

An Ecocritical Reading of Ruskin Bond's *Angry River*

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Abstract-This paper discusses the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness between humans and nature, as demonstrated in *Angry River*. In the novel, the main character, Sita, experiences a flood, fights through it with hope, and comes to the conclusion that people are a part of nature and nature is a part of humans, and one cannot survive without mother nature. The beauty and complexity of nature are awe-inspiring, and it is no wonder that Sita loves it so much. Sita learned during her experience with *Angry River* flood, nature can be both beautiful and powerful. It emphasizes the need for preserving nature and appreciating its beauty and complexity. Sita's realization about the significance of mother nature is a powerful reminder that we cannot survive without it. As Bond's love for solitude and nature shows, there is something awe-inspiring about being immersed in the natural world.

Key Words: Ecology, Nature, Complexity, Beauty, Immanence

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Ruskin Bond secures an outstanding place in the entire gamut of Indian English fiction. His devotion to the muse of writing makes him a sort of guardian angel of Indian English writing; scripting novellas, stories, children's tales, verses, literary columns, and editing anthologies. Bond's works entirely are exploration of the truth, meaning of life, understanding of one's own self, devotion to nature while writing about children and nature and above all he believes in the noble virtues of mankind.

Bond's *Angry River* tells the story of Sita and her grandparents, who live on a small island in the middle of a big river. Their house is made up of mud, and they lead a simple life. However, one day, the river begins to rise, and they are forced to evacuate their home. A Peepul tree, which is as old as the island itself and has the power to withstand any kind of catastrophe, stood in the middle of the island. Sita's grandmother gets sick, and so she and her grandfather travel to Shahganj to get medical care. Sita is alone on the island, tending to the farm's hens, goats, and other animals. She shares her thoughts and feelings with her one and only friend, Mumta, who is a rag doll made from various pieces of clothing.

One day, a severe storm and flood hit the island. Sita obeys the instructions of her grandmother and climbs to the top of the Peepul tree. The flood has

swept everything away. The Peepul tree, which is nearly as old as the island itself, is on the verge of collapsing. A young man named Krishan, who is riding in a boat, saves Sita just in time. Sita is sad because she thinks that the river is so angry at humans. By emphasizing the interdependence of humans and nature, Krishan persuades and offers hope to her. Sita and her grandfather make their way back to the island after the gruesome river has passed, but Sita is forced to leave behind her two most prized possessions - her grandmother and her doll Mumta.

Together with the assistance of her grandfather, Sita gets back to work tearing down the old house and building the new one from the ground up. In place of the peepul tree, she plants mango seeds. Sita spends the next few weeks working tirelessly on the new house, taking breaks only to tend to the newly planted mango trees. She watches as they grow, hoping that they will one day provide shade and comfort just like the old Peepul tree did. As the house nears completion, Sita begins to feel a sense of accomplishment and pride. She realizes that even though the flood destroyed everything, it also gave her the opportunity to rebuild and create something new. With the help of her grandfather and the support of Krishan, Sita feels ready to face whatever challenges come her way in the future.

She looks back on the past few months and realizes how much she has grown as a person. The

flood was a devastating experience, but it also taught her the importance of resilience and perseverance. Sita now feels a sense of accomplishment and pride in herself for being able to overcome such a difficult situation. She has learned to appreciate the little things in life and not take anything for granted.

Sita is grateful for the love and support of her family and friends, who helped her through this tough time. As she looks towards the future, Sita is excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. She knows that there will be more challenges to face, but she feels confident that she can handle whatever comes her way. With her newfound sense of strength and determination, Sita is ready to take on the world and make her dreams a reality.

The island symbolizes a world of solitude and loneliness, where Sita, the protagonist, and her grandparents live a difficult life. The island is surrounded by the vast ocean that seems to isolate them from the rest of the world. Despite their hardships, Sita and her grandparents find solace in the beauty of nature that surrounds them. They spend their days fishing, farming, and collecting fruits from the trees that grow on the island.

Although they are physically isolated from society, they remain connected to each other through their love and support for one another. As Sita grows older, she begins to understand the value of this bond and appreciates the simple life that they lead on the island. She realizes that sometimes it is not about having everything but finding happiness in what you have.

Every person is an island, the novel argues, until they are swept away by the tide of life and begin interacting with others. As she spends more time on the island, she begins to appreciate the simple things in life. The sound of the waves crashing against the shore, the warmth of the sun on her skin, and the taste of fresh fruit picked from a nearby tree. She learns to live off the land and finds joy in the little moments.

The novel highlights that people often get caught up in their own lives and forget to appreciate what they have. It reminds the readers that happiness is not found in material possessions but rather in experiences and relationships. As she interacts

with other individuals on the island, she realizes that each person has their own unique story and struggles. She learns to empathize with others and finds comfort in knowing that she is not alone.

In this way, the island becomes a metaphor for life itself - people are all separate entities until they start interacting with others and forming connections. The island's isolation can be both a blessing and a curse. While it may offer solitude and peace, it can also be lonely and limiting. The metaphor of the island extends beyond physical isolation to encompass the human experience. People are all born alone, but they need others to grow and thrive. Connection is essential for personal development, and society provides the fertile ground for this growth. Without interaction with others, people risk becoming stagnant and unfulfilled.

The island may offer a temporary respite from the chaos of society, but ultimately, people need each other to reach their full potential. So, while the island may be a beautiful escape, it is important to remember that true fulfillment comes from building relationships with those around them.

Though she was content living with her grandparents on the island, she had no idea of the vastness of life beyond it. When the flood came and swept away everything she knew, Sita was forced to confront a new reality. It was through this experience that she learned the importance of forming connections with others.

She met people from all walks of life who showed her kindness and compassion, and in turn, she learned to reciprocate those feelings. As Sita navigated this new world, she discovered that true fulfillment comes not from material possessions or a comfortable routine but from the relationships people build with others. And so, the journey of the Sita became one of growth and self-discovery as she learned to embrace the power of human connection.

The uprooting of the huge Peepul tree is a tragic event for the inhabitants of the Island. The tree was not only a symbol of generosity and magnanimity, but also a source of spiritual significance. In Hindu mythology, the Peepul tree is considered to be the most sacred, and its heart-shaped leaves are said to represent the physique of Lord Krishna. The loss of such an ancient and

revered tree is deeply felt by those who hold it in high regard.

However, amidst the devastation caused by the heavy flood, there is hope for new growth and renewal. The islanders can take comfort in knowing that even though the physical form of the Peepul tree may be gone, its spiritual significance will continue to live on in their hearts and minds. As they work to rebuild their community, they can draw strength from the symbolism of the Peepul tree and strive to embody its qualities of generosity and magnanimity in their own lives.

The rag doll of Sita, Mumta, is a poignant symbol of her isolation and loneliness on the island. As the only other "living" thing on the island, Mumta becomes Sita's closest companion and confidante. "Since there were no other children on the island, Sita shared her secrets with the rag doll, whose name was Mumta" (16). Despite being a non-living object, Mumta takes on a life of her own in Sita's imagination, providing comfort and solace in times of distress. In this way, Mumta serves as a reminder of the power of imagination and the human need for connection and companionship.

Additionally, the island itself can be seen as a symbol of isolation and confinement. Cut off from the rest of society, Sita is forced to confront her own fears and desires in a way that she never would have had to otherwise. The river that runs through the island can also be interpreted as a symbol of change and transformation. As Sita navigates its treacherous waters, she must confront both external dangers and internal demons in order to survive.

Ultimately, these experiences led Sita to a deeper understanding of herself and the world around her. She learns to appreciate the simple pleasures of life and finds a sense of peace in the solitude of the island. Through her relationship with Mumta and her journey on the river, Sita discovers the resilience and strength within herself that she never knew existed. The island may have been a place of isolation, but for Sita, it became a transformative journey of self-discovery.

The river in *Angry River* is not just a body of water but a symbol of the interconnectedness of all living things. It serves as a reminder that people are all part of nature and should strive to live in harmony with it. The flow of the river represents the

constant change and evolution of life, and its power reminds people of the immense force that nature possesses. By recognizing people's place within nature, they can better understand their role in protecting it for future generations.

The *Angry River* is a call to action, urging people to take responsibility for their impact on the environment and work towards sustainability. Let them heed its message and strive to live in balance with nature, respecting its power and beauty while working towards a brighter future for all.

In a religious context, it is important to address the issues of today and bring them to light. "Krishna, friend of birds and animals. Indra, who made the thunder and lightning. Hanuman, the Monkey-God who helped the young prince Rama in his war with the king of Ceylon" (25). It is through this emphasis and highlighting that one can begin to understand the challenges one face and work towards finding solutions.

Sita found courage and hope in mythological tales and the characters. Krishan represents a hero figure who delivers Sita from the onslaught. Sita is saved from the flood by Krishan, who comforts and persuades her by telling her that people are a part of the river, that the river is a part of mother nature, and that people cannot survive without mother nature.

Bond is a master at using literary techniques to accentuate human psychology in his works. In "Angry River," he employs a range of techniques to bring out the inner struggles of his characters. One such technique is the use of symbolism, as seen in Sita's dream, where she sees the boy and Lord Krishna as one.

This dream symbolizes her deep-seated desire for happiness and contentment in life. Bond also uses imagery to create vivid mental pictures that evoke emotions and thoughts in readers. Through his descriptions of the river and its surroundings, he paints a picture of the characters' inner turmoil and struggles.

Additionally, Bond employs dialogue to reveal the characters' personalities and motivations, allowing readers to connect with them on a deeper level. Bond's use of these techniques creates a powerful narrative that explores the complexities of human psychology in a compelling way. As Bond felt his blood and received strength, he could

not help but marvel at the beauty of the hills around him. To him, nature is more than just a pretty sight - it holds a deeper spiritual significance. He believed that the hills are a source of wisdom, teaching values like honesty, faith, and love that are essential for building strong relationships. As he gazed out at the rolling landscape, he felt a sense of peace and connection to something greater than himself. It is as if the hills are speaking to him, whispering secrets that only those who truly listened could hear. For Bond, this is a reminder that there is more to life than just material possessions and superficial pleasures - there is also beauty and meaning to be found in the natural world around oneself.

Being a religious person means believing in the presence of a supreme power and the universal connection between nature and human beings. This connection is beautifully expressed by Ruskin Bond's quote, "Live close to nature and you'll never feel lonely." Nature has a way of bringing peace and comfort to people's lives, reminding them that they are not alone in this world.

As religious individuals, they understand that there is something greater than oneself at work in the world, and that people are all connected through this force. It is important to respect and appreciate the natural world around people, as it is a reflection of the divine. In doing so, people can find solace in knowing that they are part of something much bigger than themselves.

As Bond reminds the readers, even the smallest creatures like sparrows have a place in this interconnected web of life. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all things, religious individuals are able to live their lives with a greater sense of purpose and meaning. They understand that their actions have consequences not only for themselves but for the world around them as well. This sense of responsibility drives them to live in harmony with nature and to protect and preserve the environment for future generations. For many, this connection to nature is also a source of inspiration and creativity, as they find beauty and wonder in the natural world. Whether through art, music, or literature, they seek to capture the essence of this connection and share it with others.

Happiness is as exclusive as a butterfly, and you must never pursue it. If you stay very still, it may come and settle on your hand. But only briefly. Savour those moments, for they will not come in your way very often. (*A Little Book of Life*, 58)

The words of wisdom echo in the author's mind as he watches the butterfly flutter away. It is a reminder to appreciate the fleeting moments of beauty that life offers. Like the butterfly, these moments may come and settle on people's hands, but only briefly.

But the trees seemed to know me. They whispered among themselves and beckoned me nearer. And looking around, I noticed the other small trees and wild plants and grasses had sprung up under the protection of the trees we had placed there. The trees had multiplied. They were moving. In one small corner of the world, Grandfather's dream was coming true and the trees were moving again. (*Rusty: The Boy from the Hills*, 54)

It is easy to get caught up in the chaos of everyday life and forget to stop and appreciate the small things. But it is important to savour those moments, for they will not come to people very often. Whether it is a beautiful sunset, a kind gesture from a stranger, or simply spending time with loved ones, people should cherish these moments and hold onto them tightly. They serve as reminders that life is full of wonder and beauty, even in the midst of chaos. So, all must take a moment to pause, breathe, and appreciate the butterflies that come their way.

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