lived with her grandparents in a small island situated in the middle of a big river. Their house was a small hut. Sita and her grandparents lived with nature:

The hut had been built into a huge rock so only three of the walls were mud and fourth was rock. Goats grazed on the short grass which grew on the island, and on the prickly leaves of thorn bushes. A few hens followed them about. There was a melon patch and a vegetable patch.(1)

There was a Peepul tree nearby her house. It is a big strong tree that is very old and probably it is only tree in the island. It was an old tree, and an old man sat beneath it. He was mending his fishing net. He had fished in the river for ten years, and he was a good fisherman. He knew where to find the slim silver chilwa fish and the beautiful Mahseer and the ling-moustached Singhara; he knew where the river was deep and where it was shallow; he knew which baits to use- which fish liked worms and which liked gram. (2-3)

Sita's grandparents knew everything about their environment and had a good knowledge of the vegetation around them. Bond, through this story, vividly portrays the dependence of the people of the island, their sole dependence is on the nature and the climatic conditions.

Sita's grandmother fell ill with fever for three days. She could not eat or drink anything and so her grandfather took her to a hospital in the nearby town Shahgani. Her grandfather instructed her how she should stay in the house alone. Grandfather made a small boat and carried his wife to the hospital. Even when they started there was rain. Sita had a doll named Mumta. She will talk to her as if it is a real person. That is her only companion:

"Her grandparents were often ready to talk- and Grandmother, when she was well, was a good storyteller - but sometimes Sita wanted to have secrets, and though there were no special secrets in her life, she made up a few, because it was fun to have them. And if you have secrets, you must have a friend to share them with, a companion of one's own age. Since there were no other children on the island, Sita shared her secrets with the rag doll, whose name was Mumta" (River 16).

Bond, reflects the supreme power of the river. He projects the river as uncontrollable. It is both life giving and destructive. Nature is the soul of this story. Bond is talented in painting the scenery of the island realistically. Nature controls whole course of action in the story. Sita and her grandparents' life are intertwined with nature.

The flood washed away not only the island where Sita resided but also many such villages and towns situated on the bank of that river. The huge Peepul tree where Sita found shelter could not withstand this flood and its roots were shaken and it slowly started to move in the current of the river. Sita is terribly frightened and she clung tightly onto one of the branches of the tree: "If the tree hadn't been there, such a well known landmark, she might have floundered into deep water, into the river. She climbed swiftly into the strong arms of the tree, made herself secure on a familiar branch, and thrust her wet hair away from her eyes."(36)

By the timely help of the boy named Krishnan, Sita got ashore. Sita later learns that her grandmother had died and she returns to the island with her grandfather to build a new house and continue life without her doll Mumta and her grandmother. Through, Krishnan, Bond reveals the concern and love of villagers. People who are brought up in the lap of nature are different from the city people. They learnt their lesson from nature. The boy did not expect anything from Sita in turn. He further teaches Sita how to play the flute. He comes and visits them often to give a kind of moral support. Later when they talked to each other about the river:

'Sometimes the river is angry, and sometimes it is kind,' said Sita.

We are part of the river,' said the boy. 'We cannot live without it.'

It was a good river, deep and strong, beginning in the mountains and ending into the sea. Along the banks for hundred miles, lives millions of people... (83-84)

Bond, from this, boldly highlights that nature can live without man but man cannot live without nature. Though flood devastated the island the boy, Sita and his grandfather could not think of any other place beyond the island. They wanted to rebuild their house there in the same island and wanted to start their life anew.

Bond did not forget to present the belief of the people regarding the Peepul tree. Though it appears to be a superstitious belief, it reveals the observation of the people regarding nature and the prevalence of the spiritual force in nature.

'Don't yawn when you are sitting beneath the tree,' Grandmother used to warn Sita, 'And if you must yawn snap your finger in front of your mouth. If you might forget the spirit might jump down your throat!'

And then what will happen? asked Sita.

'It will probably ruin your digestion,' said grandfather who was't much of a believer in spirits. (4)

Ruskin Bond as he was born and brought up in a hilly region on the lap of nature, his mind is filled with the consciousness of the force of nature and its relationship with man. Bond felt the essential mountain sap and spirit flowing in his blood, and received strength. He says, "It is always the same with mountains. Once you have lived with them for any length of time, you belong to them. There is no escape." Bond felt that these hills, that is nature itself, is not merely a source of beauty to gaze at, but perhaps, spiritual beauty through which one may learn the old values, honesty, faith and love for maintaining everlasting relationships. Bond being a religious person believed in the presence of supreme power and universal connection between Nature and Human beings, like the romantic poet, Wordsworth. He advises human beings, "Live close to nature and you'll never feel lonely. Don't drive those sparrows out of your veranda; they won't hack into your computer."

Bond has given a splendid description of the river and the tall trees standing on the banks of the river. He has also vividly portrayed about creatures like snakes, worms, and flora and fauna of the locality with colour. Nature's harmony encompasses all creatures, great and small, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, and Bond accepts the ultimate truth of nature with humility.

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