CHAPTER -2

Nature in Adolescents’ Novels

Ruskin Bond’s fiction is the celebration of nature. Being in perfect harmonies with nature, he is replete with godly emotions and feelings. Bond believes that nature is a pure bubbling life force which quickens every object and creature and human to act, to respond, to grow and to live. Nature that vibrates with life is beautiful.

The second chapter “Nature in Adolescents’ Novels” reflects upon the aspects of nature in Bond’s twin novellas of adolescents’ *The Room on the Roof* and *Vagrants in the Valley*. The natural phenomenae in these novellas represent various phases and transformation in the character of the protagonist Rusty. At first Bond’s debut novella *The Room on the Roof* is analysed in association with the impact of nature on the character, Rusty. Secondly *Vagrants in the Valley* a sequel to the *The Room on the Roof* is focused in relation to nature.

Rusty, the protagonist of the novel *The Room on the Roof* represents Bond’s emotions and feelings in the environs of nature. The entire corpus of Bond’s work is a magnificent document of his deep association with nature. He finds delight in running with the winds, smiling with the flowers and converses with the trees.

In *The Room on the Roof*, Bond handles natural phenomena such as: India, Himalaya, hill Station, forest, bazaar, maidan and city, Seasons: Monsoon with rain and storm and spring and mist, Flora; trees, bushes, weeds, flowers, garden, Fauna; jackal and snake, Elements; water, soil, sunlight and moon. Another important feature, landscape which is generally carried out for scenic background, appears in a prominent role in Bond’s fiction. Bond’s vivid descriptions have functional value. They lend to the plot proper understanding of the terrain, Rusty. The direct contact with nature leads Rusty to increase mental health. He has experienced many psychological benefits of nature experiences which are desirable and
healthy in this novella. In the environs of nature Rusty learns to live independently, to decide on his own, to think positively, to mingle with peers and to have hope on future.

In both Room on the Roof and Vagrants in the Valley the adolescent character Rusty is shown in clashes with adults. The protagonists of these novellas defy the authority and break the conventional rules. Adolescence is a period in one’s life when one becomes very sensitive and opposes restrictions, rules and codes of conduct which one cannot absorb. Rusty in Room on the Roof rebels against the restriction of his guardian Mr. Harrison. He defies the rigid social codes of the English which do not allow him to mix with the natives. Harrison beats him for playing Holi with his friends. Rusty repulses the attack of his guardian beats him and runs away. Nature showers faster recovery from depression and stress in response to nature stimuli than built setting. Stress reduction is a key benefit of wilderness experiences for Rusty.

Rusty is a sixteen year old Anglo Indian boy who is with blue-grey eyes and fair hair. His face is rough and marked and the lower lip hung loose and heavy. He keeps his hand in his pockets and his head down which is the way he always walks and it gives him deceptively a tired person but he is a lazy boy. As he is walking homewards he is not very happy. He is three miles out of Dehra. While walking, the light spring rain rides on the wind, into the trees, down the road. The ‘rain’ brings an exhilarating freshness to the air, smell of earth, a scent of flowers. The tender shower of rain brings a smile to the eyes of the boy Rusty on the road (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 1). The novel starts with the beautiful descriptions of transient season and its impact on the protagonist. Rusty, Rain makes him crazy, he feels his nerves dancing with the pitter-patter of first shower. The long road winds round the hills, rises and falls and twists down to Dehra. The road comes from the mountains and passes through the jungle and the valley and reaches Dehra and ends in the bazaar. Rusty feels the atmosphere and smiles as the ‘rain’ flecks his face and he too likes the smell and the freshness of it.
Somi the cyclist Sikh boy wears turban and bangle on his wrist has much interests in Rusty the European boy near Dehra. It is the unusual sight. Somi asks him to join him in the ride to go to the town. Somi is a friendly boy. Rusty likes to walk in the ‘rain’ but the irresistible warmth of Somi’s nature pulls the boy to accept Somi’s offer. Both Rusty and Somi ride slowly, gliding round the low ‘hills’ and the ‘jungle’ on either side of the road. Then it gives way to open fields and tea gardens and to orchards. The ‘rain’ still falls and wets them slightly. They meet Ranbir a youth and a wrestler and a friend of Somi. Ranbir slips on to the carrier behind Somi. Soon, the three join with Suri, a pale, bony sickly boy and a friend of Somi. The ride becomes difficult and exceedingly uncomfortable. As they are nearing the town, Rusty has to get off as he lives there and he thanks them. They invite him to join them in the chaat shop in the bazaar if Rusty has a chance to come over there. Now it stops raining and he is almost to his home. He wishes that he has gone into Dehra with Somi. He feels lonely (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 5-6). Bond refers rain, his companion as it ponders the spirit of joy. Rusty washes away his monotony of heat in ‘rain’. The force and the freshness of rain bring tremendous relief and wash away the stagnation that has been settling on his mind and body. In ‘rain’, Rusty feels the thrill of anticipation and a mountain of excitements. The ‘rain’ has come to break the monotony of the summer months. It brings momentous elation in his loneliness. Have Somi or Ranbir been with him, Rusty thinks that he can have adventure in rain. Bond in his Book of Nature (171) shares his experience in the first shower of the monsoon as that of Rusty. He also opines that the monsoon has always been his favourite time of the year. Like every Indian he is keenly alive to the monsoon than to any other season. It is as true of him today as it was in the fifties, when he was a young boy. Rusty’s experience of the first rain in The Room on the Roof is also his own (Bond, Book of Nature.171).
After arriving home, Rusty comes to know that his guardian Mr. John Harrison is going to Delhi the next day for Business. Mr. Harrison is really a cousin of Rusty’s father. He is a tall man, neat in appearance, over forty. Since Rusty’s parents have died earlier, he has been kept, fed and paid for and sent to a school in the hills that is exclusively for European. Rusty has been brought by Mr. Harrison, now he is owned by him and he has to do what his guardian wishes. Rusty is afraid of that compulsion, conditions especially his silence. The only boy, Rusty has in his community is a sweeper boy but he is not allowed to play with him considering that the sweeper boy will be unhygienic (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*. 8-7).

Rusty feels alone as he is not permitted to do his will and he dislikes to be suppressed under the control of his guardian Mr. Harrison. He has an urge to break that shell of suppression and wants to act on his own. Being an adolescent, he secludes himself from the strict Harrison and wants to have the company of his own age. Hence he finds happiness in the company of Somi, Ranbir and Suri. Bond expresses Rusty’s loneliness in the story. Everyday he walks aimlessly along the road, over the hill side brooding on the future, or dreaming of sudden and perfect companionship, romance and heroics, hardly conscious of the present. His idle hours are crowded with memories and snatches of childhood. Now Rusty intends to make use of his guardian’s absence and he can enjoy all the freedom for next days to explore, get lost or wander afar (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*. 10).

Near by is one Missionary’s wife who is fond of putting Rusty to work in her garden. It is a kind of governing him in the absence of Rusty’s guardian. He used to cut the hedge, water the plants and to clear the garden path of stones, hunting beetles and ladybirds and dropping them over the wall. But bright new day of liberty is ahead of him, he says ‘no’ to her. Bond captures the scene of freedom in his words of nature that it is a cold morning, sharp and fresh. It is quite until the sun comes shooting over the hills, hitting the mist from the valley and clearing the blood shot from the sky and the ground was wet with dew (Bond, *The
Room on the Roof. 12). As if the ray of light sends away darkness, the absence of his
guardian showers limitless expectation in Rusty’s mind. He walks rapidly down the road and
he takes the direction which is different to the one in which he usually wandered. It reminds
the reader of Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” In Frost’s poem the poet who
wants to be different, chooses the road which is not often visited by the traveller and is not
frequently used. Rusty also chooses his own way in his guardian’s absence as if he gets
freedom now. The desire to know around him insists him to break the clutches of
suppression. He takes responsibility for his runaway. Bond wonderfully renders the growth in
the mind of Rusty as he can decide to be different. It is a turning point in his life.

Rusty reaches Dehra’s landmark, the clock tower in the bazaar which is forbidden by
Mr. Harrison. Still he is afraid of discovery and punishment but hungering curiosity impels
him forward. He is fascinated by the sight of the bazaar. The bazaar of Dehra is highly
suggestive in The Room on the Roof. Dehra Bazaar reveals Rusty’s urge for socialization. The
bazaar is a medley of different types of people, sound and smell and it stands for the real
India, which is away from the confines of the English people where Rusty lives. The bazaar
suggests a spirit and an instinct that embolden Rusty to defy his guardian. Bazaar is a
unifying link between two phases of Rusty’s life. The first being Mr. Harrison’s guardianship
and the second having independent settlement at Kapoor’s house. Bazaar is a sort of
orientation for his transgression into real life full of challenges and adventures. There he
meets Somi unexpectedly. Somi accompanies him to one shop where Rusty tastes ‘tikkees’
first time. Both are very pleased to meet each other. Rusty returns to his home and builds
dream on a new day. He enjoys next day in the bazaar, steps into the chaat shop, past the
clock tower, past the small shops and tastes the same tikkees and chaat. Joined with the
company of Ranbir and Somi, Rusty accepts the invitation to celebrate ‘Holi’ the Hindu
Festival of colour with his new friends. Bond explains the essence of the festival that one
throws colour on each other and shouts and sings and forgets one’s misery. The colour means the rebirth of spring and new life in our hearts.

Rusty arrives in the noon forgetting of his guardian existence. He hesitates to make a denial of his whereabouts – since he is afraid of him. Rusty says sorry and accepts that he has been to the bazaar. The arrogant Harrison swishes the cane through the air that landing on his bottom with a slap and it stings into Rusty’s buttocks. At sixth and the last stoke of the cane, Rusty lies down groaning on his bed until the pain has eased. He pities enough to want to cry but he knows the futility of tears. The pain and the sense of injustice he feels are real. Rusty buries his head on the pillow and forces a dream. There he is thrashing Mr. Harrison until he begs for mercy (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 26). He hates the world of reality where he has been thrashed, and the dream is the only consolation and comfort. The world of nature awaits him to console and comfort him, makes him identify his own self. Rusty gets a different perspective altogether from now on.

Rusty remembers his promise that he will play Holi with Ranbir. He climbs out of the window, down the path behind the house, over the hill and into the jungle. The arrival of spring, the rebirth of year and the awakening of love start with throwing colours and beating of drums. Bond portrays the birth of the ‘spring’ that the sun came up and the bazaar work up, the trees seemed to have burst into ‘flower’; for in the ‘forest’ there were armies of rhododendrons and by the river the poinsettias danced; the cherry and the plum were in blossom; the snow in the mountains has melted; and the streams are rushing torrents; the new leaves on the trees were full of sweetness and the young grass held both dew and sun, made an emerald of every dew-drop (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 29). The infection of spring spreads simultaneously through the world of man and the world of nature and mates them one.
The whole day Rusty roams around the town and country side with Ranbir and his friends and they forget their homes for one day. Rusty too forgets his guardian and the missionary’s wife and the cane. The day’s enjoyment and the excitement of the colour game retire exhaustedly. He feels the cool dark silence of the jungle, stopped shouting and singing. He lays down in the shade of the trees and the soft comfortable grass. He wants to have this life in another world. He does not want to leave the ‘forest’ which is safe and the earth soothes him, gathers him, hence the pain of his body becomes a pleasure. He finds solace as if in the warmth lap of his mother and he never likes to depart. Nature experiences relieve mental fatigue. It offers intrinsic interest and a sense of fascination. The restorative effects of a natural environment lead to renewed attention and positive effect on Rusty.

Rusty returns to his home with a patch work of paint and torn pyjamas and he has been mistaken for the sweeper boy or some servant. Harrison is shocked to see Rusty that this is the boy he has trained and educated. He spits his anger on him by words and cane. Rusty flares into a temper shows his spirit for the first time in his life, he wraps his arms round his guardians legs and pulls on him with all his might. Mr. Harrison falls flat on his back. He realizes that his dream comes true. The greater courage keeps him aware that he was no more a child, he was seventeen and he was man (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 36).

The change in the season denotes the change or the birth or the awakening of Rusty. The ‘spring’ season reflects the alteration and the different perception and action of Rusty. Bond keenly draws a subtle parallelism between the seasonal change and the change of Rusty’s character, and his attitude. It provides him a chance to know that he is not a boy and is a man now. He makes his escape from his guardian’s house and he never intends to return.

Rusty comes to the ‘maidan’ a broad stretch of grassland, seeking his company. Around him is dark and silent and lonely. Loneliness makes him conscious of his unhappy state. Madness, freedom and violence are new to him but loneliness is familiar that he
understands. Despite his loneliness the present is confusing and he cannot view his future as if he is in utter darkness. It seems everything has turned against him. The ‘maidan’ is a witness to his first experience of independence which is awesome and disgusting. The dark and desolate ‘maidan’ reveals Rusty’s own sense of loneliness and freedom. The ‘maidan’ was a vast empty space which shows the vacuum and the emptiness in Rusty’s mind. During the day the same grass land is full of life with cattle grazed and children played and young men wrestled and kicked football. At night, Rusty walks the length of the maidan barefootedly. The ‘grass’ is soft as the grass in the forest. A light ‘breeze’ blowing across the maidan is pleasant and refreshing. Even in his loneliness, ‘Nature’ in the attire of ‘breeze’ and ‘grass’ soothes and refreshes him to face the future.

The vivid description of scenes provides an understanding of the situation of the protagonist. Rusty ran away. With no other place to move, he came to bazaar. The noise and hubbub of bazaar tempted him in the morning. But it is now deserted and forlorn. The depiction of the scene explicitly 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. He knows that he is alone only for today but tomorrow his friends are going to accompany him and help him. The pictorial description provided by Bond set the mood and the tone of the story.

Rusty’s agony is aggravated by the presence of ‘moon’. The ‘moon’ came out from a cloud, and played with his wet glistening body and revealed the vast, naked loneliness of the ‘maidan’ and his own insignificance and he longs for the presence of the people. He is certain that he will never return to his guardian. There is a ‘drizzle’ also but he never minds the rain. The ‘drizzle’ symbolizes the sickness in Rusty’s mind. It stands for nuisance, annoyance and
it binds Rusty inactive crouching under the bench and he becomes wet and cold and muddy and the feeling of helplessness and self pity grab him. He sleeps on the steps of the chaat shop long after the sun has come striding down the road because of his weariness. Bond philosophically pens that hunger and pain lengthen the night. The beggars and dogs are the last to see the stars and the hunger and the pain hasten the awakening, hence they are the first to see the sun.

Next day, Rusty meets Somi as he is the only hope and tells him that he runs away from home. Somi takes Rusty home on his bicycle, Rusty mind is now relieved that he no longer feels alone. Somi gives him a feeling of confidence. The feeling of hope and confidence of Rusty is intended by the quiet and shady ‘road’. There were ‘trees’ at the road sides, covered in pink and white blossoms and behind them more ‘trees’ thicker and greener. Somi assures Rusty that he will find a job for him. Rusty is given shelter and food in Somi’s home till he finds a job. Family relations of Bond were desperate, but he has been fortunate in the matters of friendship. It is a kind of emotional compensation. In The Room on the Roof Bond depicts the glorious narration of this friendship of Rusty with Somi and Kishen. They are the powerful medium of grapple the true spirit of India. In the beginning, Rusty is brought up in an alien environment. His friendship brings him closer to India. He feels that he belongs to Dehra.

Somi mounts his bicycle and rides off to see Mr. Kapoor to secure a job for Rusty, the post of English Teacher. Mr. Kapoor wants a teacher for his son Kishen. Rusty and Somi reach Kapoor’s house in the evening. They appear to be giving a party and Somi and Rusty join the people who are around the fire. The fire lends friendly warmth to the chilly night. As the flames leap up, it casts the glow of roses on people’s faces. Meena, Kapoor’s wife is a capable person, still young, a charming hostess and in her red sari and white silk jacket, her hair plaited and scented with jasmine she looks beautiful. Rusty admires her and wants to
compliment her. (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*, 41). The fire and the red colour stand symbolically for the love of Rusty for Mrs. Kapoor, Kishen’s mother. The scent of the jasmine flowers, red sari, the red flames of the fire kindle the flames of passion and love of Rusty. Somi and Ranbir have changed Rusty’s life with a little colour of red, green of growth and prosperity. On the morning after the Kapoor’s party, Ranbir, Somi and Rusty are seated in the chaat shop. Ranbir and Kishen are already friends. Kishen sits in front of Rusty. Kishen swaggers with money. Though he has unattractive face, his qualities make him curiously attractive.

‘Tree’ holds major concern of Bond as it is the perennial source of life. ‘Tree’ is closely associated with youth, longing for companionship, shelter and an overseeing power. Bond compares Ranbir’s wrestling with the trees as:

“He was not very clever, but powerful; we were like a great tree, and no amount of shaking could move him from whatever spot he chose to plant his big feet. But he was gentle by nature” (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*, 46).

Like a tree he is strong, like nature he is gentle. Bond presents each character in relation to nature which relevantly reflects the person’s mood and traits. Ranbir is strong like a tree but he is very soft and tender at heart to cradle the babies in his open hands and sing to them while their mothers are busy.

Rusty has got a job of a teacher to Kishen, and he can have a room of his own and his food with Mr. Kapoor’s family. Rusty feels gay and light-hearted and all the troubles in the world are scurried and he feels successful. Rusty begins to like Kishen for he has taken Rusty into his home without knowing him very well. As he walks back to Somi’s house and lays down to sleep, he sees Meena Kapoor in his mind’s eyes and for the first time takes conscious note of her beauty, of her warmth and softness. He makes up his mind that he falls in love with her (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*, 63). His thoughts are far from his guardian. Now he
listens to Meena Kapoor tell him about his room that his room is on the roof. It is a small room, with four walls, a door and a window. From the window they can view a big mango tree, banyan tree, litchi trees and the flame of the forest tree with its glowing red-hot against the blue sky.

The fruit mango is a passionate one and its inner gold is sensuous to lips and tongue. In the folk lore of Garhwal, the ‘mango tree’ is a wish fulfilling tree. In “My Father’s Trees in Dehra” Bond refers one of his favourite trees, the mango tree. Bond narrates that the young leaves and blossoms of the tree symbolizes the darts of ‘Kamdev’ God of love. Symbolically, Bond depicts the love of Rusty for Meena Kapoor through this mango tree (Bond, NTDOS “My Father’s Trees in Dehra” 140). Mentioning the mango tree in this situation, Bond implies the passion lurks or shoots in the mind of Rusty. In Bond’s Book of Nature Bond pens that every mango tree is generous with its juicy fruit hence it is known as ‘the nectar of the Gods’. In Book of Nature, Bond elaborately discusses many facts of ‘mango trees’. It is worshipped by the women folk to protect their children. The fruits of the tree welcome and attract the children towards it (136-137). The mango is the wish-fulfilling tree; the leaves and buds symbolize Manmatha or Kama-Deva, God of love (148).

Rusty’s room on the top of Kapoor’s roof is simply nectar from god for Rusty who is a homeless wanderer. He is sheltered as the parrot in the grove finds its favourite nesting place in the holes of the trunks of old ‘mango trees’. Hence ‘mango tree’ represents the love of Rusty for Meena Kapoor and the shelter for him as if a blessing in disguise.

The ‘banyan tree’ is a world in itself populated with small beasts and large insects, butterflies and squirrels, many birds like gossipy rosy pastors quarrelsome mynas, bulbuls, coppersmiths, raucous and crows. Bond briefly pins out the benefit of the banyan in his Book of Nature that the ‘banyan’ is the biggest and friendliest of all other trees. The banyan is a very hospitable tree. It attracts number of visitors – birds, squirrels, insects, and flying foxes.
The banyan is rather like a hotel or boarding house in which a number of different families live next door to each other. It is always cool, dark and shady beneath the banyan. Similarly, Rusty has secured himself in the hospitable home of Meena Kapoor. The banyan tree represents Rusty’s present position in his room on the roof (130).

As if a banyan tree, Rusty has got friends Somi, Ranbir, Suri, Kishen and Meena Kapoor. Once he was alone and there was no hope of future but now he has got a job, a room of his own and friends to share with. He realizes that he is not in a dream world because his dreams have come true that he can lead the life independently and he can experience the freedom he aspires for. Besides, he has courage and confidence that he can stand on his own. The flame of forest with its flowers against the blue of the sky represents Rusty’s love for Meena Kapoor. Rusty decides not to shut the window to have the view of these trees and flowers.

In the afternoon, Rusty sits beneath big banyan tree which grows behind the house. It is almost a house in itself. The tree shelters scores of birds and squirrels. Rusty listens to the lazy drone of the bees, the squeaking of the squirrels and the incessant bird talk which remind him of his love for Meena. Bond also enjoys being in the romance of sounds especially of unidentified sounds and he interlocks nature with love. Ananda Lal in his essay on “Ruskin Bond” in Indian English Novelist opines that as D.H.Lawrence believes that love and nature are inextricably linked for Bond, the ideal vision is, love consummated in the environs of nature (160). Ananda Lal states that both D.H.Lawrence and Bond have similar view on nature that love and nature are linked. Bond selects the forest as a backdrop to picturise the love of Rusty for Meena Kapoor. Bond chooses the ‘forest’ a natural atmosphere with sights and sounds which elicits the romantic mood for Rusty and Meena Kapoor. Bond in his Book of Nature expresses that one of the ways of attaining harmony between nature and mankind is to listen to the sounds of nature. He notices sensitively, the insects sing in harmony. Rusty
imbibes this aspect and enjoys the sounds of the atmosphere in *The Room on the Roof* (188). Rusty too enjoys the musical language of nature and he forgets himself and he feels successful in his attempt of running away from Mr. Harrison. Rusty notices sounds because he is happy and a happy person notices things.

Bond expels the new beginning of Rusty's life, his first morning in the room in relation to nature. At first everything was dark. While the sun rises, the darkness lifted like the raising of a veil and the sun reached up over the trees and hills and it sent one beam of light through the window. The sun beam creeps across to the bed, and up the Rusty's legs and it is caressing his body and whispering him to get up.

In summer, the day of the picnic has come. The seasonal change is delineated by the ripened litchies and mangoes. Meena proposes the picnic in the forest near Dehra. The picnic provides the chance of exhibiting the love of Rusty for Meena. The romantic relationship of Rusty and Meena finds a vibrant expression in the serenity of the ‘forest’. Bond quotes in his *Book of Nature* that to live harmony with nature we must become good listeners (188). In the forest they are enveloped by a peculiar silence that enables them to listen to each other’s heart.

“Listen to the jungle’, she said

I can’t listen anything

That’s what I mean. Listen to nothing” (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*, 70).

Thorns and brambles brick their feet, but unconscious of these stings, they feel intoxicated by the wilderness of jungle. Meena and Rusty become very sensitive to the sound and sense of nature. Both are surrounded by silence and heavy scented with magnolia and jasmine. Rusty is intoxicated with beauty and sweetness of Meena, Meena with freedom and the comfort of being loved. Nature traps them with its tender touches. He has a wild urge of living in the forest with Meena and escapes form the town. She utters that it would be nice to stay in the
jungle. The ‘forest’ articulates their deep passion. They are transported to a world which is free from social taboos. Soon the trance is broken by the forest itself when a deer leaps the streamlet and bounces into the shrubs. Rusty pointed to the deer and whispers ‘look’. She looks and at the same time the deer looks up. Bond compares the deer with Meena that the deer is a small animal with delicate quivering limbs and muscles and young green antlers.

The forest in *The Room on the Roof* provides the lovers to discover the peace and serenity in love. Both walk back through dappled sunlight, swinging their clasped hand like two children who have just discovered love (85-87). Bond fantastically pictures and harmonizes the scene with nature and love.

Being a great devotee of nature, Bond learns the art of living through natural objects. Waters, the blue white liquid fascinates him. It symbolizes sensual pleasure. When they hear the calling of Meena for lunch they have it in the shade of a poinsettia tree, its long-fingered flowers floating on the river virtually drags romantic moments. Not only the flower bed on the water but the pebbles on the bed of the stream magnetize the lovers Rusty and Meena.

The boys Somi, Ranbir along with Rusty jump into the water. Twisting, turning, diving and disappearing for several minutes and they come up again. The pleasure of playing in the stream is unmeasurable for children. They find such an amusement which is ever erasable from their mind. It is not just a washing off their body but an enjoyment and thrill of being in water. Their bodies glisten under crystal clear water and then they lay down on the green grass to let dry in the sun. It symbolizes man’s occasional return to the elements: water, air and sunlight which wash away the dreariness and monotony of life. Water has a universal undertone of purity and fertility. It is viewed as the source of life. In Taoist tradition, water is considered an aspect of wisdom that it takes on the form in which it is held and moves in the path of least resistance. These bathing excursions are quite frequent in Bond’s other fictions *Vagrants in the Valley; Love is a Sad Song* and *The Sensualist*. As water stands for life, for
blossom, for creation and for harmony Bond says that be like water, as taught by Lao-tzu, the philosopher and the founder of Taoism. Water is soft and limpid and it finds its ways through, over and under obstacles. It does not quarrel and it moves on. One has to accept and lead life whether one likes it or not. Rusty’s bathing excursions are representation of acquiring wisdom to lead life and attaining purity in mind and body.

As they return home from picnic, Rusty feels protectively and a bond of genuine affection that has grown among his friends Somi, Ranbir and Kishen. He has a brotherly love towards Kishen more than a friend. Rusty hopes of seeing a panther or tiger in the forest but it is a territory and only goats are on the road.

Once, Rusty has an opportunity to meet Mr. Harrison in the grocery store. He calls him deleting ‘sir’ to show his independence and never to lose his dignity. Mr. Harrison welcomes him home. Rusty conveys his thanks with the feeling that now he becomes the master of the situation. The reader can notice the development in the deportment of Rusty as the story moves. From the childhood of innocence and dependence Rusty has grown into an adult who is now independent and can manage or overcome any sort of situation. The maturity Rusty attains is reflected through the natural objects that the ‘litchi trees’ are covered with their pink-skined fruit, and the ‘mangoes’ are almost ripe.

After sometime, Meena Kapoor tells Rusty that she and Mr. Kapoor are going to Delhi for an interview to get a good job for Mr. Kapoor. She asks him a favour of taking care of Kishen till their return after few weeks.

The separation of Rusty and Meena Kapoor is foretold by a ‘moth’ which begins to fly round the lamp and it goes round and round and closer. But, with a sudden plop, it hits the lampshade and falls to the ground (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 94). The fly represents Rusty who wants to be with Meena closer and closer like the moth, the lampshade represents Meena who attracts him. The death of the fly or the fall of fly relates to the broken heart of
Rusty after the death of Meena Kapoor later. It is a kind of premonition that Bond uses to accelerate the interest in the readers’ mind.

On the following afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Kapoor have packed things as if the Kapoors are going away for a life time. They share their kisses to Kishen and depart. Kishen is not a bit sorry for his parents have gone away, but Rusty feels like crying and he thinks that the depression is momentary. Now, he is conscious of a sense of responsibility in governing Kishen.

In his loneliness he feels terribly love-sick. Though she has not been away a day Rusty wants to run away with Meena into the ‘hills’, into the ‘forests’ where no one can find them and Rusty wants to be with her for ever. Next morning Rusty finds a note on the door step which states that Suri is going up to Mussoorie and he invites Rusty and Kishen to a send off party in the same evening. The sky is so black than ever and it is going to rain. The flash of lightening in the sky confirms the observation of Rusty. He likes the window open for the rain flecking his face and watches it pattering on the leaves of the banyan tree. The ‘heavy rain’ is another premonition Bond handles to imply the total separation of Meena Kapoor. The tense sky shudders and the blanket of black cloud groans and air is still and sultry, trembles with electricity and all at once the hail stones come clattering down on the corrugated iron roof. The noise seems that lot of skeletons are fighting on the roof. The hail-stones are as big as marbles, bounce on the roof to form a layer of white ice. Rusty has to close the window and even the door and the room plunges in darkness and the storm continues all night. The departure of her presence puts him in darkness of confusion. It creates a kind of panic in Kishen. The rain has stopped by morning. Rusty has got a telegram which says that the car had an accident. Rusty can not stand the strain he throws his arms around Kishen and weeps uncontrollably for the sudden demise of Meena from his life (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*, 105). Rain always equated with life and growth, stands for
danger and death in this novella. In *A Farewell to Arms* by Earnest Hemingway rain symbolizes death. The rain actually precedes an outbreak of fatal illness. Hemingway underlines the significance of precipitation by having Catherine tell Henry that she sees them dead in the rain. During Catherine’s agonizing delivery the baby is dead. Henry looks outside the dark and the rain falling across the light from the window. The word rain is an evidence of weather’s important place in the story overall. Just as Hemingway, Bond also projects that in continuous rain the protagonist has to lose someone. Rusty lost Meena whom he loved and wanted to marry.

‘Storm’ in outside nature externalizes the storm within Rusty who is awfully perturbed by the absence of Meena. The storm is terrific and fascinating and at the same time it reflects Rusty’s state of mind. Nothing passes unobserved in nature from the eye of careful interpreter Bond. The changing pattern of sky, day, night reflect very closely the mood of Rusty.

After Rusty’s separation from Meena he is forced to learn the grim aspects of life. Meena dies in a car accident hence Kishen has to leave Dehra to stay with his aunt. Meanwhile his friends Ranbir and Suri also have departed to Mussoorie and Somi is preparing to go to Amritsar. Rusty finds himself all alone once more as he was at the beginning of the novel. When Kishen moves to his aunt’s house unwillingly, Rusty feels as if part of his life has gone and inside of him he is all alone. Ranbir and Suri and Kishen have gone, a sickening heaviness clog his heart and brain. He too wants to go somewhere. He decides to abandon Dehra to get far away from all memories of Meena and her death. The loneliness banishes his thought of belongingness. He believes as if he does not belong anywhere. Some positively explicate him that it can also mean Rusty belongs everywhere. Everyone has gone away from Dehra leaving Rusty behind, alone. He has his memory for company. He knows no one to love or hate now. He realizes that he is not the master of
himself in his loneliness. Gradually he returns to the same frame of mind in the beginning that of his life with his guardian so empty and meaningless. Rusty begins to fret, to dream, to lose his grip on reality. The full life of the past few months has suddenly ended and the present is lonely and depressing, the future becomes a distorted image, created out of his brooding fancies.

Bond harmonizes Rusty’s mood with the storm and the downpour and the howl of the jackal. While the rain is associated with freshness, storm denotes an impending terrible doom, madness, violence and devastation. The groaning of the sky, the thunder and lightening followed by hailstorm is a reflection of the awaiting doom. Bond associates the storm with sorrow and lovesickness. When the monsoon breaks, it usually brings separation from the beloved. When ‘barsaat’ arrives in *The Room on the Roof* Meena is gone. The violent storms threaten disaster. There is beauty in these storms, but more than that there is a sense of awe of helplessness in the face of nature and the fear of future. In spite of the havoc wrought by these storms, Bond has an unfathomable faith in nature. As with D. H. Lawrence who believes that love and nature are inextricably linked, for Bond, love consummated in the environs of nature. The storm serves as a premonition of crisis and an end to something.

In *The Room on the Roof* Rusty hears the howl of jackal in the yester night of Kishen’s departure. Jackal is suggestive to the particular mood of the character. Jackal is like death, ugly and cowardly and mad, which is associated with death and madness. The cries thicken their blood and thumb their spine. The blood curdling howls followed by an awful silence make the two mourners Rusty and Kishen almost hysterical. The juxtaposition of jackal’s howling and the haunting memory of Meena in the serenity of the forest makes the tragedy more intense and overpowering.

After the dissolution of Rusty from his friends, there is a focus on the room on the roof where Rusty is engrossed in his own thought. The roof top room gains an importance
and it symbolizes the entire world of Dehra as Rusty knows it. Rusty again returns to his dream world, speaks to himself and sometimes he speaks to the lizards. He even thinks of making a garden on the roof beside his room but the thought of going away from Dehra hinders him. In his room, he drinks with the sole purpose of shutting himself off from the world and forgetting. Days pass dry and dusty and he is unaware that it is passing and he longs for something to happen. Bond compares Rusty’s realization of life to the water of the river:

“It was like living in a house near a river, and the river was always running past the house, on and away; but to Rusty, living in the house, there was no passing of the river; the water ran on, the river remained” (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*, 121).

The river symbolizes life and continuity. Rusty realizes that life has to go as the water of the river. As the water goes through the rocks and pebbles or weeds on its way one has to bear the troubles, the turmoils and the loses in the life. This is the main object of the book which is to convey the truth that life continues regardless of death, change and individual emotional trauma to invoke the magical charm of a hill station like Dehra. Nature teaches him the art of living and adaptability. Nature gives Rusty hardiness that is a combination of an internal locus of control appreciation of challenge as an opportunity and commitment to self. A healthy sense of internal control is confidence. A healthy sense of external control leads to trust and willingness to go with the flow. Rusty has got confidence, trust and willingness to go with the current life from the environment especially the river. It reminds us of famous verse of Wordsworth ‘one impulse from vernal wood may teach you more of man’. It is apt to quote Bond’s poem “Walnut Tree Revisited” from his *Book of Verse*

“But I will wait until bright parrots bring

Shrill portents of another spring

And I will love you with the same sweet pain
If you and summer care to come again” (11).

The poem reflects Bond’s positive approach to life and nature. Rusty imbibes hope and faith in life as the water of river is moving but not the river. He waits for another spring and summer to bloom in his life. One can be reminded of Shelly’s verse that ‘if winter comes can spring be for behind’.

The monsoon arrives. Rusty wants to experience the first shower. He throws off his clothes, runs naked on to the roof and the wind whipped the water across his body and he writhes in ecstasy. The rain is more intoxicating than alcohol. The force and the freshness of the rain brought tremendous relief, cleaning the stagnation. The rain cleanses not only the body and mind of Rusty it cleanses the sky and earth. Soon the rain stops. The sun comes out with a challenge on leaves and petals, drops of water sparkled like silver and gold. A ray of hope shimmers in the heart of Rusty and a streak of a sun beam peeps at him. Once again the darkness has gone, brightness occupies its place. Rusty becomes clear and determines to break away from the atmosphere of timelessness and resignation and decides to leave Dehra. Bond depicts the self realization of Rusty:

“I do not want to rot like the mangoes at the end of the season, or burn out like the sun at the end of the day” (Bond. *The Room on the Roof*. 125).

Rusty does not want to waste his life idly. He likes to change his life fruitful, purposeful and meaningful. He grabs that he has some purpose to do, to fulfill in life. He never likes to be negligible as the useless mangoes at the end of the season and the dull dusk of the day. Before the day finished, mangoes rotten, Rusty wants to do something in his immediate future. He decides to go to Delhi to see the High commissioner of the United Kingdom. On his way, he can see Kishen while passing through Hardwar as he has Kishen aunt’s address.

As the monsoon arrives and washes away the dirt, bad days have gone, dawn of the new, fresh days have come for Rusty to begin another new start of life. Rusty leaves the
room, crosses the ‘maidan’, ‘bazaar’ which pull him backwards but he walks forward to lead what lays ahead. He meets the sweeper boy in Mr. Harrison’s house. Though he wants to avoid him, the boy plucks his shirt and Rusty feels ashamed of his behaviour towards the boy who never harmed him and he couldn’t have been friendlier. The boy is jobless now. Rusty promises him that he will try to get him a job. Rusty’s complete perception of life has been changed now. It is not a run away from life as he did once in Mr. Harrison’s guardianship but he understands that what is life and he walks towards it lonely. That is the genuine independent with much courage and confident in his mind and body. He takes the Hardwar mail. When the train gathered speed, the wheels with the rails orchestrate the music of a sad, persistent and fatalistic song. Another life was finishing for Rusty. Only months have gone. An irresistible force cuts him away from his roots, Mr. Harrison’s house. Now he has been replanted in Dehra with his friends Somi, Ranbir, Suri, Kishen and Meena Kapoor and has sprung into life, new life. But it was quick a growth, rootless, hence he withered. Now he searches for the sternly rooted life.

At Hardwar, Rusty searches for Kishen and comes to know that Kapoor had married again and he is healthier than ever. The shock of the second marriage had made Kishen disown his father and resort him to notorious thief for a living. Rusty traces Kishen and they decide the return to Dehra. As the circumstances alter the course of life Rusty is amazed at the competent and practical Kishen. A month ago Kishen had clung to Rusty for protection, now Rusty looks to Kishen for guidance.

Bond portrays the change of life in his own style that it is going to be colourful:

“As the sun sank, the temple changed from white to gold, from gold to orange, from orange to pink and from pink to crimson and all these colours were in turn reflected in the surrounding water” (Bond, The Room on the Roof. 142).
The troubles and the hardships of life break the person, melt him and mould him into an entirely different person who has purpose in life. The reflection of colours renders the wonderful real life, both Kishen and Rusty desire to lead in Dehra.

The return of Kishen and Rusty reflects Bond’s optimistic view of life at the end of the novel. As they cross the river by boat Rusty wants to enjoy the touch of the water as it moves past down and away. He learns that the river is running but it will not run away, it will come to the ocean, the ocean is life. The joy of the union of Kishen and Rusty, joy of the new life make both sing in time to the stroke of the oars. Rusty is now sure of one thing that they have no home on their own, they are both refugees, refugees from the world, as they are each other’s shelter, each other’s refuge, each other’s help (Bond, *The Room on the Roof*. 145).

Rusty is stern that he can not run away and he can not escape the life he had made. He has to return to the room; his room in Dehra with Kishen.

Ruskin Bond ends this fiction with Rusty’s anticipation of moving back to Dehra, to cherish the memory of the forest on the day of the picnic, to bathe at the water-tank, to sit in the fruit trees and eat in the chaat shop, to make a garden on the roof, to eat and sleep, to work, to live.

*The Room on the Roof* is about the narrator, the adolescent Rusty’s further wanderings and adventures in search of an identity. Rusty represents the dilemma, Bond faced when he was a young man. In *The Room on the Roof* Bond discovers the real India and he knows that there he belongs through the eyes of Rusty. He finds that India is a land of longing, an ultimate place of love and happiness. It is the ‘home’ for all the people of the world. Dehra is the favourite backdrop of Bond’s story where he has spent most of his life. Bond does not base his novels in other natural settings such as rural or urban life. It shows his apparent distrust of urban life. Bond has an acute awareness of nature and detailed
observation of its creatures with the sights and sounds of nature are omnipresent in this fiction.

Dehra symbolizes peaceful life with idyllic surroundings. It is a place for longing, for return to home and old friends. It is like Adam’s paradise. It is a place of serenity and divine splendour and of interaction with creation of God. Dehra acts as mother who showers peace, comfort and solace and love unconditionally to whom they attain her laps. Mr. Lal an admirer of Bond points out that the back drop of Bond’s Dehra is like Thomas Hardy’s Essex (157). He says:

“Delhi is 100 ms in the distance like the industrial cities in Thomas Hardy’s Essex, never entering the arena of activities, yet foreboding no good. Just as the physical presence of the city becomes more and more oppressive in Hardy’s later work, Delhi is instrumental in snatching her away from the narrator” (Lal. “Ruskin Bond” Indian English Novelists. 157).

Delhi stands for the sharp contrast to the hectic life of densely populated cities and towns. In Bond’s view point, Hardwar is a place where an innocent boy like Kishen becomes a skillful thief. Rusty finds crimes flourishing on the banks of the holy river. The touch of urban values corrupts the normal simplicity of human beings. The only city Bond figures in The Room on the Roof is Delhi and it associates inauspicious forebodings and happenings. The fatal car accident in which Meena Kapoor died occurs when Kapoors were travelling down form Dehra to Delhi. Hence Bond associates town with evil consequences and desperate deeds. Bond prefers the natural atmosphere not only for himself to live peaceful life but even his characters do so like Rusty in The Room on the Roof.

The various phases and transgression of Rusty are depicted through the natural atmosphere or natural phenomena such as the change of seasons from spring to summer to monsoon. Bond’s handling of natural objects such as rain, thunder, lightning, drizzling,
storm, the moon, the sun, the stream, the river, water, trees, flowers, jackal along with the landscape drive the plot allotting the prominence to nature and life and insisting the harmony of the finite with infinite. Nature brings psychological impact on the mind of the protagonist Rusty. In the beginning he was innocent, dependent and immature. After his encounter with outside world by the help of his friends, his entire attitude and perception have changed. He became confident, matured, independent and optimistic of his future life. The nature experiences decreased the mental fatigue, restored mental clarity and increased sense of well-being for Rusty. Nature as a pedagogy teaches the way to life, way of life. The characters are forced to mature out of that idyllic phase. They always remain in pursuit of that ideal world. They become conscious of the relentless advance of life.

In the second novella of this chapter Vagrants in the Valley, Bond narrates the adolescent Rusty’s further wanderings and adventure in search of identity. In The Room on the Roof he discovers the real India he likes; in Vagrants in the Valley he knows he belongs to India that he will come back. This novel was written soon after he had returned from England to India. Bond has had a special affection for this novel as it was written at a time when he was struggling to make a living as a freelance writer, living in a small rented flat above a ration shop on Dehra’s Rajpur road, eating in a strange assortment of dhabas and consorting with his fellow vagrants Sudheer and Devinder whom are described in this book.

Vagrants means, The Illustrated Oxford Dictionary defines that a person without a home and a job. The protagonist Rusty and his friend Kishen are homeless as well as jobless in this novel. Valley is Dehra, which lies in between Himalayas and Siwalik hill. Dehra is a back drop in Vagrants in the Valley, hence the tittle is a suitable one. This novel is published in 1993. Bond elaborates the beauty and the adorable scene of Dehra from the eyes of a striving teen who is struggling for a nice way to live.
*Vagrants in the Valley* picks up from where the first novel *The Room on the Roof* ends. Rusty is joined in his travel by Kishen, another ‘run away’. As they venture further into the unknown, they discover new friends Devinder and Sudheer. Rusty participates in more escapades and also begins to understand the complexities of growing up. It binds with evocation of youth, innocence and friendship along with sights, smells and sounds of Indian plains and hills.

Bond, in his introduction to *Vagrants in the Valley* explains the reason for Rusty’s runaway:

“‘The main reason for running away was that I’d run out of money and I made my great escape to the mountains’” (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. VIII).

Rusty had run away from an indifferent guardian, a year ago, Kishen had run away from a drunken, remarried father in *Vagrants in the Valley*. Both prefer the risks and pleasures of vagrancy to the security of living with the people whom they do not know. They return from Hardwar to Dehra. Both walk towards their home. Bond introduces an unknown shepherd boy in the opening lines which reminds the reader of Lord Krishna who is known for his naughtiness and innocence and always holds flute and plays it to attract the attention not only of human but every creature around him.

While Rusty and Kishen are sitting under the banyan tree and taking rest for a while for the long walk, on the road to Dehra, they come across a boy who plays on a flute, drives his sheep down the road, barefooted and a red shawl is thrown across his shoulders. He is the only speck on the dusty road and his music is followed by the tinkle of sheep-bells. The boy represents a welcome note to their destination. Amidst of tribulations, Rusty and Kishen are going to hear the joy bells in near future. As the boy is there to look after the sheep, Rusty is
there to take care of Kishen. Rusty bears that responsibility on his shoulder heartily. It is a sign of a good start to their life.

Dusty road, sweat, cool breeze, jungle of sal trees, bathing in the river, laying on the sand, walking in forest path, encountering several peacocks, a band of monkeys, fertile valley, thinking of maidan, plunges in the full moon of the sky, listening to the sound of stream, water, grass, the water fall, the pool, bathing in the cool pool, walking in the shade of many trees, hill and mountains, everything in and around nature constitute this novella. These reflect various moods and actions of Rusty in this story. These backdrops also serve as characters to imply the main stream of the story.

Bond portrays their vagrancy in simple syntax that the road stretched ahead, lonely and endless towards the hills. Dust is in their clothes, eyes and even mouths. The sun is straight and they walk, the sweat trickles down their armpits and down their legs (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*.121). While the smooth concrete road signifies certainty, the unpaved dusty road indicates vagrancy and the sweat and the sunlight imply that it is scorching sunlight with so much effort they are walking the distance. The dusty, rough track leads them to the wilderness near Dehra. Vagrancy is also symbolic of a crucial desert phase, which anyone encounters in the way of their life. It also represents a struggle in order to grab some settlement in life.

Bond predicts their hope of reaching their home town Dehra, by the ‘cool breeze’. Despite their weariness, the feather touch of the breeze cools their mind and body. Bond recites it in words that a cool breeze came across the plain, blowing down from the hills, in the fields. There was a gentle swaying movement as the wind stirred the wheat. The ‘breeze’ hits the road and the dust begins to swirl and eddy about the foot path (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*.122). The breeze separates the dust of whirl pool and hides their way. In the field, the same breeze is gentle and it is rough on the foot path. It
represents the troubles and trials awaiting them in Dehra as they have nobody there to help Rusty and Kishen to come out of their vagrancy. The nature around them like breeze makes them chill and cool in hot December noon. At present, both are without identity and sense of belonging just as meaningless and purposeless dust. The breeze cools them, makes them forget their anguishes and renews their spirit for future. In the course of Rusty’s desert phase, many times dusty breeze hits him that he is not be able to face the world and hides himself from the dust, tries to avoid life. Hence he has chosen the life of a vagrant. Only hope is Somi. Kishen tells him that Somi will be in Dehra who can help Rusty to get another job once again. They get a lift in a bullock-cart and ride till Raiwala. They travel in train to Doiwala without tickets and both slip out of the carriage. At Doiwala, they walk two miles and enter into the jungle. They feed themselves with the corn of the maize fields. They are now twelve miles away from Dehra. They walk in silence. The road emerges from the jungle of sal trees and ends beside a river. They have to cross the river to reach other side. Rusty and Kishen remove their shoes and hang them about their necks and holding hands for security, step into the river. The stones are slippery and the boys stumbled in the water up to their waists. Kishen can hardly stand but Rusty catches hold of Kishen who slips, gripping Rusty’s foot, splutters out of the water. They find themselves dragged across to the opposite bank. They lay exhausted on the warm sand. If one is familiar with Bond’s short story “Romi and the Wildfire” he or she can read a similar situation happened to Romi and Teju who are shocked to see the dreadful forest fire and they are able to escape from the fire. Their final expedition starts as they cross the river to be in the safer side. In “Romi and the Wild fire” Bond narrates Romi and Teju who are crossing the river with the help of each other like Kishen and Rusty in Vagrants of the Valley. Romi and Teju are in river water, splashing around, trying to find each other in the darkness of water. Teju grabs Romi’s foot and both with their cycle cross the river. In both cases, friendship emerges as the predominant theme in Bond’s stories
Bond, “Romi and the Wildfire” 43). Romi behaves as if Teju’s father with such maturity in leading, encouraging and saving Teju. Similarly Rusty plays a role of a father in protecting and guiding Kishen who is also now without parents like him. They are never ready to let the dusty long roads, or the jungle or the river to defeat them on their way ahead. They overcome almost all the huddles. The walk suggests the life and the huddles on their path that indicates the troubles and sufferings they face in order to move forward. ‘Holding hands together’, represents the moral and the physical support of a friend who makes things easier in spite of their hardships. At last they lay on the sand to rest is a symbolic representation of the victory in attaining their goal. The soil or the sand is the symbol of motherhood. They are just ten miles to reach Dehra. They take the forest path. Though they are tired and hungry they are cheerful now.

Both encounter a tiger in the forest which disappears into the forest with just a growl. Bond explicates their relief that they saw several peacocks and a band of monkeys. They reach the outskirt of forest. There lies the open road with fields and villages on either side. They relax and show their relief by bursting into laughter. (Bond, Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley. 132). They laugh at each other. Both Rusty and Kishen feel at ease. Rusty is young enough and flexible enough to adapt himself to any new unfamiliar environment and to absorb a double inheritance.

Their journey is over now. They become light hearted. They wait into the fertile valley between the Siwaliks and the Himalayan foothills. There are wheat and maize and sugar-cane fields, tea gardens and orchards of guava, litchi and mango. The change of life of Rusty and Kishen is portrayed through the change of the green and fruitful backdrop unlike in the beginning of the novel. The natural atmosphere serves as a mirror to reflect the plot of the novel. The dry, dusty and stony road reflects the desert phase of Rusty’s life while the valley
filled with orchards is a reflection of the oasis they reach to live and to rest. Bond’s words and language dance according to the mood of the natural settings and character’s mentality.

As Rusty and Kishen enter their town, it seems strange and heartless as if it does not recognize them. They have gone to the room on the roof but it has been rented out. They return to the bazaar they have only nine rupees and it will last them a few days with a food for a rupee. They can’t get a hotel room less than two rupees. They drink only tea and find only open space ‘maidan’ to sleep. A year ago when Rusty ran away he slept on the same maidan and again he is going to sleep on the maidan. The only progress is Rusty has a companion Kishen. The last time it rained and he woke up in a pool of mud. But, today it won’t rain and there is not dark cloud in the sky. They look at the sky, the ‘moon’ is almost at the full, robbing the stars of their glory (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 138). Rusty’s agony is aggravated when moon comes out from clouds to show him the vast naked loneliness of the maidan and his own insignificance in contrast. They walk towards the open grassland of the maidan. They are being followed by the Goonga, a thick-set youth with shaved head and he is a dumb whom they meet him in the teashop and share him a glass of tea. The Goonga goes away. Rusty and Kishen sleep in the cold bare maidan.

Looking at the ‘fullmoon’ in the sky both wet themselves in the shining shower of moon cheerfully. The situation has not changed. They are room less, jobless and penniless but Rusty has got the friendship of Kishen. Instead of rain, this time moon showers on them. The company of moonlight and Kishen fill the vacuum and Rusty utters philosophically that never care for tomorrow, enjoy today. The maidan serves as a link between the past and the present.

Next day, Rusty finds an old abandoned church on the outskirts of the Dehra. The plaster is crumbling, the paint peeling off and the wild creepers grow over the stained-glass windows of the church. Since the boys are abandoned by the circumstances, they find shelter
in the abandoned church. Bond aptly renders the parallelism between the boys and the church. Even the garden seems a jungle of weeds and irrepressible marigolds. They have no other place to lie down, they prefer this deserted church. Kishen astonishes and bursts into laughter thinking of the place they stayed, railway station; maidan; and now church. After they enter into the church, Rusty opens the windows. The fresh air rushes in, smelling sweet, driving away the mustiness of the closed place.

Rusty and Kishen want to have a bath in a stream near the church. They take a narrow path through the ‘sal trees’ through thorny bushes and brambles. Then they hear the sound of rushing water. Bond depicts the natural atmosphere:

“Water trickled down from the hill side, from amongst ferns and grasses and wild flowers; and the hills, rising steeply on either side, kept the ravine in shadow. The rocks were smooth, soft and some of them were grey and some yellow. A small water fall fell across them, forming a deep, round pool of apple-green water” (Bond, Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley. 146).

Bond mentions the sal tree. The particular quality of the tree is that it does not like being alone. It is found in its own group. It is much happier amongst its own kind in the forest. Similarly, Rusty always likes to be with the friend of his own kind like Kishen.

Bond expresses the musical sound of stream in this novel. The stream becomes the regular bathing place for Rusty and Kishen. The water runs through the ferns, grasses and wild flowers which renew their body and mind with its scents, smells and sounds. Its aromatic effect heals them from their mental sickness and they never care for the past, they forget the past and enjoy only the present in spite of their troubled situation. Nature serves as a healer who heals the ailments of human being through its presence. They forget the problem of making money and the rigours of their journey. They lay on the rock till they are dry. It unveils their unity with the elements of nature.
Rusty and Kishen have gone to Somi’s house and meet his mother. She understands them, serves them a feast. She thrusts a ten rupee note into Rusty’s hand. Rusty gets Somi’s Amritsar address to write to him. Rusty is writing, sometime reading as if he has been a bookworm. He has a shelf of books in the church but mostly Catholic in contents. Next day they wake up before the sun is up and go straight to the pool in the cold morning. Both swim about, the sun beam strikes through the ‘sal trees’ making emeralds of the dew drops, and pouring through the clear water till it touches the yellow sand. Rusty feels the sun touch his skin sink deep into his blood and bones and marrow (Bond, Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley. 152). The constant music of water and their encounter are like getting accustomed to the friendly rattle of teacups every morning. Each and every meeting with an environment spells out charm and harmony. They experience the serenity of nature in every attempt. The morning bath has refreshed them and they feel quiet energetic.

They leave the pool and walk to the maidan where they meet Hathi. Hathi is one of the wrestlers and he is like a young bull, with a magnificent chest and great broad thighs. He had been Rusty’s friend, he asks Rusty of his where about. Hathi informs him that he is going to his village in the hills in a day or two. He suggests that his village will help Rusty to write. To reach Manjari one has to walk thirty miles and to cross two mountains. It will be best for Rusty to write many stories.

Meanwhile Kishen meets an old family friend Mrs. Bhushan and her fifteen-year-old daughter, Aruna, an old playmate in the bazaar. Mrs. Bhushan is a masculine woman, she bullies men and children. Looking at Kishen, Mrs .Bhushan exclaims that Kishen is at Hardwar. His presence in Dehra surprises her. Kishen replies that he is on a walking tour with a friend Rusty. She invites him to her home. At her home, Kishen has told his whole story of journey from Hardwar with Rusty. For the rest of the day Kishen is held loveable prisoner in Mrs. Bhushan’s home. (Bond, Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley. 154-157).
Rusty has been to school to get job ends in futile. After he walks about a mile, he comes to a house which is surrounded by banana and poinsettia trees. The leaves hang down like long red tongues of fire. The front of the house is covered with the bougainvillaea and other creepers. The trees and the creepers around the house are indication of welcoming notes of nature. There Rusty meets an elderly English gentleman named Pettigrew who is seventy. The converse reveals that Pettigrew was Rusty’s father’s friend. Rusty’s father managed this estate for Pettigrew once. Rusty is too interested to know about his father. Pettigrew unfolds that both his father and Pettigrew were interested in birds and insects and wild flowers and were great readers and collectors of books. In fact, this fact has brought them together. He gives information about Rusty’s aunt who still lives in hills near Garhwal. She might have got anything of value his father might have wanted him to have. With growing enthusiasm, Rusty shows his consent to meet the lady who lives on the banks of the river, about forty miles from Lansdowne. Thanking Pettigrew, Rusty thinks of Hathi whose village comes after this Lansdowne. Rusty is very anxious to share this new development to his friends Kishen and Hathi.

Rusty searches Kishen and he meets the Sikh boy Devinder who is in his intermediate course. In the evening he attends the classes but during the day he sells combs, buttons, key-rings, thread, perfumes, soaps and hair oils in a hanging tray for his tuition and livelihood. He also lost his parents during the Partition in 1947. Rusty also tells about Kishen. Rusty and Devinder have gone to the pool and bathed and lied in the sun. Whenever the characters feel tired of vagrancy or in the battle of life or boredom, they require the company of nature especially the stream and the pool serve the best. It alleviates the monotony, prepares them to face the world with zest. Bond pictures the natural scene to change the mood of the characters and they too attain peace and love to endure the life.
Rusty waits for Kishen at the church, Kishen spends the whole day in Mr. Bhusan’s home. He leaves them and comes to the church to see Rusty. He finds Rusty with Devinder. As if a child, Kishen shows a hostile nod that he is possessive in his friendship, is resented anyone else being too close to Rusty. They decide that they should not wander anymore. Rusty conveys Kishen that he is going to see a relative who lives in the hills who can help him with the money.

Next morning the three boys have gone down to the pool to bathe. Bond’s pen dances to the sound of stream:

“The smell of the neem trees, the sound of the water, the touch of the breeze, intoxicated them filled them with a zest for living. They ran over the wild wood-sorrel, over the dew drenched grass, down to the water” (Bond, Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley. 166).

Bond makes a special mention of the ‘neem tree’ in his Book of Nature. Bond writes about the benefits of ‘neem tree’ in his Book of Nature (145). The neem gives out more oxygen than most trees. The ancient herbalists held that neem was a great purifier of the air and its leaves bark and sap had medicinal qualities. It is held sacred and people chew leaves as a means of purification both spiritual and physical. The refreshing aroma of the neem leaves lingers in the water and in the air for days. Hence the smell of the neem tree magnetizes the boys. They return to the church and they find Mrs. Bhushan sitting there for Kishen who left her without telling her. Rusty suggests Kishen to go with Mrs. Bhushan till he returns from the hills. Kishen has gone with her. Rusty also feels that Kishen has changed little and he has others in the world besides himself. Still Rusty likes Kishen and understands him well. Rusty rests his responsibility from one shoulder to another. In his absence, Mrs. Bhusan is there to take care of Kishen.
Rusty and Devinder set out in the direction of the bazaar to find Hathi. Rusty is surprise to discover that Hathi makes toys for a living. But he is disappointed at finding Hathi had already gone. They meet Sudheer, the Lafunga which means loafer. He is the most charming and the most dangerous person in town. He has to give twenty rupees to Devinder. Rusty and Devinder reach quiet, tree-lined road, and walk in the shade of neem, mango, jamun and eucalyptus trees. Clumps of tall bamboo grow between the trees. Nowhere, but in Dehra, Rusty has seen so many kinds of trees. Trees have no names, tall, straight trees and broad, shady trees. Trees slept or brooded in the afternoon stillness. And trees that shimmered and moved and whispered even when the winds were asleep (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 170).

The trees and the plants around, assume the role of a guardian spirit. Bond admits that trees are his consciousness. They are the only witness to his writings. He makes novels, stories on these favorite trees and he shares it with his readers. Trees appear to welcome him and it seems that they are familiar with him. They appear to be the shaping spirit of his dear father. Bond feels their heartwarming supervision, Amita Aggarwal quotes in *The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond*:

“The trees stand watch over my day-to-day life. They are the guardian of my conscience. I do what I think, they would approve the most” (121).

Bond in *Rain in the Mountains* narrates his sole comradeship with trees. The trees are strange at night, the sounds of the trees themselves, stretching their limbs in the dark, shifting a little, flexing their fingers. He watches them grow, listens to their secrets, bows his head before their outstretched arms and seeks their benediction (135). The reader can notice the stillness of the trees as well as the shimmering and whispering and moving language of the trees. Bond accepts that great trees of the mountains know him well. They know his face and see him watching them. As Rusty and Devinder walk, Rusty observes the silent
whispering of the shady tree as if they are talking to Rusty. Just as Bond, Rusty is also parentless. Rusty too senses his father’s presence in each and every tree and he admires it for its counseling and consent. Bond never avoids tree in any of his works. He believes and imagines that his father is coming back to life through new shoots. He depicts it in the short story “The Funeral”. Hence he is able to claim a relationship with tree.

In *Vagrants in the Valley*, whenever Rusty feels alone, or troubles grab him, or no hope of future, next moment Bond makes him with his friends along with the natural environment of trees, pool and stream. Rusty is being comforted and consoled by the parental presence or security in the form of trees. When it dances and glides to the song and touch of wind, it seems that his guardian is whispering to him. He experiences such a warmth and chillness and shade of a mother under the trees. Though Rusty’s life has a big question mark, the environment changes him and makes him forget everything. He aspires for the goal he has to reach. It drives him to move forward.

Rusty comes to see Mr. Pettigrew before leaving Dehra. Mr. Pettigrew tells him that, Rusty does not have to find much about his father because Rusty himself is just like his father. It is evident that Rusty’s father is a replica of Bond’s father. The old man thrusts him twenty rupees in an envelope. Devinder also tries to help Rusty by giving him the money he gets from Sudheer. Sudheer has best friends, Hastini and Mrinalini. He borrows money from them, seldom pays it back. Both are twin sisters.

On the night of his departure, Rusty feels very sad in leaving a familiar place, and familiar faces. Bond subtly indicates the sensitive situation, that a breeze from the window made the candles flutter and the shadows on the walls leapt and gesticulated. But Divinder stood still, the candle-light playing softly on his face. He said, I’m always here, Rusty. (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 179). As the candle flutters, Rusty’s mind too flutters that he has been with friends, people who have given him help and
comradeship. Now, he has to be on his own without Kishen or Devinder. The thought of being alone shakes him but Devinder’s words strengthen him.

Only few people go to the hills in December, so the train is not crowded. The platform slips away in the motion of the train. On the way at Doiwala Sudheer meets Rusty. He expresses his desire to be Rusty’s friend. He admits that he does not have real friends and he asks Rusty to be his friend. Rusty accepts that Sudheer will be his friend. Bond’s stories build up friendship. In this novel it is transparent. The train reaches Hardwar. Sudheer gets off and bids good luck to Rusty. After two days Rusty is in Hathi’s house, sitting on a string cot in the court yard. He feels that he belongs to mountains. Bond explices his longing to be in the mountain here. Rusty feels as that of Bond. There is snow on the tiled roof and in the fields and the sun is quite warm.

“The mountains stretched away, disappearing into sky and cloud. Rusty felt he belonged there, to the hills and the pine and deodar forests, and the clear mountain streams” (Bond, Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley. 182).

Bond does have the advantage of living in the mountains where crime and violence are rare. Every bend of the hills, the entire view is altered and our perspective also changes. Hills bring one close to nature. We come to a better understanding of life, as it is from the natural world, we first emerged and to which we still belong. Kipling writes that who goes to the Hills, goes to his mother. For Bond, living in the hills was, living in the bosom of a strong, sometimes proud, but always comforting mother. Every time, he goes away, the home coming would be more tender and precious. It becomes more difficult for him to go away. Rusty of this story wants to be a writer and the mountains have been kind and the source of inspiration for him to write. Bond finds that mountains are good to all especially to writers. He draws magnificent pictures of the Himalayan splendor through his narration in this novel.
There is no doubt that Bond like a sage in the Himalayas, feels his soul transcending towards divinity. Amita Aggarwal aptly pens:

“For Bond, mountains are not only the favorite place of a naturalist, but also a great source of spiritual enlightenment” (Amita Aggarwal, *The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond*, 73).

Rusty looks around Hathi’s house, there was an orange tree in the courtyard. He has seen mountains blue and white-capped, with dark clouds drifting down the valleys. Pale blue wood smoke climbs the hill from the houses below. Rusty and Hathi walk in the hills bare footedly. They find a waterfall dashing down on to smooth rocks fifty feet below. The forest is dark and damp and at night bears and leopards roam the hillside. (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*, 183). When the sun goes down, a cool breeze comes whispering across the dry grass. The grass grows greener, and there are trees too, water bursts from the hillsides in small springs. Birds sweep across the path- bright green parrots, trees pies and paradise fly catchers.

Bond takes a chance to showcase his passion with nature in his description of landscape with mountains, clouds, mist, water falls, springs, sun, cool breeze, birds, trees and even with the sounds around him and he never wants to part her. He is bound in the enchantment of the mountains lap. Mountains stand for the sublimity and magnanimity which man can only aspire for. Mountains are invincible spirits inspiring man to remain unmoved by storm and disaster. They exude deep emotive influence upon the psychology of man. Once a person lives with the mountains, he develops a sense of belongingness with them. Rusty is one of them. The writer hero experiences the great force of the mountains as they pour tranquility and spiritual bliss into innocent hearts.
Bond records the moment of morning in hills that the snow lay thick on the grounds, carpeting the hill side. Towards the horizon, the sky is red. The sun comes over the hills and sticks the snow. Rusty runs to the top of the hill and stands in the dazzling sunlight, shading his eyes from the glare, taking in the range of mountains and the valley and the stream that cut its way through the snow like a dark trickle of oil. Gazing the early wake up of nature, Rusty feels as if he finds treasure before his eyes. The mountain air refreshes him, he has an urge to reach the river and want to have the touch and know it personally. The path descends steeply and he has to run in a winding path. The hillside is covered with lush green ferns and in the trees unseen birds sing loudly.

Rusty loves these hills which offer him its freedom, its own individual strength and mends him to be himself like water. No matter whether he is great or small but he has to lead the life whatever awaits him in his path. Rusty has got letter from Sudheer stating that he has news of Rusty’s aunt. Rusty can join him at Lansdowne to meet her. He has money for both of them as he considers Rusty a good investment, a good friendship.

Rusty leaves to meet Sudheer in Lansdowne and both depart from Lansdowne. They reach Kotli forest, crowded with deodars and oaks. The road was damp and covered with snails. Before night they have crossed twenty miles since morning. Now they look for place to sleep. They find it in Ram Singh, an old man’s room. Ram Singh feeds them with pumpkins and potatoe curry. He is seventy but he has never traveled beyond Lansdowne and he has never seen the trains and ships. He lives a lonely life. Rusty finds sleep difficult as the cold has come in through the blankets. He begins to think of the purpose of his journey. He can hear the whistling of wind through the pines and the howling of jackal in the distance.

The thought of future squeezes him. He is afraid of finding out that there was nothing for him and nowhere to go. He feels as if he is lost in the world. Bond reveals Rusty’s inner
feeling through the moon that ‘the moon was lost in the clouds’. The moon represents Rusty who is in an unknown place, losing hope of shining to the world. Bond projects the life of old people who loves to live in the company of nature. Pettigrew, Ram Singh and Rusty’s aunt are such persons who never like to leave the hills. Bond presents the paradigm of Ram Singh and Pettigrew to show that hill people have learnt patience, humility and a quiet reserve of mountains. Hence they can withstand against any situations even in their loneliness of old age.

In the morning looking at the mountains he feels as if he finds something more than treasures. The early sun beams and the trickle of stream through the snow shower hope of life for Rusty. He decides to walk towards his goal and he is aware of the purpose. Nature provides him the opportunity to fulfill his purpose and his dream of a writer. It is apt to quote one of Bond’s poems “Walk Tall” which insists on the purpose, a small ant has to fulfill (Bond, *Book of Verse* “Walk Tall”. 23).

“You stride through the long grass,
Pressing on over fallen pine-needles,
Up the winding road to the mountain – pass
Small red ant, now crossing a sea,
Of rain drops; your destiny
To carry home that single, slender cosmos seed,
Waving it like a banner in the sun” (23).

Bond’s poem “Walk Tall” prepares the readers to realize and to give shape to their purpose and dreams. We have seen an army of red ants marching up or down a crevice. Each one is carrying crumbs heavier than its body weight. Their purpose is single minded, total commitment, labouring up all the way to its destination (Bond, *Book of Verse*. 23). Similar
awakening Rusty gets when he looks at the streak of sun beams and the stream runs through the mountains, valley and the snow.

Once the purpose comes to light, it is everyone’s duty, like the ant to carry out that purpose. It may be to carry home materials for survival or it may be learning the language of nature or striving to explore one’s root like Bond. Swapan K. Banerjee in his “Liberating Force of Ruskin Bond’s Poetry” states that once you discover the purpose of your existence, a purpose you instinctively know uniquely it is made for you alone, look nowhere else, walk tall, be proud of yourself, sure in the belief that you are able to deal with anything (66).

The birth of a day awakens the mind of Rusty to know what he is now. He likes to put an end to the life of vagrancy, without purpose. Like an ant, he is ready to strive to reach his end and to make his dream come true. When one observes nature, a time may come, when he or she is able to read the script of nature’s language, its signs and wonders. Watching the ants, it suddenly dawns on him, that everyone on earth has a specific purpose in life. Watching the stream which cuts its way through the mountains, valley and the snow, Rusty awakes from the slumber of vagrancy or purposeless life.

Rusty and Sudheer come to the place where the lady lives. Rusty’s aunt Miss. Mackenzie does not look over thirty-five. She looks physically strong and strikingly handsome. She had been the wife of Rusty’s father’s younger brother. Rusty tells her that he comes to see her because she knew his father. Rusty is informed that his father did not leave much money to him. Rusty tells her aunt about his quarrel with his guardian, of his friendship with Kishen and Devinder and Sudheer the Lafunga. Sudheer admires the lady who could live alone in the hills without giving way to loneliness or despair. Miss. Mackenzie brings the books which Rusty’s father left for him. Rusty had read when he was eight. He had been in boarding school when his father died. He did not see the books again after going to live in his
guardian’s house. After ten years, the books have turned up from the aunt who lives alone in the mountains. Rusty decides to take the book because they are the only link between him and his father. He has an ability to decide on his own. Last few months he has been vagrants but he dreams of becoming a writer. Though Miss. Mackenzie insists him to be with her as it is the best place to write, Rusty is firm that he must stand on his feet and he is not too old to be looked after by others. (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 195-196).

Sudheer and Rusty set out on foot for Rishikesh. At noon, they reach at a small village on the Rishikesh road. Rusty doesn’t have any plan but he knows that he would be soon tired of this aimless wandering. With the Lafunga beside him, Rusty feels carefree and reckless. They are in time to catch the last bus to Rishikesh. Both enjoy the ride. They gaze out of the bus window. Trees stand out perpendicularly from the cliff face. The road is so narrow. The waterfall comes gushing down from the hillside and sprays the top of the bus, splashing in at the windows. Feeling fresh and exhilarated, Rusty wants to be alone for a while. After the bus trip he is walking and he asks the woodcutter how far it is to the river. He replies accurately seventy miles. Bond explicates Rusty’s walk in the hilly path again. Rusty loves these hills hence he comes back to it again and again. Whenever he encounters hills, trees, birds, and stream he quenches his thirst for Nature which renews his spirit as if filling an empty vessel. He stops to drink water which comes out of the hills. It is cold, sharp and very refreshing. He walks an hour but the river is not in sight. He begins to feel discouraged as though he is after the mirage to quench his thirst. He feels tired and isolated. He comes to the beginning stage of the story where he walks on the dusty road. Here to Rusty walks on, along the dusty, stony path until there are no more fields, only forest and sun and silence. The walk and the passage Rusty passes are a symbolic representation of life in search of perfect goal. Sometime it seems futile as Rusty feels and there is silence inexplicable. The sharp bend or turn or a twist
in the life breaks that silence into sound. Now Rusty can hear ‘the sound of the river’. The presence of water or river is a representation of life one who aims for. At last Rusty begins to run towards it. He slips and stumbles, but he runs and reaches the river and plunges himself ankle-deep in the cold mountain water. Bond sketches the very moment briefly:

“The water was blue and white and wonderful” (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 202).

The simple sentence performs the affection and love, purity and the enchantment of water. Bond has described Hardwar and Rishikesh as spiritual seats of India. Rusty visits these places with great devotion and of faith like a born Indian. Though he does not enter any temple gates for the purpose of worship, he is fully conscious of the sanctity of such places. The Ganga is sacred to him. Rusty takes a dip into it and feels as if as the fish frolicking in the water. For Rusty it is not merely a bath, but a sort of baptism opines Amita Aggarwal in *The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond* (77). The words of Bond are pregnant with microcosm which delivers the macrocosm of the world in itself. Even the words bring the charm and power of water to the reader. It makes the readers in Rusty’s shoes to enjoy the elements of nature with him. Rusty realizes that what he aims for is not a dream or a mirage but it is before his very eyes as if his dream comes true. The water is an inspiration for Rusty to write, to live and to lead.

Depiction of Indian festivals and seasons imparts a powerful realism to Bond’s novel. The festival of the full moon denotes that everything ends well at the end. The full moon brings light to the world and it vanishes darkness. Similarly, the darker side of Rusty has been waned by the present cool moon light. The Ganges shines as a river of liquid silver. Rusty is being enchanted by the power of nature he prefers to stay by the river, while Sudheer has gone to seek some amusement in the town. Rusty finds a place in a corner of dharamasala.
Next day, Rusty had bathed early and Sudheer had left to Dehra to do some other job for few
days. Rusty occupies the shade of banyan tree at the river side and eats the sweets he buys
from the shop. The liberty of soul and mind is delivered from Bond’s description of the
atmosphere. The tree is full of birds, parrots and bulbuls and rosy pastors, feeding on the ripe
red figs of the banyan. Rusty enjoys listening to the chatter of the birds and studying their
plumage. In spite of his loneliness, Rusty senses freedom, strength and power of nature
within him. He comes out of his inner self as if a baby plant peeps out of the little seed to see
the wonderful world around it. Previously the troubles, sufferings it underwent inside the
seed is unbearable. Unless the seed dies, it can not give birth to its offspring. Rusty
underwent that kind of the sufferings of loneliness, penniless, roofless, parentless phase to
revive himself as a new man who has aim and purpose of his own. He grows from innocence
to maturity, from childhood to a man. He develops, from the stage of pupae in the cocoon to a
beautiful butterfly which can fly limitlessly to get its nectar. Rusty’s passion for nature and
his communion with it, serve as a tool to get rid of the cocoon to see the real world around
him. Nature rejuvenates Rusty. As phoenix, the legendary bird held to burn itself to death and
rise, fresh and young, Rusty renovates himself in the mountain, in the water of the river, in
the cool breeze, in the sounds of the trees and birds and water and in the panoramic view of
nature.

Turning of season’s wheel signifies great changes in the psychology and the life of
people in Bond’s stories. In this fiction, spring is the euphoria of rejuvenation and rebirth. It
offers to Rusty new vistas of life.

The winter finishes and spring enters. The spring season is season of life. After
bathing in the river, Rusty feels clean and fresh and happy, nostalgically thinking of his own
secret pool behind the church and his friends Devinder, Kishen and Goonga. Rusty is never
lacking in the matters of friendship. He decides that his future does not lie in Dehra. As soon as the Lafunga Sudheer returns, Rusty likes to leave Rishikesh. Rusty explains the matter very clearly to Sudheer that he cannot wander about the hills and the plains he wants to give some direction to his life. The assurance of life is embedded in his words:

“I want to work, I want to be free, I want to be able to write” (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 210).

This realization puts an end to his vagrancy. Sudheer leaves Rusty as he cannot join him, his track is entirely different but he never drops his friendship. Rusty returns to Dehra to see his friends. He encounters his own favorite pool near the church. He takes off his clothes and leaps into the cold, sweet, delicious water of the pool. He floats on the water, gazing up through the branches of sal tree through a pattern of broad tree leaves, into a blind-blue sky. The sun is in the pool and the pool is in the sky. Rusty is soon dry, lays flat against the warm smooth rock surface. He sees Devinder there. Devinder is disappointed to hear that Rusty has only few books. He pictures Rusty’s present situation that he is a dreamer, a kind of poet. But he can’t live on dream. He must know the way to make his dream come true in life. Rusty does not have rich friends or relative like Kishen, and he is not like Sudheer who is able to live on his wits. Rusty cannot spend rest of his years lost in the mountains like a sage. It will take him years to become a successful writer (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 213).

Rusty too obtains that he can’t be a vagrants for ever and he is getting nowhere so he has to stop at some point. Kishen has also stopped. He decides to stop now, finds a place for himself. Rusty thinks of leaving his book with Mr. Pettigrew, he has gone to see him. Within a week he has seen two lonely, elderly people who are moving slowly through the autumn of their lives. Rusty hands over the books to Mr. Pettigrew, he tumbles through them. Mr.
Pettigrew becomes surprised to see the first edition of *Alice in Wonderland* which would be a rare find. From the book-collector’s point of view the value of book depends on its literary worth, its scarcity and its condition. Mr. Pettigrew tells him that he will write to a book-seller in London and it would fetch him several hundred pounds. His friend in London will arrange for the sale. He suggests him to go to England, Rusty also thinks of that before. Rusty expresses what Bond feels about his belongingness:

“I’ve always felt that India is my home” (Bond, *Two Novels of Adolescents: Vagrants in the Valley*. 217).

The reason is, he has lived many years in India and has grown and accustomed to love the country. Bond’s case is of a double inheritance. Bond states that to love India through the friends he made and through the mountains valleys, fields and forests which have made an indelible impressions on his mind. For, India is an atmosphere as much as it is a land. Here, Bond resolves the question of his nationality. The great ‘realization’ came to him when he set foot on the foreign soil with the ambition to join the world of literary legends. Though chances of success were uncertain, the optimism of youth lured him away.

Through Rusty, the hero of his novel, Bond vicariously resolves his problem of choosing between India and England. The more he longs for India, more he is pulled back by circumstances such as lack of funds and search for publisher for his first book. Rusty represents Bond’s own story of belongingness. He prepares himself to go to England for better future, leaving Dehra. His friends are too impressed by his good fortune. They believe that he will be back someday with money and honour. Rusty leaves for England with the bright prospect of future in his eyes and his friends are highly excited.

Bond has one dream in his childhood, is to be a writer. Bond reflects his dream through his hero Rusty in this novel who aspires to be a writer despite his poverty,
responsibility of upbringing of Kishen, without penny and roof. This novel is a semi-autobiographical writing of Bond. Bond says in his *Book of Nature*:

“Live close to nature and you will never feel lonely” (30).

Bond’s novel is an evident that his character Rusty lives close to nature and he is always accompanied by her, he can not feel lonely even in their solitude. The presence of nature protects him, comforts him and renews his spirit and he never likes to depart her.

Bond’s humorous, sad nostalgic and simplicity of narration with the beautiful photographic description of the terrains are the characterization and the hallmark of both Charles Lamb and Dickens. Amita Aggarwal states in her essay on “Ruskin Bond’s Life and the Shaping Influence” in *The Fictional World of Ruskin Bond (11)* that Bond is no, doubt, a personal writer and has aptly called himself an Indian Charles Lamb. Bond’s autobiographical mode of writing and nostalgic punctuations in his fictions is the kind of Dickens and Lamb.

Dehra serves as the favorite background for Bond’s fiction. Local colour is the distinguished feature of Bond. Bond’s romance with Dehra is metamorphosed in his fiction. Dehra is the life, the love, and the inspiration of Bond’s writing career. He finds sensitive parental care here as it feeds him, nurtures him, shelters him and loves him with its people and with the true colour, sounds, smell of nature. The ‘banyan tree’ represents Dehra, which is an amalgam of place, Rusty wanted to be. It teaches him the world and its people therefore he learnt to live alone with confident and strength. The people and the friends he met taught Rusty tolerance, love and affection which help him get away from his self-pity and solitude. Bond recollects that when he was a boy in Dehra, the place looked like a fairyland. It has been the inspiration for all his stories and his love for it will send him alive here and keep writing about the town (Prabhat. K. Singh, “From an Address to Doon Citizens” *The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond.* 23).
The relationship of friendship is a very important tie in Bond’s works. This binds his young persona with each other and with the world. Bond remains unsurpassed in his portrayal of friendship, captivating the young minds. The bond of friendship plays a vital role in shaping the personality of young boys. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for security in the life of adolescents. Adolescence is a difficult phase of life when one is in emotional and psychological transition. According to Judith Rich Harris and Robert M. Libert:

“Adolescence is the transitional period form the dependency of childhood to the independence and responsibility of childhood to the independence and responsibility of being an adult. At this point in their lives, young people struggle with the fundamental problems: to redefine their relationships with their parents and other adults and to establish themselves as individuals” (“The Child” 460).

Rusty has grown from dependency to independency. He has taken the responsibility of an adult to have some settlement in life and to take care of his friend Kishen. Amidst struggles, nature gives him an opportunity to face the threatening reality and strengthens him to tackle the situation. Biological changes in the body make them insecure and apprehensive and they look more to friends for support than parents. They want the friendship to be loyal, trust worthy and reliable source of support in any emotional crisis. Peers play a crucial role in the psychological and social development of most adolescents. Nature experiences for adolescents are significant in these two novellas in this chapter. Nature presents the need of peer support autonomy and the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skill and strength to accomplish their goal.

Bond has exalted the importance of friends and friendship in the life of youngsters in this novella. The straightforwardness among friends culminates into friendship with a mixture of parental care. Rusty bears the responsibility of Kishen after his mother’s death in the vein
of a loving guardian. M. A. Jeyaraju has given a meaningful interpretation of adolescent psychology. He says:

“In the absence of a conventional home, the adolescents draw all their homely comfort from youthful comraderie. Kishen would not mind anything as long as he and Rusty are together…despite the exigencies of their destitute existence, the vagrants abide by an admirable code of principles and property” (Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond. 85).

Rusty and Kishen are parentless and homeless but the friendship between the two compensates their expectation of being protected and being loved and being cared. It is portrayed as an easy, protective and lovable relationship of life. The young friends are open, intimate and honest and show great concern for one another. The relationship of friendship is a very important tie in Bond’s work. This binds his young persona with each other and with the world. Bond highlights this healthy peer relationship through ‘sal trees’. The adolescent narrator Rusty in Vagrant in the Valley is very lucky to have great friends like Somi, Kishen, Ranbir, Sudheer, Devinder and Hathi and even a mute vagrant Goonga. His friends infuse in him the zest for life. Such close friendship contributes to Rusty’s growth by offering a climate for growth and self-knowledge. Their unconditional love and support bloom flowers in the dreary desert of his life. The spicy chaat, the thrilling bicycle riding, the exciting mountaineering, fun of picnic and many other things, he experiences in the company of his lovely friends. Friendship is projected here as a great source of enjoyment. Rusty shares his doubts as well as hopes with his friends. Rusty’s sorrows are lessened and joys are multiplied by them. It is the institution of friendship that gives Rusty an impetus to live in the alien society and freedom from his stern and insensitive guardian. Rusty wants to become a writer. His friends motivate him. Kishen is hopeful about Rusty’s bright future. This novella conveys the message of real friendship that lies in surrendering the self without expecting anything in
return. Bond’s young characters spread the message of love and understanding through the bond of friendship.

His nature descriptions on dusty road, hilly path, misty peaks, tender breeze, clouds, sun, moon, birds, trees, water falls, springs and even the unnoticed dry grass have unique impact on Rusty. The natural atmosphere binds Rusty in the charming hands of nature and he does not like to part it. It prepares him to have confidence and hope on himself that he can withstand in any circumstances.

From both Room on the Roof and The Vagrants in the Valley Bond spreads the fragrance of vagrancy, torrents, friendship, optimism of youth accompanying rain, mountains, hills, waterfalls, stream, river and breeze with its sights, sounds and smell of India. The weather and climate maintain an important symbolic significance to the story. Natural atmosphere has been a symbol of the inner psychic state of the protagonist Rusty. The weather serves as an adequate barometer of character moods and states. A misty and cloudy day reflects the gloomy character mood and a sunny day expresses the cheerful mood of Rusty.

Bond delineates life. His men are common hill folk who are motivated by universal values of truth, goodness and mutual trust. They remain content and happy in all situations.

S.C.Dwivedi in his article opines that Bond’s characters make us both society and individual oriented. They touch our hearts and awaken our conscience to break our narrow minded cocoons of individuality and selfishness (S. C. Dwivedi, “Child Archetype” The Creative Contours of Ruskin Bond. 160). The sal tree and the banyan tree are the symbolic representation of Bond’s social orientation. Social aspects of nature experiences have great impact in Rusty that it provides him opportunity for affiliation, social support, intimacy and group bonding in a new exotic environment. They represent world miniature, densely populated with insects and birds. Bonds imagination is flared up by the quaint beauties of nature interwoven with melodies of breeze, stream, trees and mountain.