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# Studying the Element of Horror and the Supernatural in “The House of Strange Stories” by Ruskin Bond

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**ABSTRACT:** This research study provides a detailed explanation of Ruskin Bond. A well-known author or a deep storyteller is connected with love, nature, and the mountain. He is well-known for his short stories for children, and this article will analyze his contribution to children's literature. It investigates the pedagogical aspects of the ecogothic themes in Ruskin Bond's literature, focusing on three novellas: furious river, dust on the mountains, and Tiger, Tiger glowing bright. The goal is to start a discussion on the pedagogical benefits of Ruskin Bond's novellas from an ecogothic standpoint combined with a postcolonial gothic pedagogical approach.

## INTRODUCTION

This essay places Ruskin Bond's writings in an Ecogothic perspective, claiming that his novellas should be included into the Indian primary curriculum as an instructional tool using ecogothic analysis methodologies to raise awareness of environment and the climatic problems.

Despite the fact that Bond's character variety is wider. He is the most accomplished author of hills, and the global attraction of his characters is unmistakable. His short stories are well-finished and artistically interwoven works. He delves further into how and why these events occurred. He looks at his characters from the inside out, analyzing how their minds work. He is the top friction writer in Indian English writing.

**FREEDOM OF OWN FEELINGS:** In Sivaliks in a forest bungalow, the world of ghost was encountered by Ruskin Bond for the first time. Fear is the most sensational emotion of man that he raises in his short stories. Ruskin Bond has a great interest in ghost stories, he is writing stories from four decades. He writes about his own experiences some stories of his is purely fictional. A person like Bond can imagine horrible situation is really astonishing. Horror is the word described as terror feeling of fear arising out of various factor like thunder, rain, strong wind etc. also arises due to overthinking, some element that is hard to believe. ‘The night train at Deoli’ of miss Fairchild is a horror story, miss Fairchild lives with many dogs. Outrage respond to monkeys, destroying of her Dahlias, shee shoots a monkey. Was killed by monkeys as she faced their anger. The dogs were taken care by her neighbor after her death. Years later when Bond goes in the same house to live he feels ghastly scene of killing being re-enacted. ‘A face in the dark’ a story of Mr Oliver a teacher in simla goes out in the woods for a shortcut to the school where he meets a boy weeping in the wood in a school uniform when Mr Oliver asked him what is the problem he looked at him he was having no eyes and nose. Mr Oliver runs with a lantern in his hand with fear he met a man same like the boy with no face and Mr Oliver dies of heart attack after seeing the man.

Ruskin Bond stories has the effect of terror enhance supernatural elements. The first two stories has the transformation of innocent into something dreadful.

**SKILLFUL USE OF A POT:** Ruskin Bond uses his plots to educe a threatening atmosphere of strong winds, lightening, storm, thunder etc. a candle light seen for befitting setting for scene of supernatural element. ‘Whispering in the dark’ story by Ruskin Bond in which two sisters tempt travellers to their boarding-house they got ribbed and killed. There is a scary background of this story.

The story of Bond are manifesting of his misery. To emancipate his loneliness and suffering he started writing from his teenage. As he faced insecurities in his childhood he uses plot or background in his stories to create atmosphere of insecurities. There is a marked variation in presentation of ghost in the passage of time.

His simple style of writing is very popular. He writes from his soul his readers believes. He does not use heavy didactic tone he teaches man to love nature as a sensitive, delicate environment, to understand the child's perspective as he is the master storyteller of child literature. It is really difficult to understand in this content how and why is gives



incentive to existence of ghosts, which is superstition. The hidden expression of his personality is the supernatural elements. Infamous, shady darkness exist but are not visible superficially of any part of bond's personality. That unrevealed self is a face 'lonely in the crowd', which crosses the walls of this world to take a look at the inhabitants of the other world, as lonely as the writer himself.

**INDIAN FOLK STORIES SERVE AS INSPIRATION:**In our encounter, Bond explained that the Western conception of the Ghost is a little different.

There, a deceased person is sort of resurrected and appears in a familiar but non-physical form.

Perhaps reincarnation plays a bigger role in this situation. Bond is a skilled observer, yet when portraying ghosts or the supernatural, he takes ideas from his friends or acquaintances. He once shared a room with Mrs. Singh, who described the several kinds of ghosts one can run into: "Churels, the ghosts of immoral women who appeared naked with their feet facing backwards; ghosts with long front teeth facing backwards; ghosts with long tails facing backwards." Ruskin Bond became acutely aware of his fantasies as a result of his imperfect relationships and unfulfilled ambitions. Instead of Western culture, he drew his superstitious ideas from Indian folk stories.

**MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE:**The sense of mystery and suspense in Bond's writing is among its most alluring features. Readers are frightened by individuals in "A Case for Inspector Lal," "He Said It With Arsenic," and "A Job Well Done" who are cunning, selfish, and dishonest. These are cold-blooded killers, careless property owners, and dishonest law enforcement. The main character in James Bond's "He said it with arsenic" is a nice, affluent man. a good, courteous individual... Who maintained butterflies in glass jars? He took a short and painless ether bottle. He never poked the lovely creatures with needles.

In "A Job Well Done," the gardener Dukhi has a soft spot for pigeons yet murders Major Sumerskill because he hates the man. He then makes amends for his wrongdoing. The reader is left wondering who killed the Rani in the compelling mystery "An Axe for the Rani." Inspector Keemat Lal discovers that Kamla, a young girl, lured the Rani with the prospect of being used by Mr. Kapoor before killing her with an axe. Inspector Lal made the decision to refrain due to tender feelings.

**A REVIEW OF THE INDIAN GOTHIC PARADIGMS:**Several authors have recycled classic Gothic motifs to emphasize the Indian social aspects that are prevalent in and around the homes. In her essay, Molly Slavin reveals Arundhati Roy's endeavor to convey her "vision of hopes, regeneration, and transformation" in the book "The Ministry of Happiness" (Slavin, 2020, p. 191). According to Slavin (2020), Roy 'demonstrates for readers the possibilities of colonial Gothic motifs remade for a postcolonial audience, building upon the initial Gothic vision of 'separated individual[ity]' to finally express a justice-oriented vision of a postcolonial world. A new genre called Indian Gothic has emerged as a result of the transformation of western Gothic to include Indian influences. But the other. The ecoGothic elements of Nabarun Bhattacharya's 2004 film Toy City are examined by Sourit Bhattacharya in 2020. The tale discusses the problem of massive amounts of hazardous waste being dumped onto developing nations in the global south by western nations and the dangers that come with it. With its dangerous mountains and poisoned rivers, neo-colonial military nuclear testing, and the oppressive atmosphere, Sourit C emphasizes the apocalyptic narrative utilized by Nabarun to show the toxicity ingrained in the text (Bhattacharya 2020). Sourit claims that after the nuclear fallout, the area around the city is nothing but an eerie aura, enhanced by death and ruin everywhere one looks. Referring to the countless ecological catastrophes that have occurred throughout the among them is the tragic Bhopal Gas Tragedy in India (1984), which occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries. Nabarun uses the "three witches" method, which predicted of the death of remaining residents, before the ultimate eradication. The three destinies, who are famed for prophesy in more than one world myth, were repurposed into the three witches theme that William Shakespeare employed in Macbeth. Witches have featured in Gothic literature to perform roles such as "divination; communing with the spirits of the dead," according to Faye Ringel (2009), who also notes that "witch belief was not central to the first Gothic revival" (pp. 259-260).

#### THE ECOGOTHIC'S PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTION

In a landmark collection on the EcoGothic, published by Andrew Smith and William Hughes in 2013, they made the case for studying and using Gothic in ecocritical research. The body is a location of Gothic fear—sexual, damaged, dismembered, and celebrated—which may be observed and happily re-membered in a literary landscape, according to Smith and Hughes' (2017) description of this book (p. 8). According to Smith and Hughes (2017), all of the chapters were commissioned for the ground-breaking book on the study of the ecoGothic specifically because they represented "a new way of thinking of the Gothic, particularly because they "indicate the way in which [the Gothic] engages with a major pressing political issue that confronts the world today" (p. 13). The introduction to the ecoGothic by Smith and Hughes from



2017 may be read in conjunction with Wisker's claim about the postcolonial Gothic's educational usefulness. Wisker (2007) asserts that while teaching any postcolonial Gothic writings, it is crucial to take students' beliefs into account. This is especially crucial when teaching about the nature of the climate problem and ecological calamities with the messages included in the texts. From an Indian perspective, it is crucial to have an understanding of the students' cultural backgrounds and belief systems because this will help them comprehend the value of protecting the environment and the harm that capitalism and neoliberalism pose to it. Native beliefs of the students must also be taken into account. According to Bayan Almmouri and Dina Salman (2021), the "proliferation of neoliberal rationality" has altered the definition of and had an influence on climate change in the global south. They link the emergence of posthumanism to this transformation. Technology is a two-edged sword that both advances mankind and exacerbates the global warming catastrophe. As a result, fiction with ecoGothic themes frequently explores a return to an organic relationship with nature. When viewed via a postcolonial Gothic lens, the ecoGothic thus becomes the location of a link between nature and power relations as well as a relationship between humankind and nature with all of its antecedent terrors and moments of sublimity.

**DEFORESTATION AND DEHUMANIZATION: DUST ON THE MOUNTAIN:**1990 saw the initial release of Ruskin Bond's *Dust on the Mountain*. The novella raises important themes including deforestation, excessive mountain drilling, and the terrible consequences of upsetting nature's delicate equilibrium. The protagonist, Bisnu, resides in the little village of Tehri, Garhwal, in the hills with his mother, younger sister, and himself. The orchards were hardly productive because of the little rainfall and snowfall. Water scarcity caused issues with food rationing and revenue. Bishnu makes the decision to travel to Mussoorie in the summer, when there is an influx of tourists to the hill resort, in order to save his family. During this time, finding work is simple, so Bishnu starts selling tea in the theater's intermissions. However, after the theater closes for the season, one of Bishnu's coworkers drives him to a mine, where he finds employment as a cleaner on a truck. Pritam, the owner and truck driver, was in charge of transporting the rocks or "dust" from the quarry to the manufacturing facility in order to make lime powder. Bishnu accepted the position with trepidation since he was horrified by the vision of mountains losing their verdant luster and becoming into dusty plains. The truck topples and rolls down the valley one day while trying to save a mule. It is stopped from continuing its dangerous drop by a tree trunk on the cliff.

Bishnu eventually decides to return to his own home after realizing the value of trees. Pritam Singh also takes a retirement to return to his hometown. This fable-heavy story has strong didactic elements that may be utilized to educate kids the value of protecting the environment and the significance of trees.

In this novella, the contrast of human life and the ferocious condition of nature is made possible by the sense of home and the desire to return there.

Mohammed Lami S. A. Shamallakh, Ravichandran Vengadasamy, and Mohamed Zain Sulaiman (2021). This abstraction evokes the Sublime when compared to Bond's paintings' wholeness of nature at its most visceral. Burke believes that when one is confronted with dread, the

Sublime is the highest emotion one can experience. According to Burke (2005), the source of the sublime "excites the ideas of pain and danger...or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror." Burkean "capitulation" to the Sublime, according to Vijay Mishra (2012), is not unlike from a "religious experience" (p.290). When Bishnu notices the trees are being uprooted owing to mining activities, he is initially terrified before being overcome with awe, which is surprise similar to a religious revelation. The urge to protect his house and to respect nature are his first thoughts at that point.

Burkean Grief is a term that may be used to describe this feeling. Burkean Grief is when a person feels sad because they identify more with what has been lost than with their own situation. After a tree saves him from imminent death and allows him to return to his homeland, Bishnu subsequently learns the importance of trees. (2010b, p. 113) The saying goes, "It's better to grow things on the land than to blast things out of it." Through a feeling of Burkean Grief, students can relate to the loss and devastation of nature, and the sublime may elevate the senses and help people realize how important it is to protect the environment. This highlights the novella's teaching significance when students read it since it is almost like a didactic message.

## CONCLUSION

The Himalayan aroma is instilled in every great storyteller, and they constantly refer to it when writing. This master of the macabre shows via his captivating tales how

This love may endure till death and even after. It's odd that such gruesome tales are interspersed with delightful charm and haze. Ruskin Bond, a well-known humanist, explains that supernatural beings may be kind like the fairies or evil



like the diners. Bond's supernatural stories are both haunted and frightening. They unnerve rather than scare, in a lyrical and subtly unnerving way.

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