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**THE INTERFACE BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE: ITS PORTRAYAL IN THE WORKS OF INDO-ANGLIAN WRITERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The age-old relationship between humans and nature has produced enormous literature in olden times. The stories from Panchtantra, Hitopdesha and several other books bear testimony to this fact, Wildlife and nature in general have been a part and parcel of the Indian psyche. In fact, the life of humans largely depended on natural resources, and they acted as sentinels of nature's bounties. But with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in England and the Western world, natural resources became a fodder for industrial production. As a consequence, the love for forests and wildlife gradually vanished into oblivion. Materialism took the centrestage and earning money by any means became everybody's motto. The literature is said to be the mirror of the society, and the writers took cognizance of the new climate, language and the people's behaviour in producing their works. Nature and wildlife enticed nobody. In spite of this backdrop, some writers dared to write on the subjects related to nature and wildlife all over the world including India. This study is related to Indian English literature which talks about nature and wildlife. Though the writers of this genre are few, their voice is so eloquent that it is difficult to undermine the role of nature in our literary endeavours. The list is not an exhaustive one, but arouses further hope. Writers have also raised the current topics of climate change and global warming which humanity is facing on a daily basis. They are the vanguards in saving nature from indiscriminate destruction and showing humans the probable outcome of this monumental loss.

**Keywords:** Nature, Natural Resources, Wildlife, Indo-English writers, Climate Change.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

The twentieth century witnessed the rapid growth of urbanization all over the world. In place of natural forests, the concrete jungles sprang overnight like mushrooms. This was in total contrast with the sylvan settings of the previous era. This sudden change brought about new human habitats and also a new set of problems which initially defied solutions due to the changed human mindset.

Since literature is said to be the mirror of societal norms, the new social conditions began to make inroads into the realm of literature too. Gradually, the focus was shifted to day-to-day struggles of human beings, and the writers were busy painting the real life travails and moments of happiness on the broad canvas of life. In the process, the man-nature interaction which had occupied the centre stage in literary writings for generations, took a back seat. In the wide spectrum of Indian writing in English, not much has been written with focus on man-nature interaction. However, this theme can never be out of place, and as such a panoramic view has been put up below comprising the writers who have given attention on this aspect of man-nature interface:

## 2. RUDYARD KIPLING

Kipling holds a unique place amongst the Indo-Anglian writers who wrote extensively about man-nature relationships. His writings came to light in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He created a most lovable character in the form of the man-cub Mowgli, in his very famous book, *The Jungle Book*,<sup>1</sup> who grew up with the pack of wolves in the jungle. He was found by a family of wolves at the threshold of their cave. He was adopted by Father Wolf. He began his journey with the help of his new-found friends: Bagheera, the wise panther and lovable old Baloo. Together they face many dangers and adventures, as Mowgli comes face-to-face with Shere Khan the tiger and Bandar Log. This, and his other books, are centred around man's interaction with nature. That way his contribution is most notable among his peers. His writings are equally popular among children and grown-ups.

## 3. RUSKIN BOND

Ruskin Bond is a veteran writer of fiction in India. He lives in Mussoorie, a hilly town in Uttarakhand. His writings betray a close connection with nature. He himself said: "...I have lived on the top floor of Ivy Cantonment. Here there are windows too, and they open on to the sky, clouds, the Doon valley, and range upon range of mountains. And from this perch on the hillside, I feel that I am part of the greater world, Mother India as well as the natural world of planet earth."<sup>2</sup> His words reflect the essence of his writing. Nature and human-nature interaction form the core of his stories and novels. Here, it is noteworthy that he has written a lot of books for children, but his works are equally popular among adult readers.

*My Favourite Nature Stories*<sup>3</sup> is a collection of 21 stories in which maples, oaks, cicadas, ferns, birds, snakes, trees, river, monsoon, rosebud, Himalayas and other such topics form the central theme. How the people interact with them has been depicted by him in an interesting manner. His other work of fiction, *From the Cradle of Nature*,<sup>4</sup> contains two of his stories *Angry River* and *Special Tree*. As the name suggests, these stories revolve around a river and a tree and human interaction with them. *Angry River* is the saga of a girl who lives with his family on an island. One day, monsoon clouds gather and then follow the torrential rains. The adjoining peepal tree also gets off the ground and the girl sitting on its branch for shelter, is thrown to the whims of the swirling river. Then starts her tryst with destiny and her fight for survival. The story reminds us of the famous novel by Hemingway, *The Old Man and The Sea*, where a sailor on the boat fights with the odds singlehandedly riding on the waves of the high seas. *Rain In The Mountains*<sup>5</sup> is Bond's another popular work of fiction which is a collection of his most beautiful works from his years spent in the town of Mussoorie in the foothills of Himalayas. He earned the epithet of "Our very own resident Wordsworth in prose" expressed in a review published by *India Today*. In these writings, Bond evokes everyday sights and sounds and captures the essence of mountain life. Some of his writings featured in this book are 'Once Upon a Mountain Time', 'Sounds I Like to Hear', 'How Far Is the River', and 'After the Monsoon'. Reading Bond's writings is experiencing the grandness of nature and the sour-sweet interaction of human beings with it presented so vividly and beautifully by the writer.

## 4. SALMAN RUSHDIE

In his Booker award-winning novel, *Midnight's Children*,<sup>6</sup> Salman Rushdie has contributed a chapter "In the Sundarbans" in which the protagonists of the novel found themselves stuck in the 'sepulchral greenness of the forest' where 'time followed unknown laws'. They termed it as 'forest of illusions' after going through some bizarre and bone-chilling experiences. They had to stay put in the deep forest because of the outbreak of monsoon and it seemed that there was no escape route. The whole narration is interspersed with phases of hallucination and the self-

realization of the grandness of forest vision. This also depicts so vividly the situations humans face while interacting with nature. In the deep-rooted calm and quiet surroundings of the forest area, one can realize his inner self shorn of any egoistic trappings.

### 5. AMITAV GHOSH

He is a renowned author on the Indian literary scene. He is one of the most prominent litterateur who has profusely written on the theme of man-nature relationship. In this connection, his book *The Great Derangement, Climate Change and the Unthinkable*<sup>7</sup> directly deals with the ominous crisis of climate change which has started troubling mankind in ample measures. This is an open secret that the present situation is created by disturbing the fine balance between man and nature. In this ground-breaking work of non-fiction, Ghosh examines our inability-at the level of literature, history and politics-to grasp the scale and violence of climate change. He has changed the narrative of climate change as a scientific question into the wide precincts of culture, politics, and power. His recent book, *Jungle nama*,<sup>8</sup> is a story of the Sundarbans. He has narrated in verse the popular fictional tale of Dokkhin Rai and the Mistress of the Forest, Bon Bibi related to Sundarbans. The story mirrors the intricate human-nature relationship which is so relevant in the current perspective. The original print version of this legend dates back to the nineteenth century which is composed in a Bengali verse meter known as *dwipodipoyar*. *Jungle Nama* is a free adaptation of the legend, told entirely in the same meter replicating the cadence of the original. Incidentally, he wrote this tale in prose in his famous novel, *The Hungry Tide*, a few years back. His latest book, *The Nutmeg's Curse, Parables for A Planet In Crisis*,<sup>9</sup> brings to life alternative visions of humans flourishing in consonance with the rest of nature. He argues that the nutmeg's violent trajectory from its native islands is revealing of a wider colonial mindset which justifies the exploitation of human environment, and which dominates geopolitics to this day. This book offers a sharp critique of modernity. It reveals the profoundly remarkable ways in which human history is shaped by non-human forces. His recent book "*The Living Mountain*"<sup>10</sup> 'is a cautionary tale of how we have systematically exploited nature, leading to an environmental collapse ', as per introductory comments on the book. (About *The Living Mountain*) This is a fable narrating a dream about Mahaparbat, the Living Mountain. The inhabitants of the valley surrounding this gigantic Mountain have survived the ravages of time under its sprawling shadow. But they feel pathetically helpless when the humans from the plains gradually begin to exploit its natural bounties. Climate catastrophe is the end result which is harmful to the human inhabitants of the nearby areas. The story eloquently highlights the complex human-nature relationship in a sensitive manner. In totality, it can be concluded that the writings of Amitav Ghosh are the living portraits of man-nature interface and its probable consequences on the future of mankind.

### 6. NIRMAL GHOSH

*Blue Sky, White Cloud*<sup>11</sup> is the omnibus collection of three novellas where the fascinating stories from different eco-zones have been narrated from the perspective of man and the beast both. The illustrations accompanying these stories add lustre to the book. Encompassing the vast geographical expanse covering the grasslands of the mighty river Brahmaputra, the Indo-Malayan rainforests to the lush green valleys at the base of grand Himalayas, the book examines the tender relationship existing from antiquity to the modern times.

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## 7.CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is obvious that only few writers have focussed on this theme of man-nature interaction. The most sought-after themes are political issues, migration and depiction of poverty, illiteracy and backwardness prevailing amongst the masses. The modern think that issues like man-nature interface will not be able to attract the readers. But writers like Amitav Ghosh have busted this myth and have shown to the world that this theme is going to take centre stage in the coming years due to the fast-approaching catastrophe of climate change. Their writings at least force the readers to think about the current state of natural resources and the fast-developing phenomenon of climate change and global warming. Thus, in future readers can expect more literature to come out of the quills of renowned litterateurs globally. Literature is the most potent tool for spreading the right message amongst readers throughout the world, and for the litterateurs, this is their moment of great challenge to save nature and the earth from the wanton and undesired actions of mankind.

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