Chapter -1

Introduction

Novel has become the prominent literary form all over the world. The novel provides a matchless illusion of reality, a sense of the moment and of time passing and a compelling vividness as of shared experience. It is the art of everyday life. The first novel reached India in the late eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century. During that period, novel was absorbed into Bengal literary tradition and one received novels in English. India has many favourable cultural conditions: a large audience, an educated class, a new questioning of age, old socio-religious dogma, a consuming urge for knowledge and interpretation of society. Indian society is a group society and the West is still foreign. Hence individual dramas tend to have a broad social content. It projects the tension between the urban and rural, between minority groups, between the masses, between students and teachers, between the young and their middle-aged parents and guardians. Fiction of this kind is Indian in the deepest sense and it depicts the spirit of Indian society. It shows the individuals, whose experience is Indian culture. It is written with the eye on the object but without pandering to the national self-esteem of Indians or the gullibility of European intellectuals (M. K. Naik. ed. Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English.212-215).

The Indo-Anglian fiction owes its origin to the translations of various fictional works from the Indian languages into English, notably from Bengali into English. Tagore casts a sweeping and transforming influence on it. His novels Gora, The Wreck and The Home and the World and other short stories were originally written in Bengali. They were translated into English. The form of his novels is old fashioned. His works brought to Indo-Anglian fiction realism and social purpose. He gave emotional and psychological depth to character portrayal.
The early pioneering works of Indo-Anglian fiction were social, historical, detective and romantic. They lacked depth and style and technique to leave any permanent imprint. Yet they helped in the development of the genre. Indo-Anglian fiction was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. The period between and after the freedom struggle have been the most fertile period. Anand brought to India the new technique of the stream-of-consciousness, Raja Rao adopted the autobiographical form of narration. Plot and characterization were also enriched. There was larger quantity and better quality. We have the social, the rural, the detective, the historical and the romantic type of novel. The contribution of K.S.Venkatramani, Shanker Ram, S. Nagarajan, Kumar Guru, A. S. P. Ayyar, S. K. Chettur and G.V. Desani are notable. But the credit of bringing a name and reputation to Indo-Anglian fiction goes to a few contemporary writers, like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, and Nirad Chaudhry. They are the four wheels of contemporary Indo-Anglian fiction. Other luminaries who have enriched the Indo-Anglian fiction are Khawaja Ahamed, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Mrs.R.Prawer Jhabvala, Lamber Mascarenhas, Mrs.Vimala Raina and Khushwant Singh.

In spite of diversity in themes and techniques the Indo-Anglian fiction has some common features, namely, the presentation of a personal narrative against the background of modern Indian history, the conflict of values between the family and the individual, and the awareness of social change. The conflict between the West and the East or between Innovation and Tradition is a perennial theme in Indo-Anglian fiction. Ruskin Bond’s works are mostly personal narrative in the backdrop of nature and it celebrates nature and children and animals. His stories are humourous, adventurous and regional which reflect that he belongs to India and he is part and partial of Indians.

In the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, the Indo – Anglian novel made a diffident appearance in the nineteen-twenties, then gradually gathered confidence and established itself
in the next two decades. More novels have been published in the Sixties than ever before. This increase in output is difficult to account for, especially when there were hardly half a dozen Indo-Anglian novels until the 1920. Perhaps one of the reasons is that the flowering of Indo-Anglian fiction coincided with the novel’s coming of age in the regional languages of India.

The Indo-Anglian writers of fiction write with an eye and hope on the western readers. They influence their choice of the subject-matter. That is why in Indo-Anglian novels there are Sadhus, Fakirs, Caves, Temples, Vedanta, Gandhi, Rajahs and Nawabs. These are subjects that interest the Western audience. They represent the Western idea of India. But at the same time, there are elements of Indianness: nationalism and patriotism, glorification of India’s past and sympathy for the teeming millions of the country speak of the Eastern orientation. Ruskin Bond projects India as he has seen almost seven decades about the true essence of hills, valleys, mountains, trees, rain and stream in relation to man and the harmony between nature and human being. He insists on the practicality of life and humanity through his works.

According to prof. C.D. Narsimhaiah the Indian novel in English has shown a capacity to accommodate a wide range of concerns: in Mulk Raj Anand a humane concern for the underdog, not just a preoccupation with economic determinism, in R.K. Narayan the comic mode as equivalent to the tragic in his evocation of mediocrity; and K.Nagarajan surprises by his sensitive handling of the human significance in the religious and the logical labyrinth of Indian society. Raja Rao recaptures the magnificent mythical imagination of Indian antiquity successively in these novels and short stories he has written. One sees this in different degrees in the writings of Sudhin Ghose, Desani and Ananthanarayan. The women writers especially Kamala Markandaya, Santha Rama Rao and Anita Desai have a fine eye for the urban scene. Bhawan, Bhattacharaya and Khushwant Singh, in very different ways, give us
valuable insights into the pathos of economic impoverishment, mal-distribution of wealth and human degradation caused by political upheavals. The wider canvas of the Indo-Anglian canvas can also be seen by a study of typical themes and characters. The range has been more widened by inclusion of untouched themes. Malgonkar’s *The Distant Drum* is the only novel about army life in Indo-Anglian fiction. Unlike these writers, Bond shows his hatred for urban, hum drum life in his writings. He feels at ease in narrating the mountain life and shows his much concern for children and nature. He is nostalgic of his unhappy childhood in many of his stories. Nature compensates his loss and showers love and serenity to him when he attains its feet.

The most prominent technique of narration in the Indo-Anglian fiction is the first person narrative. The central character or the hero is the narrator of novel. This technique is seen in many novels such as Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, Manohar Malgonkar’s *The Princes*, Nayantara Sahgal’s *A Time to be Happy*, K. Nagarajan’s *The Chronicles of Kedaram*. One can also find a large number of novels written in the third person narrative, e.g. works of Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali’s *Twilight in Delhi* and Narayan’s *Waiting for Mahatma*, Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*. R.K. Narayan in *The Guide* has combined both the modes of narration. Bond is a writer of personal notes. He employs various narrative devices like impressionistic technique, flashbacks, narration within narration, first person narration, third person narration and witness narration keeping in view the demand of subject matter. Myths, symbols, harangues, soliloquies and poetic overflows are incorporated in his narration.

In modern literature, the West myth is becoming a powerful instrument of literary structure and creation. India has a rich treasure of myths and legends. The Indo Anglian fiction has imported the technique of the creative use of myth. The Radha-Krishna legend is a recurrent myth in Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*. There is the use of myth in
Narayan’s *The Man Eater of Malgudi*. In the *Old Women and the Cow*, Anand uses the myth of Sita’s fire-ordeal as part of his technique. Similarly Sudhin Ghose’s *The Cradle of the Clouds*, is also remarkable for its use of myth. Bond has used the myth of Krishna, God of protection in “Sita and the River”.

Raja Rao has created an Indian – Sanskrit rhythm in the syntax of English. Raja Rao says that one cannot write like the English and one should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore, has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American.

So far as the themes of the Indo-Anglian fiction are concerned, they are: social problems (Anand, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas); domestic problems (R.K.Narayan, Mrs.Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya); sex (Khushwant Singh’s *I shall not Hear the Nightingale*, Narayan’s *The Guide*, Manohar Malgaonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*, and Nayantara Sahgal’s *The Time of Morning and* Kamala Markandaya’s *A Silence of Desire and Two Virgins*).

The themes of happiness and fulfillment through suffering and sanyas are also recurrent in the Indo-Anglian fiction. It is found in R.K.Narayan’s *The Guide*, B.Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer*, Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope* and Bhabani Bhattacharaya’s *He who Rides a Tiger*. Politics is also inseparably the subject-matter of the Indo-Anglian fiction from 1920 to 1950. The sensitivity to atmosphere, the probing of psychological factors, the crisis in the individual soul and its resolution; and above all, the detached observation, which constitute the stuff of fiction, forced into the background. The political theme as a matter of choice was very much influenced by Gandhi’s role and philosophy. These themes are the struggle for independence, the Indian National Army, the Indian Army, the present-day politics, the debacle of princely India, the partition and independence. (Raja Rao’s *
*Kanthapura* and *The Cow of the Barricades*, K.A.Abba’s *Inquilab*, R.K.Narayan’s *Waiting*
for the Mahatma, Anand’s *The Sword and the Sickle*, C.N.Zutshi’s *Motherland*, Amir Ali’s *Conflict*, Zeenut Futehally’s *Zohra*, Manohar Malgaonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* and many others. These novels deal with Gandhi, his way of achieving freedom, revolution, satyagrah and quit India movement. Some other novels related to politics, especially the post-independence politics, are Nayantara Sahgal’s *This Time of Morning*, Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgaonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*, Attia Hosain’s *Sun-Light on a Broken Column*. The predominant themes of Bond’s work are nature, children, humour, humanism and concern for animals and environment.

Meenakshi Mukherjee summarizing the themes of Indo-Anglian fiction writes that the Indo-Anglians have explored the metaphysical, spiritual, and romantic aspects of the confrontation each in his or her own way. Even when novel does not deal directly with the restorian theme, the personal crisis in the life of each Western – educated hero or heroine becomes inter-cultural in nature. Then there are other stray themes of love, murder, village life and erotic love.

Fiction, the most popular modern literary genre has attracted a large readership all over the world. Fiction owes its existence to the interest taken by the writers in the life of men and women. A writer is at his best when he writes about things with which he is most familiar. Joseph Condrad’s opinion in one of his essays “Books” is worth quoting:

“In truth every novelist must begin by creating for himself a world, great or little in which he can honestly believe…and yet it resembles something already familiar to the experience, the thoughts and sensations of his readers” (Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters*. 6).

The emergence of novel as an art has emphasized the importance of narrative technique. Bond is the master story teller of the present age because he has developed his individual style of narration. His narration is marked with simplicity of tone and depth of
meaning. Though, writing for him is a spontaneous overflow of emotions, his stories are carefully crafted. According to Bond, writing is a means of conversing with the world. He writes to ease his soul. He believes that writing is an art, it needs as much devotion and love as an artisan does have for his creation.

Bond has experimented with the traditional Indian art of storytelling and European impressionism in order to impart innocence and richness to narration. Bond’s sense of loneliness in early childhood, loss of parental care and love, trauma of belongingness, escapades to the world of books, nature and children—all expressed in the form of stories and novels.

Nature nurtures children who become adults who nurture nature. The experiences with nature play a unique and irreplaceable role in healthy child development says Peter Kahn and Kellert Stephen in “Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations”. The early experiences with nature are vital to the forging of later environmental commitments. Children possess a special competence with respect to the natural world and they have a special responsiveness or resonance to the world of nature. The outdoor experiences exerted impacts in their personality and character development. Stories of Bond put lights on the relationship between children and nature and the impact of nature on adolescents, adults and children and their response towards nature.

Literature and nature have a close relationship in the works of writers of all ages. At present the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analysed and emphasized in all areas of knowledge. The relationship between nature and society has been textualized by two terms ecology and ecocriticism. India is a country with variety of ecosystems and it has been affected due to increasing population and avarice of mankind. The concern for nature changes Indian literature from destruction to reverence. Bond has the same concern and reverence for nature. He expresses it in his works, where his writings deal
with beauty and power of nature. His concern for ecology and the threat that the continuous misuse of our environment in literature places his works a new branch of literary theory, ecocriticism.

In *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Glotfelty explains that ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (xviii). Ecocriticism is in full swing and is a readily accepted theory worldwide. It is the study of the relationship between literature and the environment. Bond’s novellas can be read through the lens of ecocriticism. Environment has been used as an important backdrop against which the story develops.

Ecology is defined as the way in which plants, animals and people are related to each other and their environment. Bond’s works show ecology not only as an important or dominant theme but there is a concern for natural depletion. The natural scenic hills of Dehradun and Mussoorie form the settings of his works and reflect his ardent faith in the healing powers of nature.

Ruskin Bond’s deep association with the natural world has sustained and inspired him over the years. His kaleidoscopic portrayal of nature enamours the heart and stirs the whole being of those who experience it. Bond invokes the serenity and the splendor of nature that enraptures by the warmth of captivating scenes, picturesque descriptions and lively images exalting cheerfulness and originality of expression. The devotion to nature is ever present in his work and runs through it like a vein of gold. For over a half century, Bond has celebrated the wonder and beauty of nature. The evocation and the adoration of nature and the record of his relationship with the natural world is a recurrent and predominant feature of his works.

Like a true devotee of nature, Bond finds an ample delight in exploring its myriad vistas. His response to nature is personal and unique. His meticulously drawn natural phenomena are marked by accurateness. His heart warming relationship with nature and the
hills, trees of the Himalayas are perceptible through every leaf that covers his work.

Throwing light on Bond’s heartfelt commitment to nature, Niranjan Mohanty writes:

“Bond’s adherence to the world of flora and fauna and of hills, insects and the animals is a result of his commitment to the place he worn into. The woods, the hills, and the flocks of birds, insects and the trees—all draw his attention with such impassioned intensity that at once he feels an inner urge to lose his own identity in them” (Prabhat K.Singh, Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond. 46).

Bond’s inclination to the world of nature has much to do with his long rooting to Mussorrie, a place of beauty and his reading of Henry David Thoreau, Richard Jefferies and H. E.Bates. Bond claims of reading about fifteen thousand books so far. He stuffed his mind with all types of writers such as – Dickens, Wordsworth, H.G.Wells, Walter De La Mar, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, Priestly, Louis Carol, A.G.Gardiner, Robert Lynd, G.K.Chesterton, Mark Twain, Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan. Though father introduced him to the wondrous world of books, it was his own sense of loneliness, which brought him nearer to these books. Bond now admits that his fondness for books was somewhat unusual for the boys of his age. He was not selective about his reading, anything cheap, classic, or even erotic, that had tone, style and substance was suffice to keep him emerged. This random reading reflects his confused state of mind.

Bond is a famous writer of nature. His response to nature is instinctive. The person who intimated him to this lasting relationship was his father. Bond recapitulates those planting excursions by the slopes of Dehra in many of his stories when father introduced him to the vastness of nature. Later Thoreau and Richard Jefferies have framed his attitude to nature. He specially enjoys the books of Jefferies, as he says:

“My attitude has also been influenced by Thoreau’s Walden and Richard Jefferies

“The Story of My Heart”. Jefferie’s book is not simply a description of nature lore; it
is a work of poetic and mystic vision… I can certainly say that hundred years after
Jefferies wrote… there was at least one reader, myself who enjoyed many hours of
delight in physical emotion as a result of reading the work of one who was more a
pagan than a gentle naturalist” (Bond, *Rain in the Mountains*. 246).

Bond has truly imbibed the spirit of a pagan. Nature to him is the only deity and entire
universe is the manifestation of her force. Bond was deeply impressed by Rudyard Kipling,
by his passionate adherence to the great Himalayas. Kipling’s words resound in his ears that
this is the true smell of the Himalayas and if once it creeps into the blood of man that man
will at last forgetting all else, return to the hills to die (Bond, *The Complete Stories and
Novels*. 16).

Bond is an ardent lover of nature. He breathes through her and writes for her. It is an
everlasting love affair which knows no satiety because it goes on renewing itself time and
again through transient scenes and colours. He feels that nature bares her bosom alike for all
big and small, weak and strong. The difference lies in individual’s sense of perception. One
may approach nature to conquer her, the other may try to exploit her but Bond is filled with
love for her and he chooses to live with her in total harmony.

Bond can never part with the smell of pines and therefore he has settled down in the
heart of Garhwal Himalayas to portray each passing hue on the snow-covered peaks and dew-
dappled lawns.

Bond found emotional compensation in the warm lap of nature. After his father’s
tragic demise, Bond found the hills kind enough to provide him a formidable sense of
parental security. He could feel mountains flowing in his blood. The trees and plants around
him also assumed the role of a guardian spirit. They appeared to be the shaping spirit of his
dear father. Here, Nature emerges as a great healing force to dissipate his gloom and
loneliness. Nature becomes a powerful means of defying death and redeeming his sense of loss. It is an affirmation of bond between man and nature. Nature in a therapeutic style helps Bond to emerge out of his personal grievances.

Nature acts as an emotional counterpart for the sensitive souls. It acts in dual role for Bond. It provides him new themes and background for his stories. At the same time, it charges and refreshes his creative vigour. In the exhaustive process of writing a novel, even a tiny bird, or a flower outside his window freshens him profusely. It recharges his creative spirit. The clattering of rain drops, the warbling of birds, the rippling and gurgling of brooks, the whispering of plants and the dancing summer breeze radiate his fiction with an exquisite softness. Even the occasional hurdles of writing process are removed by the benign influence of nature.

Bond’s characters are also drawn from that section of society who lives in close association with nature. They are small farmers, shopkeepers, tonga drivers, gardeners, retired persons. The distinctive mark of Bond’s characters is their primeval innocence, simplicity and purity. They represent life’s finest attribute and ability to find happiness and contentment in everyday events. They get strengthened in the company of nature.

Bond’s association with birds, animals, insects are like that of a naturalist. By his long association he has acquired a unique understanding of their habits. The charm of tiny creatures like, butterflies, caterpillars, beetles, squirrels, bluejaya, is irresistible. Even lizards, leeches, objects of general repulsion are closely observed. His microscopic eye does not spare a single living creature around him. Like a biologist, Bond records a photographic story of their ways and habits.

Nature emerges as a powerful background conveying the spirit of the story. Bond is skilled in painting world landscapes in accordance to the motif of the plot. Nature highlights the character also. Nature herself dominates the course of life.
Bond’s attitude to nature begins from the simple sensory delights and culminates into humanism. His fiction gently brings us back to nature in order to regain our primitive innocence and faith.

Among four major foreign novelists – Kipling, Forster, Myers, and John Master who scribbled about India, Kipling tried his best to know this country. For Kipling, India is a land of fakirs, sadhus, sanyasies and mullahs of different faiths with lots of ruggedness. E.M. Foster in *A Passage to India* has highlighted some important facets of India in a suggestive way but fails to solve the riddle and mystery of India. He got right into the homes of his intellectual friends into the household of Maharaja of Dewas. In John Master’s novels the English man is everywhere the hero, trying to establish order, peace and justice in the state of anarchy and lawlessness. For L. H. Myers also India appeared as a muddle. These writers tried to discover India through the coloured spectacle of a foreigner. Ruskin Bond’s case is different from all these writers. Ruskin Bond’s acceptance of India is unprecedented, because not only British but some Indian writers also have written under British spell. Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya explore India’s myriad social problems. R.K. Narayan has chosen a comic stance and enjoys idiosyncrasies of man in his day-to-day life. Raja Rao is moved by red antic India. Manohar and Nayantara Sahgal assess their history and politics respectively. Arun Joshi and Anita Desai are also searching their roots in India. A suspicion, a sort of restlessness and despair is palpable in their India. Usha says:

“Bonds India lives and breathes in the hills. To him trees mountains, rivers have a special appeal and have as much beauty and as many problems as human have. He is not attracted by the glitter of every expanding cities not is he unduly moved by the every- present social problems (Usha Bande, “Ruskin Bond’s India’. A Critical Survey” *The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond*. 103-104).
Bond’s case is of a double inheritance. Born as an English man during British regime in India, Bond was brought up in changing times as a boy of divided loyalties. Though his roots were in England he was grafted in Indian soil and nurtured by Indian air and water.

When others were passing through the post-colonial trauma of displacement, of less of country friends and parents, of insecurity and of finance, for Bond it was only a trauma of a loss of identity and he tried to search his roots in India. As he grew out of his teens he began to love this country. He was happy in Dehra and felt homely in the company of his friends.

The problem of split nationality was resolved forever by getting a firm foothold in India, never to waver again. His vision of India is very clear – India as it is with all its mythical historical structure, political, social and cultural variance and togetherness as well. In this way, Bond belongs to the tradition of C.F. Andrews, Sister Nivedita and Anne Besant who had merged their national and racial identity with the rich compound of Indian culture. A unique combination of the east and the west senility has shaped Bond’s personality free from prejudices. He himself feels proud of being a man of double identities. Endowed with remarkable openness, he is always ready to receive impression from all sides. This special attribute has enriched his vision making more adjustable and liberal.

In his career spanning almost five decades, Bond has carved out a unique literary, landscape where man lies in perfect conformity with nature. Contrary to the current scenario of Indian English fiction, Bond’s mission is to reaffirm the faith in the potentialities of man. He calls for action not for criticism, for acceptance not for derision. It is a world where people are learning the art of living in perfect relationship with other creatures of nature.

According to P.K. Singh:

“In an age of science fiction, crime fiction, Bond has created an uncorrupted world of simple but delightful world of absorbing stories narrating life in a new healing order”

(Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond. 2).
Bond’s penchant for shorter fiction is strictly personal. Joseph Conrad served as a model writer of novellas. Bond appreciated its compositional economy and unity of conception as demonstrated in *Heart of Darkness, The Nigger of Narcissus* by Conrad. Bond found him incapable of scribbling many hundred pages around a plot. It is shorter fiction in its perfect form which his predicament. He is more comfortable in snatching at life and recording its instant impressions and sensations rather than sustaining them for long. Bond has popularized this form of fiction called ‘novella’. The English name for the form is derived from the Italian ‘novella’ which means that literally, a little new thing, which was a short tale in prose. Bond found this particular form most suitable to his temperament and style. He called his novels ‘novella’ instead of novels. Strictly speaking Bond’s fictions are not novels but novellas. None of them exceeds hundred and fifty pages. His penchant for writing suggests that he is not to comfortable writing lengthy narratives. Bond’s novellas are meant to be read at one sitting. This is very true of Bond’s novels; they must be finished in one sitting, otherwise the evanescent charm which characterizes them will disappear.

Bond wrote his first draft of his first novel *The Room on the Roof* 1956 which fetched him the prestigious John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957; the highest award for the young writers in Britain. On his return to India, he preferred to settle down in the small town Dehra and said good-bye to the rush and tumult of Delhi. His works are fictions, short stories, verses, essays and travelogues. Fictions: *The Room on the Roof*-1956 and *Vagrants in the valley*-1957 both are novels of adolescence and other fictions are *An Axe for Rani* – 1972, *Love is a sad Song* – 1975, *A Flight of Pigeons* – 1980, *Delhi Is Not Far* – 1994 and *A Handful of Nuts* – 1995. *The Sensualist* published as a part of *Strangers in the Night*: two novellas in 1996. He has also written over 500 short stories and articles. Bond got the Sahitya Accademy Award in 1992 for the book *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*. He has also edited several anthologies; *Classical Indian Love Stories and Lyrics, Indian Railway Stories 1996,*
Rupa Book of Ghost Stories and Indian Ghost Stories 2002. Ruskin Bond’s Complete Stories and Novels was published in 1996. The essays, articles, ghost stories, reminiscences, documentaries and lyrics along with fifteen other Bond titles are for children. He has also published his autobiography Scenes from a Writer’s Life 1997. Rain in the Mountains 1993 and The Lamp is Lit 1998 comprise a collection of essays and articles from various journals published long ago. Rain in the Mountains is liberally, like inhaling a lungful of fresh mountain air. Honoured with the prestigious Padma Shree in 1999 for his life time contribution to Indian English Literature he has cast an indelible imprint on the contemporary literary scene. On the occasion of his sixty-seventh birthday 2001, Bond gifted two of his books Friends in Small Places and When Darkness Falls to his readers.

Ruskin Bond is a living legend who has been ceaselessly portraying life and experience through various genres of literature. Settled down in Mussoorie he has been clicking his typewriter for the last forty six years. The family of his adopted son, Prem, has been an integral part of his personal life for more than thirty five years. It gives him the warmth and emotional security of a happy-home without going through marital experience. The unhappy married life of his parents is the reason of his remaining bachelor. He could not recover from the nightmare of his parents’ separation. Bond firmly believes that most of young couples fail to conceive the true spirit behind their union. Their body chemistry may be right but the harmony of two minds is that makes relationship endure. The scars carved by this unhappy relationship made him skeptic in personal life too. Lake of wholesome parentage filled his tender mind with an intense sense of insecurity. His yearning for the cuddles of a fond mother is visible in many of his stories. He achieves in his stories what he could not get in real life.

For the purpose of the research, the researcher has dealt with five of Bond’s fictions and eight short stories to elicit his keen attachment with nature and children and his deep
affinity towards them equally. Considering the title, Children and Nature play a vital role in his short stories and Nature is predominant in fictions. While the short stories concentrate on nature and childhood, his fictions mainly focus on Nature. His fictions or novella are embedded with natural atmosphere which evocate the story. The characters of his fictions are adolescent Rusty, Somi, Ranbir, Kishen and Suri in The Room on the Roof and Vagrants in the Valley.

The other three novels are novellas of adults where Arun is the narrator in both Delhi Is Not Far, Love is a Sad Song and the sensualist in The Sensualist. The first two novellas The Room on the Roof and Vagrants in the Valley fall in the category of novellas of adolescent, period of growth between childhood and maturity. The next three novellas, Delhi Is Not Far, Love is a Sad Song and The Sensualist are novellas of adults, fully developed and matured. Hence novellas can be classified into two; novellas of adolescents and novellas of adults.

In the first set of novellas, adolescents Rusty, Somi, Ranbir and Kishen occupy significant roles. The protagonist of The Room on the Roof is a 17 year old Anglo Indian boy by the Name of Rusty, caught in the no-man’s land between childhood and adulthood. Rusty makes friends with several local boys of about the same age and the entire novel evolves around them, the only adult of importance being Mrs. Kapoor with whom Rusty falls in love. Vagrants in the Valley is the sequel to The Room on the Roof where Bond sees the squalor, poverty, mystery and muddle of India with an eye of a compassionate observer but he neither affirms them nor negates them. He draws attention towards the unnoticed daily activities which have their own role to play in our preoccupied life. His creativity lies in the fact that he has discovered adventure in small day-to-day happenings in the back drop of nature. An Axe for the Rani (1972) another novella, where Inspector Keemat Lal is a middle – aged man, but has some childlike traits and a fundamental innocence that is unbecoming of a policeman.
The crucial character in the mystery is Kamla, a girl of twelve or thirteen and the emotional core of the story is built on the friendship that generally develops between Keemat and Kamla. In *Love is a Sad Song* (1975) the narrator himself plays leading part, aged nearly thirty, but mentally just a teenager, a dreamer, an incurable romantic. He falls in love with Sushila, a school girl half his age, who is in the same ways wiser than him. *Delhi Is Not Far* (1994) is Bond’s novella, which celebrates the unsung sagas of the common masses, their unfulfilled dreams their complacency, their fear and their unnoticed life.

The novel *A Flight of Pigeons* is based upon the revolutionary upsurge against British rule in India. The entire event besides its socio-political importance reveals cardinal values of faith, love and honesty so deeply rooted in Indian soil. In *The Sensualist*, nature emerges as a powerful background conveying the spirit of the story. The barren hills, thirsty traveller, blazing sun and pathless terrain are identical to the mysterious sterility of the sensualist. The hill woman in the novel *The Sensualist* embodies natural vigour and innocence of the mountain. *The Train Stops at Shamli* is the second section of *Love is a Sad Song*, which takes place six years later. It is a curious and engrossing experience which demands our attention.

Bond’s stories are rewarding for the authentic portrayal of love, loss, achievement, pain and struggle. The literature of Bond is a harmonious amalgamation of the songs of experience and the ceremonies of innocence. He skillfully blends these two aspects, innocence and experience: by describing the serenity and beauty of nature; by portraying the ingenuousness and precociousness of children; by recounting the lament of old people for the bygone days; by narrating the unyielding spirit and shattered dreams of neglected and ignored class of society-beggars, cobblers, drivers, vendors, sweepers, prostitutes and gardeners. His natural world is enriched with dreams and aspirations of undemanding simple people whose dreams flutter in the dust like their unnoticed life. Bond accepts the world as it is and loves human beings as he finds them without moralizing on their vices. His characters, despite
being commoners- a failure, a destitute, a criminal, an old kite maker, survive and illumine
the pages of his fiction because of their originality and universality.

Bond loves to observe the hues of nature and life and is keen to paint it through
colourful vibrant strokes. He is at ease with the dew of the morning, the sensuous delight of
the day, the silent blessings of the night, the joys and sorrows of children, the striving of
ordinary folk and the ridiculous situation in which, one, at times, finds oneself at times. It is
his enthralling style and humanistic bend and the spices of nature that suffused interest in his
otherwise commonplace theme. Bond’s gentle and noble heart creeps around every
expression and description. The sincerity in description provides charm and relevance to his
common realism. With the same zeal and insight he describes, the peepul, banyan, neem,
cherry, oak, deodar and sal trees in their seasonal splendour, a raindrop on a blade of grass, a
hoopoe on the grass, a blue jay performing aerial acrobatics, a lizard on the rock and on the
wall, the scent of wet earth after the first rain, a hidden pool behind the rocky mountain and
grass land, barefoot boys riding bicycles, a tea shop in a bazaar, a dhaba on the road. The
fervour of his genuine compassion never wavers in portraying the ordinary people like waifs,
orphans, restless adolescents, frustrated old men, beggars, tonga and truck drivers, thieves
and others. Bond, with the compassionate outlook depicts the pleasant and unpleasant and
hideous and elegant aspects of life and nature. His belief man being a very imperfect creation
motivates him towards total acceptance of life. The absence of evil in his works is due to his
unflinching faith in the inherent goodness of humanity and the ever showering force of
nature. Nirmal Sadhu says:

“Simple people day-to-day situations and important persons and places of the Doon
valley are described with sensitivity. Only a writer of deep understanding and
observation can draw so much from the otherwise eventless, dreary life in the
hills” (Nirmal Sadhu, The Tribune, 2004).
Bond renders his own little world of Dehradun endearingly alive and close to the heart of their readers. He brings alive a part of India: Garhwal hills, the subtropical Siwaliks and Dehradun. He amazingly invokes the settings, the customs, the occupation and the struggle of gentle folk and catches the uniqueness in the ordinary. His fiction could be termed as local colour literature. His delineation of character nuggets on hill life bears the mark of nature writer.

Bond’s stories supply us with a familiar set locations that might easily drawn on an imaginary map, the mall with its shops, the familiar trees and flowers, the run-down once magnificent house or church that belonged to so-and-so and the important cemeteries. His fiction like travelogue writing helps the readers locate the place. He is touched by the innocence of nature and children and he conjured up his literature. Bond writes about children mature enough of their age. He has created believable characters in the backdrop of nature with which the readers can identify their lives and day-to-day problems.

Bond is a versatile writer widely lauded for his children’s writing, skillful execution of short story and novella, taxonomic delineation of flora and fauna, truthful and genuine portrayal of the marginalized, lucid and clear style and optimistic humanism. His humane sympathy for the oppressed and quiet heroes invests his fiction with a unique power. His writing always emphasize on children and nature. The objective of this study is to examine the role of ‘nature’ and ‘children and nature’ in Bond’s fictions and short stories respectively.

The present research is structured into five chapters. The first chapter is introduction, deals briefly with the life and works of Bond, impact of personal influences and his aesthetic principles and writings. The second chapter depicts nature in his twin adolescent novellas The Room on the Roof and Vagrants in the Valley. The third chapter comprises of three novellas of adults which explore the art of Bond. The fourth chapter evaluates Bond’s heart warming relationship with nature and children in his short stories. Bond’s creativity achieves the
heights when he writes for the children and about the children. He has conjured up a magical literary landscape where inquisitive, spirited and precocious children have an important role to play. Bond possesses an impeccable understanding of nature. His heart warming relationship with children and nature, and the stimulating magnificence of the dominant images of hills, trees of the Himalayas are perceptible through every leaf that covers his work.

Ruskin Bond’s novellas are the celebration of nature in its fullest form. His first novella, *The Room on the Roof* Rusty depicts Bond’s emotions and feelings in the environs of nature. The vivid descriptions of scenes provide an understanding of the situation and condition of the protagonist Rusty. Mr. Harrison Rusty’s guardian thrashed him when he defied him and visited the bazaar. Rusty ran away. With no other place to move, he came to the bazaar. The noise and hubbub of bazaar tempted him. The depiction of the natural atmosphere focuses the condition of lonely and dismayed Rusty. Rusty sees the reflection of his own ruinous condition in the lean dog, in sad song of the woman and in the cry of the jackal. The fear and the anxiety of Rusty are characteristically revealed through the setting of scene. Rusty is lonely and homeless yet he is hopeful for tomorrow. The pictorial description provided by Bond set the tone and mood of the story. The moving trees, the rustling of leaves, the howling of wolves, the torrent winds, the heavy rain, the flashing of light and the forlorn bungalow all set the mood of the story. Bond’s outstanding power of observation and description can also be discerned in his remarkable art of characterization.

Bond’s fervid adoration for nature comes into view from every composition and provides a feast to the devotee of nature. He passionately observes the various elements of nature: concrete and abstract, hidden or open and startles his readers by its faithful documentation. His nature portrayal often gushes forth spontaneously like a fountain. In *The Room on the Roof* Bond pictures natural phenomena like Himalayan hills, forest, bazaar,
maidan and city, seasons; monsoon with rain and storm and spring, mist, flora: trees, bushes, weeds, flowers and garden. Fauna: jackal and snake, elements: water, soil, sunlight and moon. Landscape is generally carried out for scenic background which appears in a prominent role in this novella. The various phases and transgressions of the protagonist Rusty are depicted through the natural atmosphere. Bond’s treatment of natural objects such as rain, thunder, lightening, drizzling, storm, the moon, the sun, the stream, the river, the water, trees, flowers drive the plot, allotting the importance to nature and life. The novella ends with the hope on life that Rusty returns to his Dehra with his friend Kishen. There is an optimistic touch at the end of Bond’s novella. His characters do not want to escape from the life they come back to face it in spite of troubles and hardships in their life. Nature being pedagogy teaches them the way to life and way of life.

_Vagrants in the Valley_ is a sequel to _The Room on the Roof_. Both are twin novellas of adolescence. Bond narrates the adolescent Rusty's further wanderings and adventure in search of identity with his friends. Dehra is a back drop in _Vagrants in the Valley_. Here, Rusty is joined in his travel by Kishen, another run way. Bond has exalted the importance of friend and friendship with the vagaries of nature. Rusty participates in another escapade and begins to understand the complexities of growing up. The novella binds with evocating of youth, innocence and friendship along with smells, sights and sounds of typical Indian plains and hills. The adolescent narrator Rusty is very lucky to have great friends like Somi, Kishen, Sudheer, Devinder and Hathi. They spread the message of love and understanding through the bond of friendship. This novella is an evident that his character Rusty lives close to nature and he is always accompanied by her and he can not feel lonely even in his loneliness. Nature is his friend, guardian spirit, who protects him, comforts him, renews him, refreshes him and Rusty never likes to depart her. The trees sal, neem and banyan are symbolic representation of friendship, Rusty has in this novella. The place ‘Dehra’ is represented by the banyan tree.
The innocence of the characters is reflected by the hills and mountains. The stream, the river, the pool and the water refreshes and renew his tired and dried body and soul. The full moon, the sun and the spring shower Rusty a better perception of life and a hope for future. The list goes on that, dusty road, sweat, cool breeze, jungle of sal trees, bathing in the river and stream, laying on the sand, walking through the forest path, encountering peacocks and a band of monkeys, thinking of maidan, plunging in the full moon, listening to the sound of stream, bathing in the cool pool, walking in the shade of many trees, fertile valley, hills and mountains even grass all play a major part in the story. They set the mood of this novella. They reflect various moods and actions of Rusty. The characters remain content and happy in all situations holding the universal values of trust, goodness which bind them together as friends. Rusty leaves for England with the bright prospect of future in his eyes at the end. The great realization came to him when he set foot on the foreign soil with the ambition to be a writer. He longs for India. Rusty represents Bond’s own story of belongingness. Bond returned to India, he began to love this country. He was happy in Dehra and felt homely in the company of his few friends.

The third chapter focuses on three adults’ novels. The first one of this category is Delhi Is Not Far which conjures up misty hills, lush green valleys, gurgling brooks, long languid stroll through the forests, small town and of course, the Pipalnagar in this novella. Bond’s novella Delhi is Not Far celebrates the unsung sagas of the common masses, their unfulfilled dreams, their complacency, their fear, and their unnoticed life. His interest in impoverished people of small-town of India comes to the fore in Pipalnagar-a world burgeoned by the simple folk and their ordinary life where the reader can encounter the adult Arun the narrator with Suraj and Kamla. The second novel Love is a Sad Song deals with the writer hero who is almost thirty wants to marry a girl half of his age. Third novel The Sensualist concentrates on the recluse and his nostalgia with the narrator. There is not exactly
despair but resignation, indifference to intercourse of life to both living and dying in *Delhi Is Not Far*. The narrator of the story Arun lives in a tiny room. He shares it with lizards, mosquitoes, rat and a beggar. Arun offers to share his room with a homeless boy Suraj. Arun befriends Kamla, a delicate twenty-year old prostitute. The trio Arun, Suraj and Kamla adopt one another. With a miniaturist’s skill, the author paints the town folk of Pipalnagar around the unlikely family. The dreams of common masses of Pipalnagar are common. The novella ends without anyone realizing his or her dream. But these common folk of Pipalnagar would go on living. Even with unfulfilled dreams they are not angst-ridden individuals; they would delight in life and share the suffering of one another and celebrate ordinary joys together. At the heart of Bond’s writings, the value is placed on simplicity and a selfless attitude towards life.

The Protagonist Arun in *Delhi is Not Far* is over powered by the magnetic charm of the hills. ‘A man cannot be complete until living in hills’ is the theme of this novella. Nature is his everlasting love affair hence he keeps his window open forever. In *Delhi is Not Far*, Bond portrays natural world through these series of beautiful crafted pictures: summer day, the change of seasons, relief of the monsoon, shade of peepul and banyan tree, bazaar, the sky flooded with stars and moon representing hope and optimistic view, sounds of nature such as cricket singing in the tree, cooing of pigeons, rustling in the leaves of the trees, the distant hum of an aeroplane, the sound made by dry and thirsty earth as it sucks water, the serenity of the hills, smell of earth, smell of rain, full moon, first shower of the monsoon, watching a pair of sarus cranes, blue jay, squirrel and the myth behind it, various flowers like dandelions, butter cups and marigold, foot path in the hills and mountains. He thanks God for His creation. Bond feels that God speaks to us through nature. Each and every aspect in nature denotes that life is not just an escape from one phase to another but a challenge to stick to it
and to grow as a dandelion or marigold towards the sun to touch the sky. Arun, Suraj and Kamla apprehend the meaning of real life and they feel that they belong to Pipalnagar.

The protagonist Arun in *Love is a Sad Song* is highly receptive to the vibrations of nature around him. Arun is a matured writer of thirty two, just double the age of his beloved Sushila who is still a school girl. Like an impatient lover, he speaks of his love and like an innocent girl of her age she responds to it. But the lover cannot materialize his passion into matrimony. Sushila prefers security. She decides to marry a rich widower, a banker of her family choice. Bond’s love inhales, surrounds and roams around the phenomena nature. The narrator hero and Sushila are intoxicated by inhaling and consuming the food of love in the aroma of nature. Bond believes that human beings, beasts and birds along with flowers, trees, and insects respond to love. Hence man and woman relationship is just a part of this universal life force. Sushila in this novella represents different stages of love.

The remarkable feature of Bond’s presentation of nature in this novella is its personification. The stream, the oak tree, the blue magpie, the rhododendron and the maple tree consummate the love affairs. The natural atmosphere invokes one’s emotions to love one another. Forest being a natural habitat of plants, trees and birds emerges as a secure place for humans especially lovers of nature. The oak symbolizes roughness and sturdiness in life. The walnut is an image, representing different stages of love of Sushila. Maple, rhododendron, hearing the magpie and reaching the stream are depicted in different perception in relation to nature and life. Besides these, water, stream, monsoon rain, mountain symbolize man’s occasional return to the elements. The rainbow, the sun shine, the butterflies, limbs of a young and growing tree, fairy princes, whistling – thrush, peepal are some metaphors that Bond uses in this novella *Love is a Sad Song*. He used similes such as; like a kitten, like a small pearl to refer Sushila. Bond’s hatred for urban life is reflected in his depiction of city life as noise, dirt, very hot, sweating, and drenched and the roar of traffic.
The sights and sounds of nature are omnipresent in this novella. The recurring images such as; the flow of water, tinkling of the cowbells and the eagle flew above the sky, the orchestration of birds and insects, murmuring sounds of brooks, the mountain path through oak, rhododendron and maple highlight the understanding of the story to the reader and denote the rich poetic sensibility to Bond’s writing. These images parade the invaluable resources of Bond’s language.

The story *Love is a Sad Song* as in life ends without any permanent solution. The natural objects or images depict both the romantic and the realistic phase of love in this story.

*The Sensualist* the final novella of this chapter is the story of a man enslaved by an overpowering sex-drive and it takes him on the downward spiraling. Here, Bond imparts the pictorial view of mountains, hills, the mountain path, the river, the stream, the rain, the moonlight and the sky. These natural settings have linked with the life of the protagonist. It is the story for adults. Bond embodies the sensual pleasures through various images drawn from nature such as; the insect, the fly, gekos, spider, scorpion, the pack mule the green lantern and the leech. The barren land, emerald grass, silver clear water, a small pool, the smell of rain, the smell of neem pod, the break of monsoon, the heavy rain, the insects, bathing in the moonlight, walking alone in Deoband, meeting the boy Roop, visiting Jalan hills with Deodar trees, lime trees, his encounter with Roop’s mother, the bite of the leech, all change the course of the action of the story. These natural aspects symbolically depict the plot and the characters of the novella *The Sensualist*. They reflect, reform and transform the attitude of the protagonist. He breaks out the fetters of ego and self esteem to understand his real self. The inner message of this novella is that the ego of human beings is absolutely misplaced. No human being can equal the majesty of God. Therefore realizing this, a man should always remain humble whatever might be the nature of his accomplishment and discover the purpose of his or her existence and accomplish it.
The fourth chapter depicts children and nature in Bond’s short stories. Nature nurtures children who become adults who nurture nature. Natural world plays a crucial role in children’s development. The experience with nature plays a unique, irreplaceable role in healthy child development. Early experiences with nature are vital to the forging of later environmental commitments. Ruskin Bond is primarily known for his children stories. His children characters are from natural environment with healthy attitudes towards life. He is the pioneer of modern children literature in India. The rise of new children’s literature is partly due to the break down of the traditional family set-up, when kids often listened to oral “Dada Dadi-Ki Kahani” or “Nana Nani Ki Kahani” Bond has captivated his young readers by the charm and freshness of his narration which is traditional as well as modern. Bond’s children stories are a type of fables though their delineation is modern. His vivid memories of childhood in pre-independence India and his observation of two generations of his adopted family of Prem that live with him have helped him to comprehend the spirit of Indian family.

Before the emergence of Bond’s children stories young minds in India were generally driven into the exciting but alien world of Billy Bunter, Nancy Drew, Famous Five or Secret Seven of Enid Blynton. When Ruskin Bond wrote about the familiar atmosphere and Indian life for native children, he became, unquestionably, the best living writer of children stories and books in Indian English literature. Bond specifically caters to the needs of young readers. His sensibility and observation of the young world is amazing. Hence, Bond is the most favourite writer of that reading class.

There are some autobiographical reasons for his attachment with the children. His own sense of loneliness and insecurity in the early childhood haunted his consciousness time and again and as a result of this, Bond became a premature introvert. Even after growing up, those early impressions and the child in him remained. Bond can associate himself with the children because the child in him always ready to leap forward to share their world. His
trauma was channelized towards children classics which helped him come out of his personal agonies. Bond began to write children stories in his late thirties.

Like rainbow in the sky, flowers in the garden, moon among stars, the spring among the seasons and childhood in the life is adored and glorified. It is a period in one’s life which is regarded as divine. The vivaciousness and exuberance of children grip the attention of beholders and their loveliness and liveliness radiate them with ecstasy. The world of literature has produced a number of literary figures that have taken great interest depicting childhood and its pleasure. Ruskin Bond secures an outstanding place among the array of children’s writers. He is credited with being, ‘the pioneer of modern children’s literature in India’ (Marquand, Christian Science. 19).

Bond has conjured up magical literary landscape where inquisitive, energetic and precocious children have an important role to play. He weaves the fabric of his children’s world thread by thread, using natural atmosphere with the sole purpose to enthrall his young readers. It is mostly in that atmosphere that pervades in his fiction and short stories where children enjoy, fight, play, roam and live a protected life. Bond’s exceptional knowledge of children and nature helps him in authentication of his writing about them. He creates a different world filled with the magic of nature in depicting innocent children on the threshold of experience. Bond’s child persona gradually discovers the truth about itself. They are being created with an awareness of ‘self’. Bond enters their mind to understand their peculiar sensibility imagination and impressionable nature. Bond’s portrayal of life like children and graceful appeal with children carved out for him a special place in children’s literature.

Bond excels in describing true -to-life children where one can encounter in any village and town of India. The world of his children literature is a world of gay abandon and ceaseless wonderment, a world of magic in realism filled with ingredients of faith, love, courage and joy. The Indian kids can identify themselves with his characters. For Ruskin
Bond, writing for children was a result of the way he writes and the genre of short story he likes. He confesses that he can’t write anything too voluminous. He likes writing short stories. The attention span of children in general is short. They avoid lengthy and bulky work. They get attracted more towards, short stories than novels.

Bond’s sensitive treatment of children and projection of their dreamy world, full of fun and frolic make him one of the favourite children’s writers. Bond’s child protagonists Binya, Sita, Arun, Romi, Teju, Rakesh and Mani attract us by their lovely moods and passionate nature, lively and pleasing activities, playfulness and their never ending pranks. They are burgeoning with mischief, sulk on being scolded, fabricate the stories on being caught quickly get involved in squabbles, easy to win as a friend startle us by their precociousness and maverick demeanor, squander their time, bewitch us by their shining and innocent faces, ride bicycles down precipitous hills, explore river and mountain paths, climb mango and litchi trees, take nap under shady trees, without any fear of crime and violence and enjoy wandering in and around nature.

The child protagonists of Bond spring up from the Himalayan soil, especially from the neighbouring villages and towns of Dehradun and hill stations of Mussoorie. Bond recreates the everyday experiences of the life and the problems that the children face for survival. Adventure, discovery, love for animals, variegated phenomena of nature, portrayal of their indomitable spirit in difficult circumstances around which Bond weaves the yarn of his children stories. The best part of Bond’s portrayal of children is his involvement, his coming down to their level and his association with their erratic life. His oneness with children has infused life force to his works. He does not merely describe a child but becomes a child for the time being. His literature explores childhood hidden behind the layers of adulthood. The love for the children seems to emerge from his own discontented and lonely childhood, his longing for happiness and security when he was a child.
Bond feels that God speaks to us through nature. Nature is the best source to establish a communication with God. Bond portrays the natural world through the series of beautiful rafted pictures. Bond is of the view that the beauty of nature has the capacity to bring closer even the strangers and bind them in the bond of friendship. This is shown through the relationship of Koki and the narrator child in “The Window”. The colourful and lively aspect of nature has always bewitched children. Amidst nature, their emotion and imagination and free spirit find an outlet. They enliven by enticing forms of nature and find infinite pleasure in its company. The images of children swimming and playing in the forest pools, running with the winds, smiling with the flowers, dancing in the rain, exploring the plenty of nature and desiring to possess a garden are focal points of Bond’s literature.

Bond’s protagonists express his concern for nature. They try to establish harmony with nature and hence develop a touching relationship with it. Like Bond, his child characters too reveal a desire to possess nature. They show this affinity by conserving and preserving it. The children in the story “The Window” have thought to create a garden of their own on the roof and have planned to grow all sorts of flowers. They planted few small plants and pumpkin seeds and felt proud of their adventure. In “The Cherry Tree” Rakesh has sown the seed of a cherry tree and takes care of it. He waters it regularly even when it rains because he wanted it to know that he was there. Watering the plants by Bond’s characters even though it rains is a recurring feature of his stories. It emphasizes the importance of personal communication with nature.

Bond sees an affinity between children and nature. Both of them are marked by innocence and purity. He believes that children are unadulterated specimen of living and kind nature. It becomes visible when Bond uses nature imageries to portray his characters. Bond’s literature on and off highlights the analogy between tree and man. He points out the similarity of evolution and decay in human beings and trees. Both trees and men grew much at the same
pace, if they are not hurt or starved or cut down. Both in youth are resplendent creatures and in declining years stoop a little. At the end of the journey, a man like a tree sheds his leaves with a sigh. The story “The Kitemaker” exclusively presents the affinity between trees and human beings.

Bond, a true devotee of nature not only records it in its fullest form but also advocates its preservation and conservation. Bond seems to have been writing about saving our environment and concern for it long before ecology became an important aspect of our daily life. He has been writing about the steady decline of the forest cover due to growing industrialization, urbanization and about the ruthless destruction of the natural habitat of the creatures of the jungle. “The Tree Lover” “Prospect of Flowers” reveal Bond’s concern for trees which deserve our love, care and protection.

Bond’s short story collections are Funny Side up, Book of Humour, Treasury of Stories for Children, Ruskin Bond’s Complete Stories and Novels, When Darkness Falls and Other Stories and Friends in Small Places. He has also edited several anthologies – Classical Indian Love Stories and Lyrics, Indian Railway Stories, Indian Ghost Stories and Rupa Book of Ghost Stories. Rain in the Mountains, Lamp is Lit, Book of Nature Tales and Legends from India, The India I Love and Roads to Mussoorie comprise collection of essays and articles.

Bond’s children stories are the tales of little adventures and the discovery of new vistas of life. Boys and girls of nearby villages, their everyday experiences have provided the themes of his stories. Bond always feels rejuvenated in their company. He finds them unassuming and easy - going. For him, they are the little wonders of God, full of relentless spirit of adventure and innocence. Bond crafts his stories around such themes as – discovery, adventure, nature and trees. All hold a child’s imagination. Robert Marquand, the writer of The Christian Monitor says:
“Bond’s own stories reprinted in school texts throughout India, are always of discovery; adventure, exploring train tunnels, climbing guava trees, making a zoo of rabbits and lizards, learning to get along. Yes, there is a shrewdness and innocence in his work” (Marquand, *The Christian Monitor*).

Bond’s children stories can be divided into two categories; personal and impersonal. Personal stories are autobiographical or semiautobiographical in tone in which Bond speaks of his reflections, unfulfilled passions and little adventure. It includes stories like “My Father’s Trees in Dehra”, “The Funeral”, “Women in Platform 8”, “The Cherry Tree”, “When I Can’t Climb Anymore” “The Tiger in the House”, “The Playing Fields of Simla” “Life with Uncle Ken” “The Last Tonga Ride” “Coming Home to Dehra” “All Creatures Great and Small” “The Tree Lovers”. These stories depict young Bond’s friendship with the trees and his love for the town Dehra. Bond’s emotional relationship with the place, where he spent his childhood, makes these stories nostalgic and vivid, bringing alive the quaint charming places, fruit laded orchard where he wandered as a boy. The story “The Funeral” is a pathetic narration of his father’s death and his miserable loneliness. “Life with Uncle Ken” is a humorous account of Uncle Ken who shifted form one job to another. The story “Untouchable” brings about young Bond’s remarkable sensibility which sleeps with an untouchable boy on the stormy night. The story “Animals on the Track” presents hilarious adventures of a family traveling in a train with their unusual pets; a tiger, a squirrel, a parrot and a python. The story “The Last Tonga Ride” revives the romance of Tonga ride on the steep roads of Dehra, fringed by lush green plantation on both sides. The boy loved the thrill of Tonga ride especially of Bansi Lal.

Bond’s other stories may be termed as regional stories, spring up like cosmos from the very Himalayan soil. Bond is a keen and perceptive observer of children in rural peculiarly, Himalayan India, their capacity for hard work, their innate spirit of adventure and
most of all, their intimacy with nature. The children of near by villages, of hills, middle-class children working in the fields or going to school inspired him to peep into their ordinary shells. Bond’s greatness as a writer lies in the fact that he easily visualizes something special or heroic in their day-to-day life. The stories like “Sita and the River”, “The Blue Umbrella” “Panther’s Moon”, “The Fight” “The Thief” reveal the struggle of youngsters to survive in the world. In “Panther’s Moon” the presence of a man-eater in the forest becomes a battle for survival for twelve – year-old Bisnu. Bisnu is determined to continue his schooling and ultimately succeeds in forcing the animal to change the territory. Bond skillfully handles the issue of man’s harmony with his environment including animals. “The Blue Umbrella” is a moving story of basic human instincts - desire, possession, envy greed and compassion. The “Thief” depicts the conversion of a thief who, being compelled by his habitual instinct of theft, robs his friend Arun. But Arun hardly bothers about it. He finds himself being robbed of his own trust and confidence in Arun. “The Hidden Pool” is the story of three friends Laurie, Anil and Kamal. Laurie is the son of a British engineer in India and Anil and Kamal are his Indian friends who introduce him to the festival and traditions of India. Laurie finds out a hidden pool in the mountains which varnishes their friendship. Hidden pool is the place where they swim and wrestle and the kids plan a trip to a glacier at 12,000 feet above sea level.

Bond’s child heroes have a completeness and independence. Unlike their elders, they have an openness of mind. They are eager to cross the barriers as laid down by their elders. In the story “The Flute Player”, Kamla who lives in England with her parents comes to meet her grandmother in Jaipur. Amidst the vast- stretch of cornfield, she meets Romi, an innocent village boy, who swims in the canal, feels overjoyed on getting stained in mud and plays melodies upon his flute. Kamla is thrilled by these new found pleasures.
Some of Bond’s children stories are the tales of little adventures and the discovery of new vistas of life. The story “Four Boys on a Glacier” imparts a vivid picture of snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas. The boys visualize divine beauty of nature during their adventurous expedition. The story “How Far is the River” is also filled with the spirit of reckless enthusiasm peculiar to the adolescents. The gurgling sound of the water in deep forest arouses curiosity in them and they march through the bushes on steep hills and valley in order to trace it out. The story “Romi and the Wildfire” presents a different type of adventure in the forest. The boys in the story are shocked to see the dreadful forest fire which imperils the life of thousand beasts and birds along with numerous types of vegetation. Bond shows his worry for the unthoughtful actions of man towards nature. His short stories for children try to convey an important message that is the importance of nature in our life. In his “An Island of Trees” grandmother reveals her granddaughter Koki, how the bondage grows between human and nature if there is love and compassion. “No Room for a Leopard” is about deforestation and its aftermath. It presents the pathetic condition of the animals after deforestation. “The Tree Lover”, “The Cherry Tree”, and “All Creatures Great and Small” are about the chain which binds man and nature, as in the chain of ecosystem, showing interdependence. Bond has always emphasized on the friendly relationship between man and nature.

Another type of Bond’s stories is fables. Bond’s fables are slightly different from the traditional “Panchtantra” and “Betal Pachisi”. He seems to be closer to the spirit of Kipling’s Mawgli who lives in perfect harmony with nature and animals, which is essential for survival. The stories like “The Tunnel”, “Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright”, “Tiger in the House”, “Crow for All Seasons” “The Leopard” are based upon his conviction and animals should be treated as “Timothy”-a composite dialogue of love and trust. It suggests a better relationship among creatures of this earth. These stories indicate Bond’s attitude of love and understanding towards other creatures.
In some of his children stories, Bond talks about doting grandmothers and fun loving grandfathers. Grandparents share their age-long-experience with grandchildren. This relationship survives on the basis of give and take. Children share their loneliness and give them an opportunity to revive their childhood. The stories “The Photograph”, “The Kite maker”, “A Long Walk with Granny”, “The Cherry Tree” and “Animals on the Track” render an interesting account of mutual sharing between the young and the old. As in “Photograph” the boy enjoys a streak of blush in the wrinkles of Granny’s visage when she looks at her old photograph. The pigtailed girl in the photograph reminds her of those good old days when she bathed in the village pool along with other village boy and sat on the back of buffaloes. In “A Long Walk with Granny” the boy takes her old granny to the town to buy a new pair of spectacles for her. Children are very quick in making friends. Small objects like a flower, a marble stone, a flute, a coin or some beads or claws may serve to initiate their friendship. In the story “A Rupee Goes a Long way” Rani gives a pretty necklace of bright coloured stones to Koki and becomes his friend. In “The Fight” two boys of same age group fight for the right to bathe first in the river. They realize that they can be good friends.

In some of his stories Bond creates purely humorous accounts of children’s little cunning which is also a part of their innocent world. In the story “The Window” Koki imitates her elders while perusing her innovative ideas sowing pumpkins and making flower beds on the roof. In “Chachi’s Funeral” Madhu devises the fake murder and cremation of chachi whom Sunil dislikes. Bond’s stories mostly revolves around animals and nature and find a ready echo in any child’s heart where the animals like monkey and snake and the young children alike annoy adults and fall into adventures. In “Monkey Trouble” the troublesome monkey Tutu who perpetually annoys aunt Ruby, a pet python that scares people by suddenly turning up at the most unexpected places in “Snake Truoble”.
Bond portrays the magic of supernatural element in the story “Whistling in the Dark” “The Prize”, “Wilson’s Bridge”, “Something in the Water” and “The Rakshasas” These stories are the testimony of Bond’s enticing powers of narration and intense perception of life. He believes that supernatural springs out of natural phenomena; the restless rustling of leaves, the creaking of branches, moving shadows of the trees in bright moon light are likely to create an uncanny fear in the heart of a lonely traveler late at night. According to Bond, one should cultivate the capacity to view miracle in most ordinary stirring of the day.

Children love Bond’s autobiographical, regional, adventurous, fables, fun loving grandparents, humorous and supernatural stories. These delightful stories are told in the author’s unique style that gets the readers involved in the story. The stories are not too long and they are funny and adventurous, involving children and nature.

The focus of the research is mainly on two autobiographical stories, “The Funeral” and “Woman in Platform 8”, two regional stories “The Blue Umbrella” and “Sita and the River”, and one adventurous story “Romi and the Wild Fire”, “The Kite Maker”, “A Long Walk with Granny” and “The Cherry Tree” in relation to children and nature. Considering the harmony between nature and children, these stories have been selected. These stories have filled with abundant natural phenomena along with children’s attitude. There are some reasons for the selection of these stories particularly to reflect Bond’s childhood life as a model for the neglected, deserted, depressed children of the society and to make them stand on their own to face the world with courage and positive attitude towards life. Two autobiographical stories; “The Funeral” and “Woman on Platform no 8” have been dealt to motivate the children like Arun. To teach the greedy and selfish society that sharing showers happiness and friendship through Binya of “Blue Umbrella”. It moralizes that the innocent world of children can change the greedy life of the elders. “Romi and the Wildfire” and “Sita and the River” are samples to show the growing spirit of children to stand alone and to
survive against the natural disaster like flood and forest fire. It parades an awareness of protecting the environment and nature. Bond sensitively invokes loving and caring relationship between children and adults in “Long Walk with Granny”, “The Kitemaker” and in “The Cherry Tree” which attract the researcher to choose these stories for discussion.

In the story “The Funeral” Bond narrates the emotional feeling of the boy over the death of his father in a melting way. It is an autobiographical story of Bond who shares his loss or demise of his father when he was a boy. The story “The Funeral” brings us close to the irretrievable loss that Bond faced at a very young age. He renders his deeply felt nostalgia in this story. The boy imagines that his father coming back to life through new shoots. The story ends with the optimism of the boy that just as the plant is shooting out of the soil, the boy’s father also will be resurrected in the form of new shoots somewhere and he can be able to meet him one day. The flowers, the spoiled garden, the trees and plants, snow-covered peaks, mist laid mountains reflect the abandoned condition of the boy, and the trees and plants assumed the role of a guardian, mountains and snow-covered peaks slant for hope and renewal of life in this story. The boy is asking series of questions to himself regarding the funeral which projects very vividly the insatiable curiosity of children. Bond depicts the indelible moving emotional feelings of the boy who lost his father. He has been comforted and consoled by the trees, plants, flowers and mountain peaks which assure him faith of meeting his father. Bond hints at the eternal force of nature and human soul in this story.

“The Women on Platform 8” is a typical Bond’s short story about a twelve-year-old boy Arun. He is lonely and unloved who finds a spring of human kindness in a lonely window. She embodies Bond’s vision of an ideal mother who understands her kids. Bond’s sense of insecurity is evaded by the kind hearted mother character of a strange woman in white saree. Arun finds mother like compassion, and love and care from the woman and he calls her ‘Mother’. Her touch, her kind words, her perceptions and her calmness make the boy
accept her, his mother. “The Woman in Platform 8” is a fable that teaches the children to be independent and confident to face the world alone like Arun. Adults, like the stranger woman in this story must take the leading role in showering love, care and tenderness to mould the children in having confidence of their own in handling the situation alone. The kindness of strangeness renders Arun his mother.

Binya, the vivacious girl of “The Blue Umbrella” successfully overcomes the self-seeking attitude towards life. The readers are motivated in witnessing the indomitable spirit of Binya. Bond adorns the story with the basic human instincts like desire, possession, envy, greed and compassion for an object ‘Umbrella’. It is termed as regional story as Bond portrays children Binya and her brother Bijju, who belong to the rural Himalayan India. Bond presents their hard work, their spirit of adventure and most of all their intimacy with nature. In “The Blue Umbrella” there are many phrases which reveal the fragrance of the soil, Gharwal hills, rocks, summer grass, the cow Neelu, and Gori, dark forests, potato, onion and maize fields, leopards claw. Bond celebrates the innocence of children by setting them against the world of adults. Bond narrates the adventurous spirit of Binya and Bijju in this story. The blue Umbrella is an evocative symbol of attraction and repelling alike.

“The Blue Umbrella” is really a revelation of innocence, kindness, sympathy and brotherhood of children. The description of the mountains, seasonal changes, the children, their cows, Binya’s thrilling rescuing operation of her umbrella, Bijju’s fight with the boy, leech bit and bee stung, the life in the village Garhwal all seem to come alive. The story conveys that a touch of compassion, an ability to share and a sense of justice can turn a heart of stone into a heart of gold.

“Sita and the River” is both a regional story and an adventurous story as it is the tale of two children and their bravery during the flood. The story portrays the girl Sita and her spirit of adventure to save herself from the angry river and her intimacy with nature. Bond
captures his readers through his vivid description of the island and the village and people. The girl ‘Sita’ embodies adventure, humanity, preservation of trees and courageous mind in times of tribulation and loneliness. She is an inspiration for the young readers.

“Sita and the River” illustrates that life is not of only good and happiness but it puts light on the darker side of bad and suffering as we have two sides on the same coin. The river represents life by itself. It reveals the agile of life and ups and downs of it. The three hundred year old peepul tree provides shelter for the birds. It attracts birds and insects from across the river. The peepul serves the purpose of saving human by protecting Sita from the river. Mythologically, peepul leaves represent the presence of Krishna. The river, the island, the peepul tree, the kite and the rag doll Mumta all represent life and nature. The island in this story conveys the truth that each individual is like an island, till he is swept in the current of life and starts interacting with other people. Little Sita and her gallant rescuer Vijay ‘Krishna’ triumph at the end. Sita and her Grandfather’s return to the island represent their attachment and adjustment to live in the same land irrespective of the troubles and loses, she faces. Sita and Vijay are embodiment of children who realized life and nature and ready to join hand in hand with nature.

“Romi and the Wildfire” presents a different type of adventure of the boy, Romi in the forest. The boys Romi and Teju in this story are shocked to see the dreadful forest fire which imperils the life of thousand beasts and birds along with vegetation. Bond brings together an action packed full of adventure in this story, set against a terrifying backdrop of a forest fire. Bond deals with the issue of saving the wildlife and he trains the younger generation towards the preservation of the wild life.

As boys love to take a mischievous sort of delight in pursuing forbidden enterprises, Romi takes as a challenge to cross the fiery forest. Romi enjoys his long rides with thrills and adventures. “Romi and the Wildfire” is replete with suspense, adventure and curiosity. Bond
has woven wildlife so earnestly and imaginatively in the texture of story. It is interesting to know that man and beast have adapted themselves according to each other mode of existence. They survive against the constant threat to their lives because they live in conformity with the laws of nature. The animals such as hare, deer, jackal and elephant and birds are closely observed. In this story Bond takes up the issue of ecology and environment. The planned destruction of trees on mountain slopes in the name of progress and development is the theme in “Romi and Wildfire”. Romi and Teju indulge in ordinary childhood activities which are charmingly documented. Children get enamoured of Romi’s heroic aptitude. He is packed with courage, confidence, hope, intrepidity, helpfulness, balanced and coolness. Romi symbolizes Bondian humanism. The beast symbolizes nobility and represents the soul of India.

Mehmood in “The Kitemaker” speaks of the inseparable relationship between man and nature. The analogy of man and tree gives the total essence of Bond’s treatment of nature. The Kite maker Mehmood is like the banyan tree, his hands gnarled and twisted like the roots of the ancient tree. Mehmood presents his experience in making the new kite for his grandson Ali. It is a nostalgic tale where Mehmood, a famed kite maker of past years, nostalgically recalls his days when his kites were the cynosure of the town. The old Mehmood wants to be useful as a flying bird and as a walking man. But, now he seems to be lame in his loneliness and the indifference of his neighbourhood.

The descriptions of kite making and kite flying, interest the young readers who may imagine themselves indulge in flying kite and experiencing the same enjoyment. The kite becomes the symbol of past, symbol of freedom and a creative spirit. Bond bemoans the ravages of development which has turned once a lively city into a congested metropolis with no space for innocent activities. All who are old and passing their years in their life need children to share their loneliness and solitude. The tragedy of modern man is that he forces
the older to be in his cocoon. Children are the keys to open the cocoon and free them to enjoy their old days by their talking, laughing and engaging them lively with their presence. Old people also have the responsibility of raising their grandchildren in the right path and making themselves recover from the boredom of solitude. “The Kitemaker” is an interesting account of mutual sharing between the children and the old. Bond emphasizes that the negligence of the old has to be stopped, the care and affection for them is appreciable and abolish the trend of keeping them in ‘Old Age Homes’ or ‘Mercy Homes’. Bond suggests his readers especially children to bear the responsibility of governing the helpless lonely elders who are their own grandparents. Children are the pillars of the future generation. Bond puts the seed of responsibility through the characters Mehmood and Ali in this story to nurture them in good path. Bond presents the story in the colour of nature. The symbolic representation of kite and the banyan tree speaks to the innocent heart of children who learn to treat the old tree, old man and the poem of the poet with compassion and condescension.

The story “A Long Walk with Granny” focuses on the attachment between a grandmother and grandson Mani. Mani offers to accompany his grandmother on a two days journey to Mussoorie where the nearest eye hospital is located so that she can get a new pair of glasses. The atmosphere of the Himalayan region during monsoon is charmingly described as they two set off on their adventure. The story depicts Mani’s love and affection and care for his granny. Bond losses his parental care - he gratifies himself with his dream of having a good care of granny in this story. They are just his dream incarnations. Bond imparts the vigour of hill people through the character of Granny. He compares her stamina to an ‘oak tree’. Mani and his grandma belong to the hills and they have fellow feelings for birds, flowers, rivers and clouds around them. It shows their close association with nature. Descriptions of slopes and mountains are predominant in the story “A Long Walk with Granny”. Bond captures the mountain with its birds, flowers, river, spring, path, deodar
forest, pine leaves. Seeds, bulbs, umbrella and new spectacles reflect new life, new vista and new spirit in and around grandma.

Bond’s requirements in “The Kitemaker” to care the old people, is rectified through Mani in “A Long Walk with Granny” Mani epitomizes love and affection the elder needs. In return, Granny compensates the role of mother in bringing him up. Mani represents ordinary Indian village boy who helps his grandparents in their fields and in their household duties.

The final story of this chapter “The Cherry Tree” depicts young Bond’s friendship with the tree. Bond speaks of his own reflections through the boy Rakesh. It reveals the relationship between the boy Rakesh and his grandfather. The germination of a cherry seed into a baby plant and the growth of the plant into a tree spread love and understanding not only between the old and the young but also between the boy Rakesh and the Cherry tree. Rakesh is a six year old boy living with his grandfather. His parents are farmers in a small village, there is no school. Hence his parents have sent him to his grandfather. Rakesh lives in the Himalayan foot hills. There are the forests of oak and deodar. Oak stands for steadfastness of the hill people, the deodar represents Godliness, the cherry tree represents the invincible power to exist.

In “A Long Walk with Granny” Mani helps his granny in all her ways and accompanies her to get new spectacles, listening to her stories and enjoying the beauty of landscape around him. Rakesh in “The Cherry Tree” is being helped by his grandfather in growing the cherry plant. Bond draws an analogy between the boy and the cherry plant. Grandfather conveniently teaches him the lesson of being useful to others in planting the cherry seed. The utility of the object decides the luck of it. When the seed becomes the plant and grows into a tree, it shelters birds and insects even Rakesh and his grandfather. Both are intoxicated by the cacophony of the nature around them. The boy admires the wonders of nature that it is just one small seed. He feels the smooth bark of tree and this is what it feels to
be God. The different stages of the growth as well as the constant threat to the death of the tree is described in minute details and with special reference to the growth of Rakesh himself.

A loving grandfather introduces the child Rakesh to the world of nature. He acts as a catalyst in upbringing Rakesh. He passes on his wisdom to him and enables them to gain confidence and assume responsibility. This relationship paves the way for the happy selfhood of the boy Rakesh. Here, grandfather becomes the loving source of his grandchild’s growth and self knowledge. He takes care of the child, hence he commands respect from the boy naturally. Bond is aware of the fact that the tender body and immature mind of children need protection and guidance to acclimatize themselves in the world of adults. Bond invokes loving and nurturing relationship between children and adults in “A Long Walk with Granny” “The Kitemaker” and in “The Cherry Tree”. In these stories the children’s thought and the adult’s reactions have been talked about.

Children love nature- birds and animals. This comes naturally to them. They never harm the animals and their environment or exploit them for their personal self, gain or profit. The young narrator loved each and every bird, animal and plants on the planet. In turn he is reciprocated by accepting him, trusting him and caring for him in their respective way.

The stories of Bond provide an opportunity for the young readers to have the attraction towards the natural world. It makes them believe that he or she is a part of nature. His works render children, nature experiences during their childhood and nurture the concept of nature and make them believe that they are part of it. It is during early childhood when children’s experiences give form to the values, attitudes and basic orientation towards the world that they will carry with them throughout their lives. Regular positive interactions with nature help children develop respect and a caring attitude for the environment.
As stated in this introduction, the thesis is dealt with Nature in Bond’s novels in second and third chapters, Children and Nature in Bond’s short stories in the fourth chapter. This work is an attempt to bring together most of Bond’s works to make as homespun patch-quilt. In it there are bits and pieces of clothes that are his stories and novellas with the colour of nature and children, the scraps of material knitted with the days of Bond’s life. And one believes that it may not be a velvet tapestry, but serves its purpose as quilt to give warmth, cozy comfort and colour to the readers.