

Nature and Child Kinship: Analysing the Discourse of Deep Ecology in *The Cherry Tree*

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Abstract

The Environmental consciousness in literary writings is a much-talked subject of the day with the emergence of a contemporary theory called Ecocriticism. The eco-friendly movement fosters environmental consciousness among the readers. Deep Ecology, one of the sub-fields of eco critical theory, underlines the value of every life in an ecosystem. The essay investigates a child's knowledge of the environmental relevance of the simplest things of ecology in a setting. Ruskin Bond is a notable Anglophone writer, recognised for his nature works. Being a lover of the natural world, Bond's short fiction, *The Cherry Tree* realistically illustrates how concern for the environment emerges in a child through his direct interaction with nature. The paper makes an attempt to investigate this fascinating story under the observation of an ecocritical lens.

Keywords : ecocriticism, forest, nature, tree,

Introduction

The depiction of the natural world in works of literature is not a new development. Since the beginning of time, great works of classic literature have included descriptions of nature. Nature plays a significant part in a wide variety of literary works, ranging from *Beowulf* to *The Wasteland*. However, the author does not always have the same perspective regarding nature. Mother nature frequently makes an appearance in stories as both a backdrop and a character in its own right. The Metaphysical poets view nature as a conception through which humans think of their distinction from the rest of the world, which does not contain humans. As a result of their discontent with the world around them, the romantics sought refuge in the unrestricted embrace of nature. As may be seen in Hardy's writings, nature often plays a decisive part in the works of Victorian authors. The modern writers take a realistic view of nature in their writing. But writing about nature underwent a change toward the latter half of the twentieth century, when environmental concerns were given

a place in literary canons in response to the growing severity of the worldwide environmental problem. Ecocritics are assuming a more prominent role, and ecoconsciousness is gradually supplanting ego consciousness as the dominant state of mind in literary criticism. The development of an ecocentric attitude is an absolute necessity in light of the current state of environmental disarray facing our planet. This article focuses on the environmentally conscious mindset that a child develops as a result of his or her interactions with nature, which is highlighted throughout. Because of his prominence as a writer of children's literature, Ruskin Bond's *The Cherry Tree* is the subject of this research. Bond's tale focuses on the importance of caring for the natural world.

Ecocritical Analysis of *The Cherry Tree*

Children who read *The Cherry Tree* develop a heightened understanding of environmental issues as a direct result of their exposure to this story. The piece of short fiction begins with Rakesh, a very young schoolboy of only six years old, heading back to his house after visiting the Mussoorie bazaar. He purchased a large quantity of cherries and enjoyed eating them while he travelled. When he finally arrived at his grandfather's house, where he would be spending the night, there were only three cherries left of the pleasantly deliciously moist fruits. Because his grandfather had worked as a conservation officer for many years before retiring, he possessed a wealth of knowledge concerning the topography and flora of the Himalayas. They lived at the foothills of the Himalayas, but there weren't many trees there since the dry, cool breeze and the rocky terrain prevented most plants from growing properly. However, Rakesh made the observation that the oak and deodar forests developed on the slopes that received the least amount of sunlight. Rakesh had, up until that point, crushed all of the seeds, but before he did so, he placed the final one on his hands and examined it. In accordance with the advice that his grandpa had given him, he intended to get the most out of it. Motivated, he grabbed a spade, dug up the soil, and buried it in the shady area of a mustard farm. Then, he promptly forgot about it.

During this time, Rakesh's awareness of environmental issues increased as a result of his observations of the natural environment. Because of his grandfather's poor eyesight, Rakesh would often be asked to read the newspaper to him so that he could listen to his grandfather's stories. This was one of his favourite things to do. But Rakesh was not particularly concerned with socio-centric matters. The child's perspective was slowly shifting to become more bio-centric. He noticed, as winter approached, how the dry, cold wind and snowfall had stripped the deodar trees of their leaves, giving them a barren appearance. During the bone-

chilling months of winter, he used to look forward to the evening charcoal fire as a source of comforting warmth. He witnessed the process by which the migratory birds travelled from as far away as Siberia to their land, and he witnessed the process by which they travelled back to their territory during the spring in the form of a "v" formation streaming northwards. He also heard the call of the birds resonating through the mountain air.

When Rakesh went into the garden early one morning, he bent down to pick up a little twig and discovered, much to his amazement, that it was firmly entrenched in the ground. After staring at it for a while, he asked his grandfather if it was the same seed that he had planted, which had since developed into a cherry plant. His grandfather happily confirmed that it was the same seed. Rakesh gave it consistent amounts of water and adorned it with pebbles to keep it healthy. He was able to observe the modest but consistent expansion of the plant during the course of his observation. When the monsoon season arrived, the tree trunks sprouted ferns, strange-looking lilies appeared in the tall grass, and the cherry tree grew very quickly. All of these changes coincided with the entrance of the rainy season.

However, there were some obstacles in the way of the plant's development. Once upon a time, a goat wandered into the garden and consumed all of its leaves when the plants were about two feet tall. The only parts that were left were the main stem and two very slender branches. Rakesh was sure the plant had to be dead at this point, but his grandfather reassured him that because cherry trees are hardy by nature, they will continue to exist. At the tail end of the wet season, fresh leaves began to sprout on the branches of the trees. A second time, a woman cut the tree in half when she was trimming the grass for the animals in the house. Even her grandfather reprimanded her for causing the damage, which ended up being permanent. "But the cherry tree had no intention of passing away," the speaker continued. By the time the season of summer rolled around once more, it had already sent forth a number of new shoots that had tender green leaves. (Bath & Dasgupta 33) At the same time that Rakesh reached the age of eight, the cherry tree also increased in height. It had reached his chest at this point. Rakesh continued to water and tend to the plant with considerable concern. But the cherry tree remained in jeopardy, and Rakesh was a firsthand witness to its fight to stay alive throughout the ordeal. The first creature to visit the cherry tree was a hairy caterpillar, which immediately began feeding on the leaves of the tree. Rakesh swiftly took it from the room and pleaded with the insect to return only once it had transformed into a butterfly. Because he was aware that by that time it would be capable of sucking honey from the blossoms and contributing to the infusion process.

By the time it was officially winter once more, a single pink flower had made its way to the tip of the cherry tree branch. The following year, the tree continued to grow and mature, and further blooms began to sprout on the twigs. Honey bees swarmed the blossoms in order to consume the nectar that was present there. The flocks of little birds flocked around the flowers and peeled off the petals one by one. However, throughout the spring, there were a greater number of blossoms than there were birds. When summer arrived, the little cherry completely covered the tree's limbs. These drew in the larger birds, such as bulbuls and red minivets, and those birds immediately began chowing down on the cherries with great joy. Grandpa took in the picturesque view of the cherry tree from the comfort of a cane chair placed beneath the tree. The refreshing shade that the tree provided amused him as well. Even Rakesh got a kick out of the excitement, especially when the wind made the lovely foliage of the cherry tree sway. He felt a personal connection to it because he was the one who had originally planted it. He rejoiced because he had not thrown away the seed, which eventually grew into a majestic tree. As he ran his hand along the trunk of the tree and pressed his finger to the tip of a leaf, he experienced the happiness that comes from being a part of something that was created. He pondered the question to himself, "Is this how it feels to be God?" (Bath & Dasgupta 35). That he was able to make use of the cherry seed that he had was a stroke of good luck for him.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how a young infant can develop an awareness of the environment by interacting with the fundamental aspects of natural phenomena. Rakesh, a young boy at school, has an intuitive understanding of the process by which a single seed can develop into a plant and, eventually, a tree, alluding to a mutually beneficial partnership between the human and nonhuman worlds. The cherry tree serves as the focal point, drawing in a variety of organisms, including humans, children, and various insects. A trifling seed requires very little attention in order to grow into a tree, which will eventually produce many more seeds via its blossoms and fruits. The child gained his ecological perspective through hands-on experiences with nature, such as trees, birds, insects, flowers, and seasons, among other things. His initial objective was to savour the cheerful to appease his taste buds, but this quickly evolved into a concern for the environment and the well-being of future generations of humans. The reading does not only extol the virtues of nature; rather, it investigates the value that nature possesses in and of itself. Under the current conditions, people partake in activities that are harmful to the environment. They have very little time to observe the value that is already

present in natural objects. A little youngster like Rakesh possessed the kind of ecological understanding that every person ought to have in order to provide greater care for the world.

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