CHAPTER-III

Various Themes in the Poetry of Ruskin Bond

(i) Nature
(ii) Harmony between Man and Nature
(iii) Moral Philosophy
(iv) Human love and sympathy
(v) Autobiographical note
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VARIOUS THEMES IN THE POETRY OF
RUSKIN BOND

Having studied Ruskin Bond’s contribution to the development of Indo-Anglian poetry in the second chapter, let’s wield the pen towards Ruskin’s various thematic qualities. Ruskin found a lot of inspiration in Indian life and culture. In spite of having British descent, he has composed poems on Indian themes and all these themes of his writings mark him as an Indian writer. It is only because Ruskin has spent his whole life in India. So there is nothing Western in his poetry. Everything is Indian. In Indo-Anglian Literature Ruskin is popularly known as a short-story writer and a novelist but his attempt at composing poems has proved him as a great modern Indo-Anglian poet. His thematic quality in respect of poetry is not limited. It is very widespread. Ruskin’s poetry is, in fact, a collection of various themes such as — (i) Nature, (ii) harmony between Man and Nature, (iii) moral philosophy, (iv) human love and sympathy, and (v) autobiographical note.
(I) **NATURE** :

Nature forms one of the chief and most recurrent themes in the poetry of most of the poets. In English Poetry Nature has been treated by great poets like Chaucer, Spenser, Gray, Thompson, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Keats and others. Among Indo-Anglian poets of Nature Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Aurobindo Ghose Rabindranath Tagore and Ruskin Bond occupy a prominent place because of their deep interest in beautiful description of Nature.

Ruskin is out and out a Nature poet. Almost all his poems speak of his deep love and concern for Nature. Ruskin’s treatment of Nature in his poetry reveals his intense and sensuously passionate love for it. All sorts of beauties and charms of the earth and the sky, the moon and the stars, the sun and the sunrise, trees and hills, birds and flowers attracted his poetic imagination. The seed of this attachment to natural objects and a realisation of divine spirit behind them was implanted early in his life. Living at his grandfather’s house at Dehra he came in close association with the external objects of Nature. The mighty world of the eye and the ear gave him poetic joy. Moreover he experienced a rare sensation of living in the lap of Nature far from the madding crowd. This love for Nature remained deeply seated in his heart through
out his life. His works naturally contain charming description of Nature.

As a young boy Ruskin had developed a passionate love for Nature. Living at Dehra he gave a keener edge to his innate love for Nature. The beautiful surroundings of Dehra conduced his poetic instinct and gave a spurt to his imagination. The different objects of Nature proved to be a fine stimulus to his imagination.

As a Nature poet Ruskin is notable for his keen observation of, and poetic sensibility to, the external aspects of Nature — its sights, sounds and colours. The garden at Dhera becomes the main source of inspiration for his Nature - poems. He immortalised this garden in his short poem ‘There Are in My Garden’ which presents scenic beauty of the garden. The poet describes the garden:

“There are in my garden
the burnt bronze petals
of shattered marigolds
spears of golden rod
blending to the load
of pillaging bees
two armoured lizards
a map butterfly
and a division of ants - - -”

(‘There Are In My Garden’)

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In his passionate and deep love for Nature Ruskin resembles William Wordsworth, the high priest of Nature in English Romantic poetry. But if we see from literary point of view, there is a great difference between them. Wordsworth’s Nature poetry is full of mysticism. But in Ruskin’s poetry there is no mystic quality. Ruskin’s Nature poetry is very simple and short and has song like quality. His Nature poems are not written in a very narrative form. Wordsworth’s poetry shows the beautiful Western landscape and Ruskin’s poetry displays the beautiful Indian surroundings. It is only because Ruskin is an Indo-Anglian poet and has been living in India since his childhood. So it is natural that he has written all that he has seen and has experienced in this land.

Ruskin has portrayed real beautiful Indian natural phenomena in his poems. Most of his poems talk about the Indian trees such as — banyan tree, peepal tree, deodar tree, cherry tree, neem tree, jamun tree, walnut tree and guava tree not only about elm tree and oak tree as is revealed in the poems of Keats and Wordsworth.

Ruskin’s Nature poetry is not a product of his imitation of the romantic creed of love for Nature as is in the case of Derozio. Rather it is inspired by genuine and authentic love for Nature. Ruskin’s response to external Nature is more in the manner of Keats than in Wordsworth's. It is a concrete approach proceeding
from his minute observation of the various charms of Nature. He is specially attracted by colours. Ruskin's poem *Look For The Colours of Life* reveals his sensuousness towards colours of life. In it Ruskin writes:

"Colours are everywhere,
Bright blue the sky,
Dark green the forest
And light the fresh grass;
Bright yellow the lights
From a train sweeping past,
The Flame trees glow
At this time of year,
The mangoes burn bright
As the monsoon draws near.

A favourite colour of mine
Is the pink of the candy-floss man.

only the wind has no colour.
But if you see carefully
You will see it teasing
The colour out of the leaves."
And the rain has no colour
But it turns the bronzed grass.

Look for the colours of life —
They are everywhere,
Even in your dreams”\(^2\)

(‘Look For The Colours Of Life’)

In ‘Look For The Colours Of Life’ Ruskin displays his extreme love for colours. He explains that colours are found in every walk of life. From heaven to earth there are so many colourful things. The sky is blue, the forest is green and the grass in the forest is also light green. The sunlight looks yellow like the flames of the fire rising into the sky. The rising flame - like sun rays indicates the summer season’s beginning. The mangoes are also about to ripe because their colour has turned yellow. This also indicates that the monsoon is just at hand.

In this poem Ruskin also shows his special liking for pink colour. This colour is his favourite one. When a man with a ‘pink candy floss’ comes down the hills calling his wares, it presents a charming sight. The balloon - seller selling his multi-coloured balloons also presents a very beautiful sight in the forest. The
roses are blossoming in the dew-drenched morning. The scene of
dawn with blossoming flowers is really worth - enjoying. The red
and white poppies are swaying. It means they are enjoying the
morning. Their enjoyment is a source of pleasure to the human
beings who are in love with Nature like the poet himself. The
fresh morning breeze is, infact, life - giving. How ironic it is that
the wind which gives colour and life to everything is itself
colourless.

In this way through this poem Ruskin draws a real and living
scenery of Nature which ranks him in the list of great Nature poets
like Wordsworth, Keats and Frost.

As a poet of Nature Ruskin is a poet of trees, flowers, seasons
and landscapes. They moved his poetic sensibility with poetic
beauty. Ruskin gives contrasted and evocative description of
Nature-beauty. Time and again he betrays his passionate obsession
with trees. His description of trees for instance, is quite the
opposite to Sarojini’s who seems always to feel possibly due to
Gosse’s advice, that all she described must be Indian. In respect
of trees there is a great similarity between the poems of Ruskin
and Toru Dutt. To Toru the trees just happen to be Indian — the
trees she loves. The same may be said about Ruskin because he
has described almost all the beautiful Indian trees which have been
a part and parcel of his life. Ruskin has described almost all his favourite Indian trees in most of his poems because in these trees Ruskin finds out the recollections of his childhood. There is no poem of Ruskin without the description of Indian trees. It is sheer Ruskin’s love for trees that he has composed four separate poems on trees such as — ‘Banyan Tree’, ‘Walnut Tree’, ‘Walnut Tree Revisited’ and ‘Cherry Tree’.

In the poem ‘Banyan Tree’ Ruskin Bond describes the recollections of his childhood. Banyan tree is one of his favourite trees because Ruskin was brought up under the branches of a banyan tree which grew behind his house in his own garden. Ruskin has mentioned the banyan tree not only in this poem but also in most of his other poems and short-stories.

This poem may be compared with Toru’s ‘Our Casuarina Tree’ because Toru’s Our Casuarina Tree is full of the recollections of her childhood as is expressed by Toru in the following lines —

“But not because of its magnificence,
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul;
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes shall the tree be ever dear!”

(‘Our Casuarina Tree’)

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In the same way Ruskin expresses the same feelings of reminiscences of his childhood in the following lines —

“I remember you well, old banyan tree,  
As you stood there, spreading quietly  
Over the broken wall.  
While adults slept, I crept away  
Down the broad veranda steps, around  
The outhouse and the melon-ground.  
Into the shades of afternoon……  
Those summer in India no one stirred.  
Till evening brought the Fever-Bird  
And the mem-sahibs rose with the Rising Moon.  
In that June of long ago, I roamed  
The faded garden of my father’s home  
He’d gone away. There was nothing to do  
And no one to talk to……  
I must have known that giants have few friends”\(^4\)

(‘Banyan Tree’)

In ‘Walnut Tree’ Ruskin tells that walnut tree is a strange tree. When it loses its leaves, the fruits are ripened. It means if it loses something, on the other hand it gives an important thing also. When it gives up its skin, the hard nut comes up. The fruits
of this tree fall down on the grassland. These fruits were raw, yet they attracted the other boys including the poet himself to eat them. In this way the walnut tree gives the message that if we lose something, we can provide others with some other thing. Ruskin describes the beauty of this tree in the following lines:

“\textit{The walnut tree is the first to lose its leaves,}
\textit{But at the same time the fruit ripens,}
\textit{The skin splits, the hard shell of the nut}
\textit{Stands revealed yesterday (the last of August)}
\textit{You climbed among the last few crumpled leaves,}
\textit{Slim boy in a walnut tree, your toes}
\textit{Gripping the tender bark, your fingers}
\textit{They were still raw but we could not wait :}
\textit{The walnuts would age and I might grow younger!}”\textsuperscript{5}

(‘Walnut Tree’)

‘Walnut Tree Revisited’ is the second part of ‘Walnut Tree’. In this poem Ruskin tells about his second visit to the walnut tree after the autumn. The poet looks at it through his window. Now this tree was looking quite bare-branched. But in the sun-light other trees glittered with their several green leaves. Still the poet wants to wait for the beauty of the tree when the parrots will come
to it during the spring season. Ruskin draws this scene in the following lines:

"You have ripened, since last the walnut tree,
Lost its dark leaves, last autumn.
One summer intervened between your growing
And my importunity;
One summer lost,

But I will wait until the parrots bring
Shrill portents of another spring;
(And I will love you with the same sweet pain,
If you and summer care to visit me again)\(^6\)

(‘Walnut Tree Revisited’)

With the help of these two poems Ruskin reveals his intense love for the walnut tree.

In ‘Cherry Tree’ Ruskin seems to be very much in love with the cherry tree. He himself sows a seed to get his own tree to be enjoyed and to be remembered for ever. To his enjoyment, in the month of May, he finds a small tree grown from the seed he had sown a few months ago. Although this tree was hidden in the grass and its leaves had been eaten by the goats and a grass-cutter had cut it into small parts. Still the same stem struggled hard to come
up. Then Ruskin had to leave for Kashmir for one year. But after one year when Ruskin came back, he found this cherry plant quite healthy and rich. It was six feet tall. This tree bore a ripe berry looking like a jewel in the sun rays. The next year there were so many berries pink and fragile quite ready to fall. Ruskin explains his feelings about this tree in the following lines:

“Eight years have passed
Since I placed my cheery, seed in the grass.
‘Must have a tree of my own’, I said—
And watered it once and went to bed
And forgot; but cherries have a way of growing
Though no one’s caring very much or knowing
And suddenly that summer, near the end of May.

Ripened and jewelled in the sun
Hung from a branch – just one!
And next year there were blossoms, small
Pink, fragile, quick to fall.”

(‘Cherry Tree’)

In the last stanza of this poem Ruskin gives a vivid description of the true Nature-scence such as the green grass under ‘the blue blind sky’ and ‘the bees sucking’ ‘nectar’ from the cherry

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tree. At the same time, the sun goes down in a flash and the stars come out in the sky. The fire-flies (here the poet calls them ‘moon-moths’) and the crickets with their music produce a lovely sight. Ruskin enjoys this scene lying upon the grass and expresses it in the following lines:

“I lay on the grass, at ease,
Looked up through leaves, at the blue
Blind sky, at the finches as they flew
And flitted through the dappled green,
While bees in an ecstasy drank
Of nectar from each bloom, and the sun sank
Swiftly, and the stars turned the sky,
And moon-moths and singing crickets and I –
Yes, I! praised night and stars and trees :
A small, tall cherry grown by me.”

(‘Cherry Tree’)

It is quite obvious that for Ruskin trees work like an inspiration for his poetry. They also work like a friend and a companion for him. Ruskin finds spiritual quality in trees and so he worships them like God. So trees are not only inspiring objects but also a symbol of God for Ruskin. This feeling of Ruskin shows him a complete Indian poet because Indians have full faith in trees.
as they have in God. In his non-fictional book ‘The Rain In the Mountains’ Ruskin says, “Deodars have often inspired me to poetry. One day I wrote :—

Trees of God, we call them;
Planted here when the world was young
The first trees.”

(‘Mountains in My Blood’)

In his poem ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ Ruskin describes some tree along with deodar as “Trees of God” they are mentioned in the following lines :—

“Deep in the crouching mist, lie the mountains.
Climbing the mountains are forests
of rhododendron, spruce and deodar
Trees of God, we call them – soughing”

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

Ruskin Bond has been a lover of Nature since his childhood. He has profound love for Nature and its beautiful objects. Flowers are also a part of Nature. It is not without truth that flowers are an object of attraction and pleasure giving to all the human beings. Ruskin like Wordsworth, a great Nature poet, has mentioned flowers in his five poems — ‘There are In My Garden’, ‘It Isn’t Time that’s Passing’, ‘All Is Life’ and ‘A Little Night Music’. In
‘There Are in My Garden’ Ruskin talks about ‘marigold’. In ‘It Isn’t Time That’s Passing’, he talks about ‘black rose’. In ‘All Is Life’ talks only about ‘flower’ but in ‘A Little Night Music’ Ruskin describes flowers in phrase not separately as — ‘fragrance of flowers’, ‘blossoming champa’, ‘lily-pads’, ‘champa as a queen of night’. In these four poems Ruskin describes the flowers in the following lines :—

“There are in my garden
the burnt bronze petals
of shattered marigolds
spears of goldenrod”\(^{11}\)

(‘There Are In My Garden’)

“Blackbird on the wing, bird of the forest shadows
‘Black rose’ in the long ago summer.”\(^{12}\)

(‘It Isn’t Time That’s Passing’)

“And fragrance of flower
Blossoming Champa
And Queen of the Night
Along on their ‘lily-pads’\(^{13}\)

(‘A Little Night Music’)

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Ruskin Bond has also composed three separate poems on flowers. They are — ‘Dandelion’, ‘The Last Flower’ and ‘The Message of The Flower’.

In ‘Dandelion’ Ruskin says that he is very much disgusted to hear from the people that the dandelion flower is a weed. He considers it as an insult on the part of the flower. He asks the people how they dare say that this divine flower is a weed. This flower is so much strong that it can bloom even in wind and rain, it can thrive on ‘stony soil’, ‘on walls’, ‘on strips of waste’ and ‘even on rubbish’. This flower is quite strong and rebounding; it is an object of attraction. It gives delight to all who look it. When this plant produces its yellow flowers and fruits, it attracts everyone to come to it and pluck one. Ruskin here becomes religious minded and thinks that some people pray this flower to fulfil their wishes and desires. Ruskin also believes that if someone is really pure at heart, this magic flower bestows upon what one wishes for. Therefore, in this poem Ruskin requests the flower to be his own and help him on his way of life. Ruskin expresses his intense love towards dandelion flower in the following lines:—

“I think it's an insult
To Nature's generosity
That many call this cheerful flower

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A ‘common weed’.

How dare they so degrade
A flower divinely made!

Sublimely does it bloom and seed
In sunshine or in shade,

Thriving in wind and rain,

On stony soil
On walls or steps
On strips of waste;

Good dandelion,

Be mine today.¹⁴

(‘Dandelion’)

In ‘The Last Flower’ Ruskin appears to be extremely concerned with the Mignonette flower. He asks the human beings which flower they would like to choose among Mignonette, the rose or the sweet violet. But Ruskin says that in this mortal world positively choose the red geranium flower blossoming on the Mignonette plant. Ruskin likes this flower so much that he keeps this flower plant in a flower-pot on his table all the time. This flower claims its importance quite clearly standing on the table of
Ruskin. Ruskin denotes his liking for Mignonette and other flowers in the following lines:—

“If, in this dying world,
Only one flower could be left,
Which one would you choose?
The rose, or some sweet violet,
Or would you prefer the fragrant
Mignonette?
Of flowers not yet extinct,
You might just settle for the Indian Pink
But my first choice, I like to think
Is the red geranium.
Standing on my desk all year.”

(‘The Last Flower’)

In ‘The Message Of Flowers’ Ruskin Bond describes almost all the beautiful natural flowers. Ruskin says that the flowers which are a part and parcel of the beauty of Nature, have a number of messages and teachings to impart. Ruskin explains them one by one in his own way as follows:—

‘Apple Blossom’ opens in the spring season. It is very attractive flower, therefore it tempts everybody to come near it.
‘Bluebells’ give the message of constancy and soothe. They act as a balm to the suffering.

‘Carnation’ is a lovely flower, specially liked by the women. This flower is a symbol of love.

‘Crysanthemum’ flower changes its colour according to the pace and time. When it assumes red colour, it indicates the time to love. When it turns white, it symbolises youth when it turns bronze, it conveys the message of being true to our concerned beings.

‘Cornflower’ is delicate, therefore, it conveys the message of being soft and delicate in our behaviour and manners.

‘Daisy’ imparts the message of innocence. Innocence is a great quality of every creature whether human beings or animals. This quality attracts everybody.

‘Daffodils’ act as purifiers. The whole of the environment is purified by them. As human beings try their best to clean the environment, similarly the daffodils convey the message to purify the air. They are the symbol of bravery, gratefulness and care. We can learn all these essential qualities from daffodils. William Wordsworth has also written a complete poem on ‘Daffodils’.
‘Eglantine’, the flower of poets looks like sweet thorny rose. It is so much attractive that John Keats liked it very much and called it rain-scented flower with dew-sweet. This flower has been an object of attraction and inspiration to Ruskin too.

‘Forget-me-not’ is a flower which itself says that it must not be forgotten because it is also not less attractive. That is why Ruskin Bond says that he will always remember this flower. It is his promise to the flower.

‘Geranium’ is a crimson red flower. It is also very attractive. But it is said that this flower is a sign of folly. It might have been said only in jest. Folly may be a profound love for something. The poet likes this flower even if it is called a flower of folly.

‘Honeysuckle’ is a very nice flower. It gives out a strong fragrance almost unbearable. But the poet is so much intoxicated with its fragrance that he wants to be with it for ever. He does not want to part with it.

‘Ivy’ flower is a symbol of friendship and faithfulness. This flower inspires us to be faithful. It also signifies eternity. Ruskin Bond tries to teach the human beings that Nature is really the best teacher. The same opinion has been expressed by William Wordsworth in his poem ‘Education Of Nature’.
'Jasmine' flower also stands for perfection. The poet loves this flower to the core of his heart because it teaches a lesson of perfection.

'Lemon Blossom' is a wonderful flower. This flower instigates the memories of love and play. It inspires us to love one and all and lead this life happily as if we were playing to win.

'Magnolia' is a big plant almost a tree on which champa like flowers blossom. This tree is regarded as 'the queen of the garden'. The flowers which resemble champa are thought to bring good fortune to all who love and possess these flowers. Ruskin Bond once again wants to reveal the fact that Nature and its products may also bestow upon us good fortune. Nature in this sense is just a diety.

'Nasturtium' is a meek and gentle friend of Ruskin. Here, Ruskin displays harmony between man and Nature. Nature can be a teacher, a friend and even a diety. Therefore, the poet is beside himself with joy when he sees a nasturtium flower at the end of the winter season.

'Oleander' flowers are red and white in colour. They are also a fountain of joy to Ruskin. Whenever he catches sight of them, he is extremely delighted.
‘Poppy’ is a favourite flower of Ruskin Bond as is also explained by Sarojini Naidu in one of her poems. This flower is crimson red. Therefore, Ruskin calls it his scarlet lady. This flower has some peculiar qualities such as extravagance, excitement and quickly disappearing. This flower lives a short life but gives a lot of joy and attracts everybody. Ruskin has mentioned this flower not only in his poem ‘The Message of the Flowers’ but also in his another Nature poem ‘Look For The Colours of Life’ as Ruskin writes, in the following lines:

\[
\text{It's early summer} \\
\text{And the roses blush} \\
\text{In the dew-drenched dawn,} \\
\text{And poppies sway red and white} \\
\text{In the invisible breeze.}^{16}
\]

(‘Look For the Colours of Life’)

‘Quercus’ a group of bamboo trees, resembles an oak tree. The poet calls it his ‘friend’. When he does not find it in his garden, he is perplexed. But whenever he sees it, he feels very happy and satisfied.

‘Roses’ are the most beautiful flowers. Nobody will be there who is not attracted towards them. The main attraction of these flowers is that they are found in a number of colours. The chief of
them are black rose, white rose, yellow rose, and red rose. The red rose is thought to be a symbol of love and lustfulness. This flower also signifies faithfulness.

'Snapdragon' is also a very beautiful flower. Besides beauty its fragrance is also very sweet. It fills the whole surroundings with sweet-smelling. This sweet-smelling indicates its presence in the natural surroundings. Everybody is attracted towards it through its fragrance. The poet also can't help drawing near it.

'Tulips' are bell-shaped flowers of several colours. Once Ruskin was offered a tulip flower. He didn't know what speciality this flower had. But when he was told that this flower brings name and fame to one who possesses it, Ruskin accepted the flower and decided to settle it with the 'Thorn-Apple in his garden. This description also displays that the flowers may be fame-providing gods. Whether faith or blind faith, it can't be said, but it is sure that they must possess some or the other special divine quality.

'Urtica' is a very stinging flower. It has thorns which stings just like a scorpion. Everybody tries to avoid this flower.

'Violet' is a very modest, sweet and shy flower. It generally tries to hide itself from the human eyes. Therefore, it blossoms in the corners of the garden. This flower teaches us to be modest and shy. This quality is essential for women also.
‘Wallflower’ is a very nice flower. Ruskin has beautified his walls of the house with this flower. This flower teaches us to be beautiful but sturdy also.

‘Xerophyte’ is a flower of the desert. This flower blossoms in a rough and uninteresting surrounding, yet it is beautiful and remains happy and cheerful all the time. We can learn from this flower that we should be happy in all circumstances.

‘Yellow Iris’ is a flower of passion. It transfers us into dreams. This flower attracts Ruskin because it entices him to be passionate.

‘Zinnia’ is a peculiar flower. It reminds us of our friends whom we have forgotten. What a miraculous flower it is!

This broadcasting description of flowers shows Ruskin’s extreme love for flowers. All these poems composed on the flowers may rank him in Indo-Anglian Poetry as ‘a poet of flowers’. As a true Indian Ruskin finds some divine power in the flowers and according to him God’s worship is incomplete without the offering of flowers and it is a universal truth.

Ruskin’s presentation of Nature is, in fact, luminous, vigorous and poetically strong. His power of description of the beauty of Nature shows his poetic imagination and sensitivity to seasons.
Like Sri Aurobindo he is mainly a poet of seasons. Ruskin has described all the five seasons of the year — spring season, summer season, rainy season, winter season and autumn season in his Nature poems.

Ruskin’s description of seasons differs from other Nature poets. Most of the Nature poets talk mostly about spring season. But Ruskin has described mostly summer season in his Nature poems. He has mentioned summer season in at least ‘nine’ poems. In spite of knowing the fact that spring season is a very important part of Nature, he lays stress on summer season and describes it very beautifully and differently in his Nature poems showing his craftmanship. Not that, Ruskin has not described the spring season in his poem. He has described spring season in ‘three’ poems. Besides these two seasons Ruskin has also described ‘winter season’ in his three poems, ‘rainy season’ in his four Nature poems and ‘autumn season’ only in ‘one’ poem.

‘Walnut Tree Revisited’ is such a poem in which Ruskin has described four seasons — ‘summer season’, ‘winter season’, ‘spring season’ and ‘rainy season’ and the following lines are an apt illustration of them :—

“You have ripened, since last walnut tree,
Lost its dark leaves, at autumn

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One summer intervened between your growing

But turning its own fingers
To the slanting winter sun.
Not one leaf left, where hundreds
Glittered like spears in the forest of September.
But I will wait until the parrots bring
Shrill portents of another spring”17.

(‘Walnut Tree Revisited’)

In ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ Ruskin has described seasons as a phrase—‘season for dying’, ‘season for pilgrim’ and ‘mountain summer’. Ruskin draws these seasons as phrase in the following lines:–

Last week I dug too graves, and now, without warning
Here’s another. It isn't even the season for dying.

Even then we were cold
It was not the season for pilgrim

His memories were good for many drinks
In many inns; his face pickled in the suns
Of many mountain summers.”18

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

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In his Nature poetry Ruskin has also composed three separate poems for seasons — ‘Rain’, ‘The Wind And The Rain’, ‘Summer Fruit’.

In ‘Rain’ Ruskin points out that rain is given a warm welcome when it is anxiously waited for after the heat and dust which causes discomfort for a couple of days. Not only the human beings but also the animals and the natural things like leaves and grass also enjoy the rain. It gives a new life to plants and produces music when it falls. When the rain makes its way through the drains and collects into pits, the scene looks all the more worth-enjoying. Ruskin draws the beautiful scenery of the rain in the following lines :–

“After weeks of heat and dust
How welcome is the rain.
It washes the leaves,
Gives new life to grass,
Draws out the scent of the earth.
It rattles on the roof,
Gurgles along the drainpipe
Collects in a puddle in the middle of the lawn —
The birds come to bathe.”19

(‘Rain’)
After the rain is over, the sun shines to invite the living creatures of the earth. A small brown lizard enjoys basking in the sun. The human beings also feel enthusiastic to enjoy life. The birds look very happy in their bath in the rain water. The scene at night produces a good sight when we look at the sky through the branches of the cherry tree, the sky looks quite clear and bright. Ruskin describes it in the following lines:

“When the sun comes out
A lizard crawls up from a crack in a rock.
‘Small brown lizard
Basking in the sun
You too have your life to live
Your race to run’
At night we look through the branches
of the cherry tree
The sky is rain-washed, star-bright”

(‘Rain’)

In ‘The Wind And The Rain’ Ruskin appears to be very much impressed by the wind, the rain and the leaves. Therefore, he wants to walk like the wind and sing like the rain. Further, Ruskin Bond wants to dance like the leaves of the plants. It means he wants to enjoy himself as the objects of Nature do. At the same time Ruskin
wants to be grave and still like earth. In doing so the poet thinks that he is fulfilling God’s will. This very short lyric reveals Ruskin Bond’s profound love for Nature.

Ruskin wants to retain his love for Nature throughout his life like the great English poet William Wordsworth who wants to continue as a lover of Nature or he would not like to survive as he writes in his short lyric ‘The Rainbow’ :

“My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!”

(‘The Rainbow’)

In his Nature poem ‘Summer Fruit’ Ruskin very beautifully describes the summer season which is also a part of Nature. In this season fruits of many kinds with different colours attract everybody. Who does not like the mango, the king of fruits? The berry and cherry are also the products of this season. Thus the summer season is not only attractive but also a provider of sweet and tasteful fruits. Ruskin describes this season in verses as follows :

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“Summer is here, and mangoes too
And fruit of every taste and hue;
And given a choice of juice or berry,
I'll settle for the humble cherry.”\(^{22}\)

(‘Summer Fruit’)

In the concluding lines of the same poem Ruskin describes some other popular Indian fruits with their Indian names known as – ‘lichis’, ‘tarbuj’ and ‘kharbuj’. Ruskin writes them in following lines :

“May be some lichis in your pockets.
Or would you like a large tarbuj –
Its sweeter than a good kharbuj–
Tarbuj, kharbuja – oh, what's the difference?
Tell me, children, and your preference.”\(^{23}\)

(‘Summer Fruit’)

In his Nature poems Ruskin has not only described seasons but also the months of the year. But his description about months is also somewhat different from other Nature poets. Most of the Nature poets have described the months of ‘April’, ‘May’ and ‘March’ in their Nature poems. Chaucer, the father of English poetry, begins ‘The Prologue To The Canterbury Tales’ with the
month of ‘April’ and ‘March’ as is described in the following quoted lines:—

“Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote”  
And bathed every veyne in sweet licour,  
Of which vertu engendred in the flour.”

(Chaucer’s ‘The Prologue To The Canterbury Tales’)

These quoted lines reveal the fact that months are also a very important part of Nature poetry as it is described by Chaucer, the founder of English poetry.

But Ruskin’s description of Nature is somewhat different from other Nature poets. Ruskin has described not only the months of ‘April’ and ‘May’ but also the month of ‘June’, ‘September’, ‘November’ and ‘December’. In some poems Ruskin has described these months as phrases — ‘April rain’, ‘forest of September’ and ‘December grass’. Chaucer’s ‘Prologue To The Canterbury Tales’ begins with the month of April. In the same way Ruskin’s ‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’ also begins with the month of ‘April’ as is displayed in the following lines:—

“Your face streamed ‘April’ rain  
As you climbed the steep hill  
Calling the white cow home”

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)
Hills and mountains are also a very important part of Ruskin’s Nature poetry. He has described most of the beautiful hill-stations and mountains in his Nature poems. In his book ‘Rain In The Mountain’ Ruskin indites — “In a thousand ages of the gods I could tell thee of the glories of Himachal. So a poet confessed at the dawn of Indian history, and no one since has been able to do real justice to the Himalayas. We have climbed their highest peaks, but still the mountains remain remote, mysterious, primeval.

No wonder, then, that the people who live on these mountains slopes, in the mist-filled valley of Garhwal, have long since learned humility, patience and a quiet reserve”.

Through this narration Ruskin shows his keen interest for hill-stations mostly for Garhwal Himalaya where he has spent a long period of his life. Mountains and hills are the part and parcel of Ruskin’s life. Ruskin has passed his whole life in the quiet open and hilly areas. It is only because Ruskin is a Nature poet so he wants to live in a place which is full of natural surroundings and there is no doubt in it that mountains and hills are full of Nature scenes. Since his childhood Ruskin has been living in beautiful hill-stations. He has described these hill-stations and mountains in most of his Nature poems such as ‘View From The

“A boy on a mule passes by on
the rough mountain track.
He sees my face at the window and waves to me.
I wave back to him.”

(‘View From the Window’)

Your face streamed April rain,
As you climbed the steep hill
Calling the white cow home.
You seemed very tiny
On the windswept mountainside;
A twist of hair lay
The sky spins, the trees go hush
Hush, the mountain sings —

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)

Standing near a mountain stream
I heard a sound like the creaking”

(‘A Frog Screams’)

(110)
The slender maidenhair fern grows firm on a rock
While all around her the water swirls and chatters

---

Down to the bottom of the hill."^{30} 

("The Fern")

Where has it gone.
The pool on the hill?

---

And that's why they call this
the Haunted Hill."^{31} 

("The Pool")

This mountain is my mother

---

Swift river from the mountain,

---

So, piper on the lonely hill,"^{32} 

("Night Thoughts")

Ruskin has also composed some separate poems for hills and mountains in his Nature poetry and these poems are —
‘Garhwal Himalayas’, ‘Rain In The Hills’, ‘Hill Stations’ and
‘Second-Hand Shop In The Hill Station’.

(111)
In ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ Ruskin describes the beauty of the mountains which carry pretty forest. On these mountains there are so many beautiful trees like rhododendron, spruce and deodar. Ruskin call them “trees of God”. The Garhwal hills look all the more charming when they are covered with snow and the winds blow spreading the sounds of ‘leopard's moans’. To add beauty of the hills, the herdsmen come here with their sheep. The sheep graze the grass producing an attractive scene. By the side of the mountains, the terrace of small stone house of Garhwal, with small fields cut from the rocks present beautiful sights. The poor women looking pale (poverty is glimpsed on their faces), scorn at the thunder when their husbands go down the plains to earn their bread and butter. The children are hungry at noon yet they forget it and enjoy the sun-set. They are so much happy with natural surroundings that they forget even their hunger. It is really wonderful that some children grow old in their mother's arms sucking milk. This is the greatest irony on the part of poor people of Garhwal. Ruskin portrays Garhwal Himalaya in the following lines :–

“Deep in the crouching mist, lie the mountains.
Climbing the mountains are forests
Of rhododendron, spruce and deodar–
Trees of God, we call them – soughing
In the wind from the passes of Garhwal;
And the snow – leopard moans softly
Where the herdsmen pass, their lean sheep cropping
Short winter grass.”

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)
When I returned to India, still a young man in my twenties (I had spent only four years in England), I lived in Delhi and Dehra for a few years and then without quite knowing why I found myself visiting the hill-station, calling on the oldest resident - - - - - - “35

Ruskin has not only described hills and mountains but also the beautiful fern which is found on the rocks. In his poem ‘The Fern’ he points out that the fern is a very beautiful plant with slender leaves or the rock. The rain water whirling around it produces a very nice scene. Then water rushes towards the hills and falls down them. This rare scene is drawn by Ruskin in the following lines :-

“The slender maidenhair fern grows firm on a rock
While all around her the water swirls and chatters
And then disappears in a rush
Down to the bottom of the hill”36

(‘The Fern’)

Ruskin finds relief and shelter in the hills when he is surrounded by flooded waters. He prays to God to give him shelter in the rocks where he finds peace and patience. Ruskin imagines this ardent feeling of his heart in the following lines :-
When I'm surrounded by troubled waters, Lord,
Let me find with in a rock to Cliny to.
And give me the quiet patience of the maidenhair
Who has learned to live with the rock.”

(‘The Fern’)

Through these conveying lines Ruskin reveals the fact that there is no solace anywhere but the lap of Nature provides him with a lot of mental peace and relief from all tensions.

Ruskin describes beautiful Indian fields in his Nature poems in a beautiful way. In these fields he has described almost all the beautiful Indian fields such as – ‘mustard field’, ‘wheat field’ or ‘tea slope’ as are mentioned in the following lines:

“The wheat-field, the tea-slope - -
A cow at rest.
And longed for the soft, shoeless tread”

(‘Lost’)

“On heavy wings, ringed pheasants rose
At our approach
The fields were yellow with mustard.”

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)
In his Nature poems Ruskin also conjures up the images of the jungles in the lower regions of the Himalayas. He has described beautiful Indian forests and jungles in his most of the Nature poems in a beautiful manner. In respect of Indian Forests Ruskin has composed a separate poem ‘To The Indian Foresters’

In his poem ‘To The Indian Foresters’ Ruskin Bond praises the foresters for doing the best service to make up Nature. He calls the foresters ‘quiet man’. Without them forests can not be in existence. Even the medicine plants like herbs need the protection of forests to survive. The poet emphasizes to grow more and more plants, trees, and verdure. These forests are the real Nature. Nature is itself a glimpse of the forests. The poet has specially composed this poem as a Nature poem. The moral of the poem is that Nature depends on Nature or in other words Nature is for Nature.

Like the mountains and the forests, there is also a very praiseworthy description of small creatures in Ruskin's Nature poetry. In almost all his Nature poems there is a vivid description of small creatures according to the time and place. In his book ‘Rain in The Mountains’ Ruskin writes, – “When mist fills the Himalayan valleys, and heavy monsoon rain sweeps across the hills, it is natural for wild creatures to seek shelter. Any shelter is
welcome in a storm – and sometimes my Cottage in the forest is the most convenient refuge.

There is no doubt that I make things easier for all concerned by leaving most of my windows open – I am one of those peculiar people who like to have plenty of fresh air indoors – and if a few birds, beasts and insects come in too they're welcome, provided they don't make too much of a nuisance of themselves.”

This statement displays Ruskin's intense love for small creatures. He has described all types of small creatures or animals in his Nature poems. He also describes insects such as – ants, crickets, porcupines or flying insects as – bees, butterflies moon-moths, fire-flies whistling thrushes and bats. There is also a vivid description of beautiful birds in his Nature poems. He has described different types of birds as – yellow-birds, black-birds, lady-birds, brain fever birds, parrots, owls, mynah birds, hawk-cuckoos etc. In his Nature poems he also describes small creatures as – lizard, squirrel, frog, mouse and also small animals of both types – pet animals and wild-animals. In pet animals he describes cows, dogs, goats, sheep and other cattle but in wild animals he describes foxes, deer, wild dark leopard etc.
Ruskin mentions all these small creatures in almost all his Nature poems creating a beautiful scenery to decorate his Nature poems as is illustrated through the following lines:

“There are in my garden
- - - - - - - - - - - -
of pillaging bees
two armoured lizards
a map butterfly
and a division of ants ....
A small yellow bird 41

(‘There Are In My Garden’)

But I will wait until the parrots bring
Shrill portents of another spring:42

(‘Walnut Tree Revisited’)

Porcupines come out of their burrows
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
The timid owl peeps out of his hole in the tree trunk
Where he has been hiding all day.
Insects crawl out in thousands.43

(‘So Beautiful The Night’)

(118)
And the snow-leopard moans softly
Where the herdsmen pass, their lean sheep cropping
Short winter grass.\textsuperscript{44}

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

Two mynah birds are building a nest in a hole–
They are very noisy about it.
Bits of grass keep falling on the window sill.
High up in the spruce tree, a hawk-cuckoo calls:
I slept so well, I slept so well!
When the hawk-cuckoo is awake, no one else sleeps.”
That's why it's also known as the fever bird,
A small squirrel, climbs on the windows sill.”\textsuperscript{45}

(‘View From The Window’)

Enough for me that you walk past
A firefly flashing in the dark.”\textsuperscript{46}

(‘Passing By’)

\textsuperscript{119}

Calling white cow home
You seemed very tiny
By robber bands, masked mynas
And yellow birds with beaks like daggers,\(^{47}\)

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)

Swiftly, and the stars turned in the sky,
And moon-moths and singing crickets and I—
Yes, I!—praised night and stars and trees:
A small, tall cherry grown by me.\(^{48}\)

(‘Cherry Tree’)

And sometimes a field mouse
Drop in for a bite

And the frogs in their pond
Sing out as they float

The Brain-fever bird
Is calling on high
‘Brain fever, brain fever!’

The crickets join in
And out-of-tune orchestra

A leopard's out hunting —

The swamp deer calls.”

(‘A Little Night Music’)

For insects, small creatures and animals Ruskin has also composed some separate poems as ‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’, ‘The Bat’, ‘Lone Fox Dancing’, ‘A Frog Screams’ and ‘Butterfly Time’

In ‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’ Ruskin Bond shows that even the small creatures are aware of their rights and importance. The bug has all the rights and is no less important than small beings. The bug has a right to suck human blood. It does not have any displeasure in sucking human blood. It thinks that God has created it only to survive on human blood.

‘The Bat’ is a poem completely on insect life. Its moral is ‘life lives on life’. The bat lives on small insects on the earth. It swoops down only to get its food. The bat eats the insects which do not let the furniture last long. Ruskin has no objection at the entrance of the bat into his house. Sometimes it sits under his bed. He thinks that a bat can also be a good companion in the night when he is all alone.

(121)
In ‘Lone Fox Dancing’ Ruskin shows his attraction towards the fox which is all alone in the forest and is dancing to enjoy, ‘the cold moonlight’. Ruskin stops there to enjoy the natural sight of the dancing fox in the cold stormy night and expresses his desire to dance like the fox as Ruskin himself justifies it in the following lines :

“As I walked home last night
I saw a lone fox dancing
In the cold moonlight.
I stood and watched. ..... 

I'm like a lone fox dancing
In the morning dew.’’

(‘Lone Fox Dancing’)

In ‘A Fog Screams’ Ruskin shows his love and sympathy for a frog which is caught by a snake. Ruskin draws a life-like picture of a struggling frog in a very beautiful way showing the real natural beauty in the following lines :

I heard a sound like the creaking
Of a branch in the wind.
It was a frog screaming
In the jaws of a long green snake.’’

(‘A Frog Screams’)

(122)
The frog is struggling for life. Ruskin takes pity on the frog and with the help of two sticks, he saves his life. But on the other hand one truth is also there which can't be avoided. It is – ‘every creature depends on other creatures for food’.

In ‘Butterfly Time’ Ruskin points out that in April when it showers, there are so many colourful butterflies in the forest. These butterflies collect there to suck ‘sweet nectar’ from natural flowers and plants and give a lot of joy to Ruskin. Ruskin thinks that Nature does all that is good for all creatures. This poem displays how Ruskin seeks relief and satisfaction in the lap of Nature. Ruskin paints the butterfly and its movements in the following lines:-

“April showers
Bring swarms of butterflies
Streaming across the valley
Seeking sweet nectar.
Yellow, gold, and burning bright,
Red and blue and banded white.
To my eyes they bring delight!

For Nature does things in good order:
And birds and butterflies recognize
No man-made border”. 52

(‘Butterfly Time’)
In all these Nature poems Ruskin shows his love and companionship with small creatures. He also describes difference between man and small creatures. In his non-fictional book 'Delhi Is Not Far' he indites, "I love animals but their bowel movements are somewhat different from ours, and they were never meant to live in an author's bedroom, libery or clothes cupboard. Their true home is in the wild, where they can enrich the soil rather than carpet."53.

This vivid description of Ruskin's Nature poems shows that he is really a Nature poet and has the power of presenting images vividly and even whole panoramas in a few decisive luminous phrases. Minute details of Nature illustrate his power of observation. This shows his poetic imagination and sensibility to Nature. His Nature poems are remarkable not only for the loveliness of the Indian Nature but also for the beauty of imagery and descriptive details.
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(II) HARMONY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE:

Ruskin is really charmed and spell-bound of Nature and its beautiful objects whether living or non-living. But Ruskin is not exclusively a poet of Nature alone but a poet of ‘Man and Nature as well’. Most of Ruskin's poems bring forth the harmony between Man and Nature. Like Wordsworth, Ruskin, in his poetry, deals with both Man and Nature. He presents Man trying to subdue the forces of Nature to make it useful for him. He shows Man all alone, isolated in and alienated from, a hostile universe. Since Man and Nature are found in closer proximity in rural areas, than in the cities, Ruskin delineates Man belonging to the countryside and engage in rural activities.

In his non-fictional book ‘Rain In The Mountains’ Ruskin indites, – “The peepul was a good tree to sit beneath on hot days. Its heart-shaped leaf, sensitive to the slightest breeze, would be flapping gently when the clouds were standing still and not another tree witnessed the least movement in the air. There is a peepul tree in every Indian village, and it is common to see a farmer, tired at the end of an afternoon's toil in the fields, being lulled to sleep by the rustling of its leaves.”

Through this statement Ruskin points out that there is a great harmony between Man and Nature. Whenever Man is tired of days'
work and returns home with heavy steps specially a farmer or a shepherd, feels comfortable in the lap of Nature. At that time Nature works like soothing balm for the weary man. Ruskin believes that human nature can be found in its pure and original state in the poor community who lives in the lap of Nature.

Ruskin's description in respect of the harmony between Man and Nature is, in fact, praiseworthy. He describes all the charming natural objects with Man in most of his Nature poems. In his Nature poem ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ Ruskin points out that there is a deep and close harmony between Man and Nature:-

"Where the herds men pass,

their lean sheep cropping

Short winter grass.

And clinging to the sides of mountains,

The small stone houses of Garhwal,

Their thin fields of calcinated soil torn

From the old spirit – haunted rocks.”²

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In the above lines Ruskin shows great harmony between Man and Nature. He points out that the men and women are so much concerned with Nature that they are not afraid of thunder. On the contrary they appear to be challenging it. The children are hungry

(132)
at noon, yet they forget it and enjoy the sun-set to sing sweet songs. They are so much happy with natural surroundings that they forget even their hunger. It is really wonderful that some children grow old in their mother's arms sucking milk. This is the greatest irony on the part of poor people of Garhwal. But here there is a great harmony between Man and Nature because even poverty is not an obstacle between Man and Nature. Ruskin expresses this in the following lines:

“There is hunger of children at noon; and yet
There are those who sing of the sunset
And the gods and glories of Himaal,
Forgetting no one eats sunsets
Wonder, then, at the absence of old men;
For some grow old at their mother's breasts,
In cold Garhwal”

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In ‘Hill-Station’ Ruskin describes a great harmony between Man and Nature. He explains that at a hill-station he feels quite all-alone but the beautiful mountains give him company as a companion to remove his loneliness and allure him to dwell in. Not only these mountains but also shepherds and woodmen know him as a resident of this place and trees also remove Ruskin's
loneliness. Here Ruskin shows a great harmony between Man and Nature because both Man (here shepherds or woodmen) and Nature in the form of mountains and trees provide him companionship. Ruskin reveals this harmony between Man and Nature in the following lines:

“There is nothing to keep me here,
Only these mountains of silence
And the gentle reserve of shepherds and woodmen
Who know me as one who
Walks among trees.”

(‘Hill Station’)

In the fourth stanza of his long poem ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ Ruskin is extremely charmed by the banyan tree. He takes delight in its sight. He feels much relieved to touch the old rugged wood and feels it is singing to him. This shows a great harmony between Man and Nature because banyan tree provides Ruskin musical tune which gives him comfort and invites him to enjoy himself with its music. Ruskin denotes this harmony in the following lines:

“Of aerial roots,
Intruder in your pillared den, I stood
And shyly touched your old and wizened wood,
And as my heart explored you, giant tree
I heard you singing!"  

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In the same stanza Ruskin becomes very emotional and shows the banyan tree as his friend which attracts him to ‘silent throbbing heart’. Ruskin further shows banyan tree not only as a friend but also as a ‘preceptor’ as William Wordsworth shows Nature as ‘the best teacher’ in his poem ‘Education of Nature’. Ruskin calls this banyan tree as his ‘first tutor’ because he learns a lesson of stillness from this tree. This is the best example of harmony between Man and Nature. Here Ruskin is the Man and the banyan tree is Nature itself. Ruskin draws this harmony in the following lines :

“The spirit of the tree became my friend,
Took me to his silent throbbing heart,
And taught me the value of stillness.
My first tutor, friend of the lonely.”

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In his very short poem ‘This Land Is Mine’ Ruskin Bond composes a few lines on harmony between Man and Nature. He calls this land his own, though he is not the genuine owner of this land. His feelings are attached to the whole earth simply because
he is born on it. He wants to be associated with natural objects as ‘the dust’, ‘the grass’, ‘the tender leaf’ and ‘weathered bark’ till his last breath because these objects are the part of his upbringing. Through the use of oxymoron Ruskin justifies his love for Nature and expresses this harmony in the following lines:

“This land is mine
Although I do not own it,
This land is mine
Because I grew upon it
This dust, this grass,
This tender leaf
And weathered bark
All in my heart are finely blended
until my time on earth is ended.”

(“This Land Is Mine”)

In his poem ‘Don’t Be Afraid Of The Dark’ Ruskin advises the readers not to be afraid of Nature, on the contrary we should be friendly with it. ‘Darkness’ is also a part of Nature as is ‘the light’. So we should not be afraid of darkness. Man has a great harmony with Nature because Man is also a part of day and night and day and night are a part of Nature. Ruskin draws this harmony in these lines:

(136)
“Don't be afraid of the dark, little one,
The earth must rest when the day is done.
The sun may be harsh, but moonlight – never!
And those stars will be shining forever and ever,
Be friends with the Night, there is nothing to fear,
Just let your thoughts travel to friends far and near.
By day, it does seem that our troubles won't cease,
But at night, late at night, the world is at peace.”

(‘Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark’)
The Flame trees glow
At this time of year
The mangoes burn bright
As the monsoon draws near"9

('Look For The Colours of Life')

In his short lyric ‘Listen’ Ruskin asks the readers to pay attention to all that is a part of Nature. The night, the day, the trees, the pabbles, the leaves, the summer, the winter, the sky, the earth, the sun and the moon, the dawn and the evening etc, all are the part and parcel of Nature. Man can not be separated from these parts of Nature. That is why it indicates that Man has great harmony with Nature as is expressed by Ruskin in these lines:–

“Listen to the night wind in the trees,
Listen to the summer grass singing:
Listen to the time that's tripping by,
And the dawn dew falling
Listen to the moon as it climbs the sky.
Listen to the pebbles humming;
Listen to the mist in the trembling leaves,
And the silence calling.”10

('Listen')
In his Nature poem ‘To the Indian Foresters’ Ruskin Bond wants to display that there is a profound harmony between Man and Nature. It is only for the reason that the foresters do their best to survive and protect the forests. If the foresters do not save the forests from being cut down, this land will be a ‘bowl of dust’. Man does a lot to maintain all the natural surroundings of the world as foresters, farmers, gardeners etc. Although farmers and gardeners do a lot to maintain fields and gardens which are also a part of Nature but Ruskin in this poem emphasizes only on the foresters as defenders of Nature. That is, in fact, a very rare concept in respect of harmony between Man and Nature because most of the Nature poets talk only about farmers and fields, gardeners and gardens. But Ruskin’s harmony between Man and Nature is somewhat different than other Nature poets because Ruskin not only talks about forestes but also foresters that shows a real harmony between Man and Nature, as forests and foresters are inseperable to each other as Ruskin indites it in the following lines:–

“You are the quiet men who do not boast
Although you've done much more than most.
To make this land a sea of green
From here to far Cape Comorin.
Without your help to Nature's thrust
This land would be a bowl of dust.

Dear foresters, you have not sought for fame or favour,
Yours have been a love of labour.
Our thanks! Instead of desert sand
You've given us this green and growing land.”¹¹

(‘To the Indian Foresters’)

In the same poem Ruskin also adds even the birds and animals have undying harmony with Nature. Nature is their home and they receive their food to survive that is explained in the following lines:

And we need trees to hold together
Beats’, and birds of every feather,
And leaves to help the air smell sweet;
All this land more is no mean feat.¹²

(‘To The Indian Foresters’)

In ‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’ the bug appears to be happy with its lot because it has a special right of feeding on human blood. Both man and bug are the part of Nature. Nature also requires Man and other creatures. Here Ruskin reveals the harmony between human beings, and other objects of Nature. For him human beings
and the small creatures like bug are concerned with Nature in some or the other way as Ruskin reveals in the following lines:

“My place –
Chief pest
Upon the human race!
I'm here to stay –
To feast upon their delicate display,
Those luscious thighs.”

(‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’)

In ‘The Bat’ Ruskin points out that at times bat comes and sits under his bed but he has no objection at its entrance because he thinks that a bat can also be good comrade in the nights when he is all alone. This proves Ruskin's love for small creatures displaying a great harmony between Man and Nature.

In ‘The Message of The Flowers’ Ruskin tells when he watches a ‘nasturtium flower’ at the end of the winter season, he feels an extreme joy. He regards this flower as a meek and gentle friend. Ruskin's this friendship with nasturtium flower displays a great harmony between Man and Nature because here this flower provides Ruskin intimate friendship as a man does. Ruskin mentions it in the following lines:–
Nasturtium “How can I forget you, humble friend?
You gladden my heart to winter's end.”

(‘The Message of The Flowers’)

‘All Is Life’ a short poem of Ruskin, is also deeply concerned with harmony between Man and Nature. In it Ruskin asks his friend to make the most of Nature because it gives us relief in pain and panics. He expresses it in the following lines:–

“Let's make the most of it, my friend.
Make happiness our pursuit,
Spread a little sunshine here and there
Enjoy the flowers, the breeze,
Rivers, sea, and sky
Mountains and tall waving trees.”

(‘All Is Life’)

The same feelings have been expressed by William Wordsworth in his Nature poem ‘The Tables Turned’. Wordsworth, an ardent lover of Nature, exhorts his friend William Hazlitt to give up studying books of Art and Science. He writes –

Up! Up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! Up! my friend, and clear your looks;
why all this toil and trouble?

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
he, too is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.”\textsuperscript{16}

\textquotedblleft (\textit{The Tables Turned})\textquotedblright

In \textit{Night Thoughts} Ruskin points out that Man, sometimes, is so much harmonized with Nature that he regards it as his mother, father, teacher and even God. The same feeling has been expressed by Ruskin Bond in this poem. He calls the mountain his mother, sea the father and the river as the fountain of joy. The darkness of night also gives him joy. This feeling creates a great harmony between Man and Nature as is expressed in the following lines:

\textit{This mountain is my mother,}
\textit{My father is the sea,}
\textit{This river is the fountain}

\textit{The day has gone, sweet night comes on,}
\textit{Its drakness helps me see”}.\textsuperscript{17}

\textquotedblleft (\textit{Night Thoughts})\textquotedblright
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(III) MORAL PHILOSOPHY:

Moral philosophy is another part of Ruskin's thematic quality. He describes it in most of his poems. Morality and philosophy are, in essence, a consequence of Ruskin's close, keen and correct observation of life. His morality and philosophy are rooted in the everyday business of life. All that has passed into his philosophy and morality has been wrung from experience, felt in the blood, felt along the heart and passing into purer mind. Moral and philosophical ideas become eloquent through the depiction of various phases of life and they have the real content and complexion of life. Ruskin does not see life in philosophy and morality; he sees morality and philosophy in life. As a result, his moral and philosophical poems are alive with life, have the real throb of feeling and refreshness, and warmth pulsates through them.

In the seventh stanza of his long poem 'A Song For Lost Friends' Ruskin provides a moral philosophy saying that death is not an end of human life but it is the out and out conclusion of life. It is a wise saying of a high esteemed oldman of the village. The oldman is delighted to see the beautiful sun-set in the Himalayas but he says that this beautiful sight does not fill up their belly. So the poor people remain satisfied with the sights of
natural surrounding and try to forget their poverty. Ruskin explains this philosophy in following lines :-

"Not death but a summing-up of life,
Said the village patriarch, as we watched him.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

The people were poor, and the patriarch said:
'I have heard it told that the sun
Sets in splendour in Himalaya-
But who can eat sunsets?'

The patriarch was old in years".1

('A Song For Lost Friends')

In the fourth stanza of the same poem Ruskin imparts some different philosophy from that. He explains that promises should be kept just as the tonga man kept his promise by coming to him the second time and asked if he felt lonely in the tree as Ruskin writes in the following lines :-

"With a promise he'd give me a ride someday.
And from him I learnt the
value of promises kept."2

('A Song For Lost Friends')
In ‘The Words’ Ruskin says that Gautama Buddha imparts Ananda moral lesson; human body contains within itself power which can renew its strength for a moment and it can remove the causes of its destruction. Then Gautama preaches to all his disciples ‘that which causes life causes also decay and death’ and always keep it in your mind because it is a universal truth. Through it Ruskin displays his moral philosophy and mentions it in the following lines:-

“--------------------------------
Beloved,
that which causes life causes also decay,
and death, Never forget this.
I called you to tell you this.”

(‘The Words’)

Ruskin’s ‘Walnut Tree’ also depicts a great moral philosophy. In it he explains that when walnut tree loses its leaves, the fruits are ripe. If it loses something, on the other side it gives an important things also. When it gives up its skin, the hard nut comes up. It means if we lose something, we provide others with other thing. Ruskin expresses this philosophy in the following lines:-

“The walnut tree is the first to lose its leaves,
But at the same time the fruit ripens,
The skin splits, the hard shell of the nut.”

(‘Walnut Tree’)
The sum and substance of Ruskin's poem ‘We Must Love Someone’ is — “without love, there is no life”. Ruskin's this poem teaches us a great moral philosophy. In it he says that the chief purpose of the human beings is to love some one or the other. Only then the purpose of human life will be meaningful. Even birds and animals realise the importance of companionship. If a crane loses its companion, it is beside itself with grief. Ruskin expresses it in the following lines:

“We must love someone
If we are to justify
Our presence on this earth.
We must keep loving all our days,
Someone, anyone, anywhere
Outside our selves;
For even the sarus crane
Will grieve over its lost companion,

Without the touch of love
There is no life, and we must fade away.”

(‘We Must Love Someone’)
is the speciality of love that when it is gained, it is often lost and
lost love is once again regained. The entire world is going on well
only on account of love. Without love there can be no existence
of man and society. If love disappears from the world, there will
be universal chaos and disorder. Truly speaking love is nectar.
Therefore, everybody should receive a moral lesson to love all
the creatures whether lifeless or living beings. Ruskin shows this
philosophy in the following lines :-

"Who shall set a law to lovers?
Love is a law unto itself
Love gained is often lost
And love that's lost is found again
It's love that makes the world go round
Love that keeps us closely bound
Take this power to love away
We would be just beasts of prey.
If love should lose its hold on us,
Discord would rule the Universe."\(^6\)

(‘Love Is A Law’)

In ‘What Can We Give Our Children’ Ruskin delivers a good
speech to parents to enable their children to cultivate good habits.
He teaches them that they should try to give their children
knowledge, honour, a noble character and cheerfulness on the faces. These are simple things, free of cost but they are greater than gold. Knowledge, honour, noble character and cheerfulness are the real gold of man. Ruskin draws this moral philosophy in the following lines:–

“What can we give our children?
Knowledge, yes and honour too,
And strength of character.
And the gift of laughter
What gold do we give our children?
The gold of a sunny childhood,
Open spaces, a home that binds
Us to the common good....
These simple things
Are greater then the gold of kings.”

(‘What Can We Give Our Children’)

In ‘Don't Go To War, My Son’ Ruskin gives a moral philosophy to young man to avoid battles. He asks him not to fight battles because the battles are of no use for anyone. They are the outcome of our madness. Battles even lost or won both are meaningless. The deadbodies in the battles serve the food for
vultures. This is the reward of the battles and Ruskin portrays it in the following lines:-

"Blood drying in the fierce sun  
Vultures feasting on the dead  
Mangled limbs and severed heads  
Battles lost or battles won  
Must end in madness when they're done.  
Don't go to war, my son."8

('Don't Go To War, My Son')

In his short poem ‘We Are The Babus’ Ruskin reveals the moral philosophy of the office babus. They exploit the rich. Their main motive is to extract more and more money from the rich persons and on the other hand they are also not sympathetic towards the poor. They have only a little sympathy for the poor and that is they give them a bit of rebate in their extracting money from them. Over all moral philosophy of the babus is to get money from the the rich and the poor all alike as is expressed by Ruskin in the lines given below :-

"Soak the rich and harry the poor,  
That's our motto and our law;  
We are the rulers of this land,  
We are the babus, a merry band,"
Under the table, or through the back door,  
We'll empty your pockets and ask for more!  
We are the babus, this is our law—  
Soak the rich and harry the poor.”¹⁹

(‘We Are The Babus’)

In the poem ‘Lost All My Money’ Ruskin draws a moral lesson that Nature gives relief and peace in the comparison of city life. When man lacks money he can not survive in the cities therefore, he has to go back to his own countryside. The fields of rocks (hill areas) are better than the houses of rocks in the cities. In cities man can find nothing but sickness of the soul and sorrows, but on the contrary to them man finds solace and relief in the villages where Nature prevails. There, man for a moment can live even without having money. The lack of money will not be an obstacle in his peaceful life as Ruskin composes in the following lines :-

“I've lost all my money,  
And I'm on my way home;  
Home to the hills and a field of rocks.  
Nothing in the city but a sickness of the soul,  
Nothing to earn but sorrow - - - - - -  
I've lost all my money
And I'm on my way home,

With nothing to buy my way home - - - -”10

(‘Lost All My Money’)

In his didactic poem ‘Date To Dream’ Ruskin Bond draws a moral philosophy. He exhorts to build castles in the air but at the same time one should give them foundations. Everybody should stick fast to his dreams and try his best to make them true with perfection. Ruskin writes :-

"Build castles in the air--

But first, give them foundations.

Hold fast to all your dreams,

Make perfect your creations.11

(‘Dare To Dream’)

One more exhortation by Ruskin in the same poem is that glory comes to those who make attempts without any doubt and fear, thinking that there is nothing impossible in this world for us as is explained in the following lines :-

“All glory comes to those who dare.

Failed works are sad lame things.

---
Ruskin Bond has complete faith in God and His favour. It is also his moral lesson to human beings that the persons who do good to others ought to have no despair in their hearts. Their goodness would be recognized by all and then there will be no despair in their life. Nature also makes up for the loss that has been during her survival. But it may take some time in compensating what remains to be amended for as is revealed by Ruskin in the following lines:

"Do-gooders don't despair!
Nature will repair
Her own, long after
We are dust."13

(‘Parts Of Old Dehra’)

In his poem ‘Silent Birth’ Ruskin wants to teach a moral lesson through the process of a tree coming out of the seed from the earth. The birth of trees, flowers and fruits is quite silent without any noise and display but when a human being takes birth in this world, there is a lot of cry from his mouth. This cry goes on through
out his life. Our desires, our necessities and our ambitions all are the causes of our cries when they are not fulfilled. Therefore, man should take a moral lesson of stillness from trees, the inanimate objects of Nature – Ruskin indites the same in the following lines:–

“When the earth gave birth to this tree.
There come no sound.
A green soots thrust
In silence from the ground.
Our births don't come so quiet –
Most lives run riot –
But the bud opens silently
And flower gives way to fruit.
So must we search.
For the stillness within the tree,
The silence within the root.”14

(‘Silent Birth’)

Ruskin's Nature poem ‘To The Indian Foresters’ is specially dedicated to moral philosophy. In it Ruskin Bond depicts how the foresters devote themself to the growth and survival of the forests. They have profound love for forests. The poem teaches us a moral lesson and that is, – the foresters do their best to make the forests ‘a sea of green’ still; they do not brag of what they have done for
them. They want no name and fame for serving the forests. Ruskin makes it clear through these lines:

"You are the quiet men who do not boast
Although you've done much more than most
To make this land a sea of green

Dear foresters, you have not sought for fame or favour,
Yours have been a love of labour.
Our thanks! Instead of desert sand
You've given us this green and growing land."\(^{15}\)

(‘To The Indian Foresters’)

Ruskin further adds that these forests provide us some important herbs which are used as medicines for the sick persons to recover from their sickness. These forests not only give herbs and medicines but also give shelter and food to animals and birds. Ruskin expresses this philosophy in the following lines:

"Without your help to Nature's thrust,
This land would be a bowl of dust.
A land without its wealth
Must suffer a decline in health
For herbs and plants all need green cover

(157)
Before they help the sick recover.
And we need trees to hold together
Beasts, and birds of every feather.
And leaves to help the air smell sweet.
All this and more is no mean feat.\(^{16}\) 

(‘To The Indian Foresters’) 

Ruskin Bond has a keen observation of finding some or the other moral lesson from everything in Nature. In his very short poem ‘The Fern’ Ruskin observes the dauntlessness of the feeble maidenhair fern. It remains firm even surrounded by water. The poet draws a moral lesson that one should also remain firm and happy even when one is surrounded by troubled waters. For achieving this great quality he prays to God to give him quiet patience so that he may live a long life even among the rocks. Ruskin reveals the fact that if God gives him quiet patience, he is prepared to live happily in all the circumstances. Ruskin makes it clear in the following lines :-

“The slender maidenhair fern grows firm on a rock
While all around her the water swirls and chatters

When I'm surrounded by troubled waters, Lord,
Let me find within a rock to cling to,

(158)
And give me the quiet patience of the maidenhair
Who has learned to live with the rock.”¹⁷

(‘The Fern’)

Benevolence is the highest quality of a man. It should be the guideline of every human being. Ruskin Bond expresses the same moral philosophy in his very short poem ‘A Quiet Mind’. He prays to God to give him a quiet mind and a gentle voice not for his own sake but for the comfort of others. What he asks God for is not for his own use but it is for the advantage of others. He indites:—

“Lord, give me a quiet mind,
That I might listen;
A gentle tone of voice,
That I might comfort others.”¹⁸

(‘A Quiet Mind’)

Conveying the same moral philosophy in the very poem Ruskin further asks God to give him a sound sleep and healthy body so that he may go on in the right direction. This moral philosophy of Ruskin is the guiding principle of life also. He composes this moral philosophy in verses as follows:—
“A sound and healthy body
That I might share
In the joy of walking
And leaping and running,
And a good sense of direction
So I might know just where I'm going!”\textsuperscript{19}

(‘A Quiet Mind’)
CHAPTER-III (PART-III)

REFERENCES


11. Ruskin Bond: 'Dare To Dream', a poem from a collection of poems, 'A Little Night Music', Rupa Co. 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002, p. 35.


(IV) HUMAN LOVE AND SYMPATHY:

Ruskin is not only a poet of Nature, harmony between Man and Nature and moral philosophy but also a poet of human love and sympathy. In most of his poems Ruskin displays his high heart for small creatures and lowly people whom he is extremely in love with. Ruskin comes to believe that human nature is the mirror which, in its purest form can reflect the great blessings of Nature, namely fortitude, spiritual dignity, resolution, independence, goodness, sympathy, kindness etc. He also believes that Man is most happy and healthy when he lives close to the heart of Nature. Man has brought upon himself untold miseries and unhappiness by keeping him away from Nature. Life of towns or cities is artificial. So human nature can be found in its pure and original state in the poor who live in a simple, innocent, kind and sympathetic way in the lap of Nature. Keeping it in his mind Ruskin has composed several poems about simple people living in the countryside showing their real language and condition. Emotion and physical alienation is the main theme of Ruskin's poetry.

At one place in his non-fictinal book ‘Rain In The Mountains’ Ruskin displays his intense love for humanity and says, “Summer nights he rolled himself up in a thin blanket and slept on the ground, beside the dying embers of his fire. During the
winter, he waited until the last show was over, before retiring to the rickshaw coolies shed where there was some protection from the biting wind."

In the same book Ruskin shows his lament for humanity which is full of pathos when Ruskin expresses it – “Did he enjoy being alive? I wonder now. He was not a joyful person; but then neither was he miserable. I should think he was a genuine stoic, one of those who do not attach overmuch importance to themselves, who are emotionally uninvolved, content with their limitations, their dark corners. I wanted to get to know the old man better, to sound him out on the immense questions involved in roasting peanuts all his life; but it's too late now. The last time I visited the bazaar the dark corner was deserted; the old man had vanished; the coolies had carried him down to the cremation ground.

“He died in his sleep” said the teashop-owner. ‘He was very old’

Very old. Sufficient reason to die.

But that corner is very empty, very dark, and whenever I pass it I am haunted by visions of the old peanut vendor, troubled by the questions I failed to ask; and I wonder if he was really as indifferent to life as he appeared to be.”

(164)
In the fifth stanza of his narrative poem ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ Ruskin shows his profound love for Bansi, the tonga driver and Bansi’s love for his mistress. Ruskin likes Bansi for his frisky activities. He talks to him and goes on rides with him. Once Bansi had no money and he had to present something to his beloved. Ruskin lent him his pocket-money for the present because he did not want to shatter his feelings and ardent desire of presenting a gift to a beloved. This shows that Ruskin is, in fact, an apostle of love for human beings as is expressed by Ruskin, himself in the following lines:–

“- - - - - - - Bansi, tonga-driver,
Wore a yellow waistcoat and spat red
Betel-juice the entire width of the road.
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

When he took me for rides, he lost a fare.
That was his way - He once said, If a girl
Wants five rupees for a fix, bargain like hell
And then give six
It was the secret of his failure he claimed
To give away more than he owned.
And to prove it, he borrowed my pocket-money
In order to buy a present for his mistress.³

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)
In the same stanza of the same poem Ruskin shows a gardener's benevolence. Ruskin says that a gardener looks after the trees and also digs the graves. He feels sorry when he has to dig graves even when there is no season for dying of cholera. Here Ruskin expresses his sympathy for human beings which is full of pathos. This pathetic picture can be seen through the following lines:

"The gardener, who looked after the trees,
Also dug graves. One day
I found him working at the bottom of a new cavity.
'They never let me know in time,' he grumbled.
Last week I dug two graves, and now without warning,
Here's another. It isn't even the season for dying."4

('A Song For Lost Friends')

In the concluding lines of the same stanza of this poem Ruskin reveals his extreme love and kind-heartedness for the poor lepers. He takes pity on their ugly children. He makes them his friends. He plays marbles with them and wins most of their marbles. He takes these marbles with him to keep in mind their companionship. Though Ruskin's mother chides him for playing with leper boys. She takes him away in an insulting way and gives him a bath. She warns him against playing with them in future.
Still Ruskin has an affection for them in his heart. Ruskin reveals his humanity and brotherhood towards the leper boys in the following lines:

“I made friends with some.
And won most of their marbles,
And carried them home in my pockets.
One day my parents found me
Playing near the leper colony.
There was a big scene
My mother shouted at the lepers.
And they hung their heads as
   though it was all their fault.
And the children had nothing to say
I was taken home in disgrace
And told all about leprosy and given a bath.
My clothes were thrown away
And the servants wouldn't touch me for days”

(‘A Song For Lost Friend’)

In the sixth stanza of this very long poem Ruskin Bond introduces his kind and sympathetic nature towards a slim dark young boy named Manohar. He belongs to hills and used to work in a small hotel a few years ago. But now when he comes across
Ruskin, he tells him that he wants to go home. But his home is very far in the terrible hills. Therefore, Ruskin promises him to give him his company and says:–

“When I go home I'll take you with me
But we hadn't enough money.
So I sold my bicycle for thirty rupees.
And left a note in the dining room.
'Going away. Don't worry - (hoping they would)–
I'll come home
When I've grown up.”

(‘Song For Lost Friends’)

In this way Ruskin takes a lot of pity and sympathy for the boy and sells his own bicycle for thirty rupees. He sets out for the boy's home. He suffers very much on the way but he does not care for the sufferings and difficulties of the horrible route among hills. Then both of them cross the rushing waters of the Ganga. They spend a night at a wayside inn. It was extremely cold, yet they pass the whole night in the single blanket. This also shows Ruskin's love towards humanity as is mentioned in the following lines:–

“We took this route and spent a night –
At a wayside inn, wrapped tight
In the single blanket I'd brought along;
Even then we were cold
It was not the season for pilgrim.”

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In the same stanza Ruskin shows his love and keen interest towards mule-drivers who were also enjoying in the same inn in which Ruskin was staying with his friend, Manohar to pass the night. When Manohar retires into a sound sleep, Ruskin enjoys the talkings of the mule-drivers over the hubble and bubble (Hookahs) as is revealed by Ruskin here :

“The mule-drivers slept in one room.
And talked all night over hookahs
Manohar slept bravely, but I lay watching
A bright star, through the tiny window.”

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

The next morning Ruskin does not give up the company of his friend Manohar even though he knows that the way hence after is all the more boring and difficult. He had in his mind the loneliness and helplessness of his friend. Therefore, he starts with him to get at the target. This account is really sympathetic. And it displays his profound love for human beings specially for the people who deserve our sympathy and assistance.
In his poem ‘Boy In A Blue Pullover’ Ruskin denotes his love and sympathy towards a boy in a faded blue pullover. One day Ruskin lost his one rupee coin. A small boy in a faded pullover found it. He was very happy to find this coin and showed this coin to Ruskin. Ruskin asked him what he would do with the coin. The boy told him that he would buy a buckle for his belt. Ruskin thought that it was the boy's pressing need and this coin could meet the need of the boy. Therefore, Ruskin kept mum and did not claim over his coin. Ruskin did so out of great sympathy for the small boy. This shows Ruskin's tremendous love and sympathy for human beings as Ruskin denotes it in the following lines:-

“What's up? I said, why are you happy?
He showed me the nickel rupee-coin.
I found it on the road : he said
And he held it to the light
That he might see it shining bright.
‘And how will you spend it,
Small boy in blue pullover?
I'll buy–
I'll buy a buckle for my belt!
Slim boy, smart boy,
Would buy a buckle for his belt .....
Coin clutched in his hot hand,

He ran off laughing, bright.

The coin I'd lost an hour ago,

But better his that night."

(‘Boy In A Blue Pullover’)

In his poem ‘Hill Station’ Ruskin reveals a great love and affection for shepherds and woodmen. When Ruskin feels quite all alone at the hill station, these shepherds and woodmen give him company to remove his loneliness and entice him to reside at the hill station. Ruskin expresses this feeling of love in the following lines :-

“There is nothing to keep me here,

Only these mountains of silence

And the gentle reserve of shepherd and woodmen

Who know me as one who walks among trees.”

(‘Hill Station’)

Ruskin's very short poem ‘Love’s Sad Song’ displays his romantic attitude for human beings. In this poem he reveals his love for a sweet little girl. He loves her for her innocence, beauty, cleverness, smartness and other noble qualities. He justifies himself as a bad boy in her comparison and greatness. It is his
love for the little girl that he finds all noble qualities in her. Ruskin reveals his love for the girl in these lines:

“There's a sweet little girl lives down the lane,
And she's so pretty and I'm so plain,
She's clever and smart and all things good,
And I'm the bad boy of the neighbourhood.
But I'd be her best friend for ever and a day
If only she'd smile and look my way”

(‘Love's Sad Songs’)

Ruskin's similar feelings of love and romance are expressed in his poem ‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’. This poem is specially dedicated to Binya Devi whom he loves very much. He keeps his company with her in the lap of nature enjoying the beauties of nature as well as the beauty of his beloved. He is so much in love with her that her touch removes all the darkness and thinks that she is brighter than the sun. Ruskin reveals this profound love for Binya Devi in the following lines:

“Your face streamed April rain
As you climbed the steep hill
Calling the white cow home.
You seemed very tiny
On the windswept mountainside;
A twist of hair lay
Strung across your forehead
And your torn blue skirt
Clung to your tender thighs.
You smiled through the blind white rain,
And gave me the salt kiss of your lips
Salt mingled with raindrop and mint.
And left me there, where I had come to fetch you.”

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)

Ruskin displays his love for Binya Devi not only in his poems but also in his novels and essays. In his non-fictional book ‘Rain In The Mountains’ Ruskin expresses the same feeling of love for Binya when he narrates it ____. “Look at Binya – we all look at Binya, who is perched very prettily on the wall – ‘she hasn't seen more than two pictures in her life!’

‘I'll take her to the pictures,’ I offer.

Binya gives me a radiant smile. She'd love to go to the pictures, but her mother won't allow it.

Prem relents and takes his wife to the pictures.

Binya's mother has a bad attack of hiccups. Serves her right, for stealing my walnuts and not letting me take Binya to the pictures.”

(173)
Ruskin's this romantic feeling shows him not only a poet of love but also a poet of romance and ranks him with a great Romantic poet John Keats. But Ruskin is not so great in the field of Romanticism as Keats has established himself in English Romantic Poetry.

In his poem ‘View From the Window’ Ruskin shows his love for human beings even at the time of illness. In it Ruskin points out that once he was laid down with fever and was confined in bed. He was feeling a bit lonely but the sight of natural surrounding which he could enjoy through his window gave him some pleasure. In the meantime he catches the sight of a boy riding a mule on the mountain trace. He is very happy and waves his hand to receive his salutation. He then makes a promise to him to ride his mule when he will get well. Ruskin displays his love for the boy in these lines:

“A boy on a mule passes by on
the rough mountain track.
He sees my face at the window and waves to me.
I wave back to him.
When I'm better I'll ask him to let me ride his mule”\textsuperscript{14}

(‘View From The Window’)
Ruskin's poem ‘Garhwal-Himalaya’, also shows his love for human beings. In this poem, he describes the working of the people of Garhwal Himalaya showing their social and economical condition. The description of the herdsmen, the pale women and their husbands working with them in the plains of Garhwal hills, the hungry children with their mothers reveals Ruskin's profound love for them displaying a keen observation of life and its activities. Ruskin expresses his love for the people of Garhwal in the following lines:

“Where the herdsmen pass, their lean sheep cropping
Short winter grass.
And clinging to the sides of the mountains
The small stone houses of Garhwal,
Their thin fields of calcinated soil torn
From the old spirit-haunted rocks.
Pale women plough, they laugh at the thunder,
As their men go down to the plains:”  

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In the same poem Ruskin also shows his sympathy for the children of the Garhwal Himalaya as is expressed in the following lines:

(175)
"There is hunger of children at noon; and yet

There are those who sing of the sunset

And the gods and glories of Himaal

Forgetting no one eats sunsets.

Wonder, then, at the absence of old men;"^{16}

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In his poem ‘We Must Love Someone’ Ruskin expresses his ardent desire for having love for human beings. He writes that our purpose of living on this earth can be justified only when we love someone or the other otherwise, our life is meaningless. Without a touch of love, there is no existence of life at all. In the absence of love this life would be full of gloom and dejection. Thus, Ruskin’s this poem reveals his reality as a lover of humanity as well as the animal-world. Ruskin expresses this feeling of love in the following lines :-

“We must love someone

If we are to justify

Our presence on this earth.

We must keep loving all our days,

Some one, anyone, anywhere

Outside our selves;
Without the touch of love
There is no life, and we must fade away.”\(^1\)

(‘We Must Love Someone’)

In his philosophical poem ‘Don't Go To War, My Son’, Ruskin also expresses his ardent love for human life. He does not want that there should be any battle among the human beings because battles bring destruction of lives. After the battles there is everything deserted and the whole earth becomes a heath and hell. Through this short poem Ruskin appears to make an appeal to all those countries which are always ready to fight one another for no genuine cause. Ruskin reveals this love in the following lines:-

“Blood dying in the fierce sun
Vultures feasting on the dead
Mangled limbs and severed heads
Battles lost or battles won
Must end in madness when they're done.
Don't go to war, my son.”\(^2\)

(‘Don't Go To War, My Son’)

In his poems Ruskin Bond shows his love not only for lowly people but also for the small creatures. In ‘A Frog Screams’ Ruskin derives a feeling of love and sympathy for frog that is struggling
for life because it is caught by a snake. Taking pity on the frog, Ruskin saves its life from the clutches of the snake with the help of two sticks and Ruskin describes this sympathetic feeling in the following lines.

“I couldn't bear that hideous cry.

And taking two sharp sticks,

I made the twisting snake disgorge the frog.

Who hopped quite spry out of the snake's mouth

And sailed away on a floating log.

Pleased with the outcome,

I released the green grass-snake,

Stood back and spoke aloud.”

(‘A Frog Screams’)

In ‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’ Ruskin Bond reveals the fact that he does not disdain the small creatures like bug. On the contrary he has great love for them because these creatures are the source of delight for him. He even thanks God to create such small creatures in the universe. Ruskin expresses these views in the following words :-

“No, no I don't despise,

These creatures made for my delight.
A kind Creator had my needs in mind
I thank you, Lord, for human kind.”²⁰

(‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’)

In ‘The Bat’ Ruskin introduces his extreme love for the bat when it enters his room every now and then because Ruskin thinks that the arrival of the bat gives him company to remove his loneliness at night. Ruskin reveals it in the following lines:

“At the foot of my bed,
I let him be
On lonely nights, even a crazy bat
Is company.”²¹

(‘The Bat’)

Ruskin’s love for small creatures can be seen in his poem ‘Rain’. During the rains, he observes several sights in Nature, i.e. the change of atmosphere and its effect on small creatures. The small creatures like the lizard and birds enjoy the rainy season in their own way. After rains, when the sun rises, a small brown lizard comes out of its hole and enjoys basking in the sun. The lizard, here displays its own way of living. During the rain, the birds also entertain in their own style. They have a bath in the rain water. This keen observation of small creatures' activities displays his
love for them. Ruskin draws this beautiful scenery of small creatures entertaining the rain in the conveying lines:

"After weeks of heat and dust
How welcome is the rain.

Collects in a puddle in the middle of the lawn—
The birds come to bathe.

When the sun comes out
A lizard crawls up from a crack in a rock.
Small brown lizard
Basking in the sun
You too have your life to live
You race to run."\(^{22}\)

(‘Rain’)

The same observation and his love for small creatures is seen in his poem ‘There are In My Garden’. In this poem Ruskin observes the merriment of the bees, butterflies, ants and birds. All these creatures are enjoying the beauty of the garden in their own way. But Ruskin enjoys the sights to satisfy his love for them. In this poem Ruskin shows his love not only for small creatures but also for the human beings. He draws a very beautiful picture of ‘a laughing boy’ enjoying the beautiful garden which is full of
beautiful flowers and small creatures as has been mentioned in
opening lines of this poem. This beautiful description can be
illustrated in following lines.

“There are in my garden
the burnt bronze petals
of shattered marigolds
spears of goldenrod
bending to the load
of pillaging bees
two armoured lizards
a map butterfly
and a division of ants - - - -
A small yellow bird
attacks the last wild cherry blossom
and a laughing boy
stands over new grown clover”^23

(‘There Are In My Garden’)


(V) **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

Ruskin's thematic quality is not only limited to Nature, harmony between Man and Nature, moral philosophy, human love and sympathy but autobiographical note is also a part of his thematic quality. His each and every poem is replete with autobiographical references. Poetry, to be autobiographical, must record the factual experiences in the life of the poet, even if they are occasionally blended with imagination. His poems reveal his likes and dislikes, his tastes and temperament, and his observations and reactions. He uses poems as an instrument of self-revelation. At every step of his poems he visits to his real world-life. No aspect related to his personality is untouched or without colour. The past, like the present of his self offers him a fund of inexhaustable matter, which he freely exploits. Ruskin's poetry reveals many glimpses of his own life and personality. Through his poems we are introduced to his close friends, colleagues, the members of his family and his relations. A large part of his life history is related in these poems and with the addition of a few names and dates a full autobiography may be constructed from them. Poetry to Ruskin is, indeed, a means of revealing the self of the poet.
‘As A Boy’ is an autobiographical poem of Ruskin Bond. He reflects on his boyhood life in it. He reveals that as a boy Ruskin stood on the edge of the railway-cutting to enjoy the sight of a train passing through a dark tunnel in the forest. He used to see hundreds of people travelling by the train and took delight in biding them goodbye. The irony on the part of Ruskin was that he could no longer enjoy this sight and had to leave the place for some other one. But the train could not forget the boy and remained tracing him out in cities, villages besides the sea, in the mountains and other distance places whenever it passed through them. Even now when Ruskin sees a train coming round the bend of hill, he feels the same sort of innocent wonder that he felt as a boy:–

“As a boy I stood on the edge of the railway-cutting
Outside the dark tunnel, my hands touching
The hot rails, waiting for them to tremble
At the coming of the noonday train.
The whistle of the engine hung on the forest's silence.
Then out of the tunnel, a green-gold dragon
Came plunging, thundering past–
Out of the tunnel, out of the dark.
And the train rolled on, every day
Hundreds of people coming or going or running away—

Goodbye, goodbye !!

(‘As A Boy’)

‘View From The Window’ is out and out an autobiographical poem. In it Ruskin recalls those days when once he was laid up with fever and was confined in his bed by the side of a window. Through this window he took delight in looking at the cherry leaves, wild black-berry bushes, two mynah birds building a nest in a hole and making a lot of noise, the call of the hawk-cuckoo which is also known as the ‘fever bird’ in a spruce and also a small squirrel which climbed his window everyday till he remained confined in bed due to fever and Ruskin gave it crumbs to eat as he writes in the following lines :

“A small squirrel climbs on the window sill
He's been coming every day since I have been ill,
and I give him crumbs from my tray.”

(‘View From the Window’)

From his window Ruskin also took fancy of a boy riding his mule towards the rough mountain track and waving his hands towards Ruskin and it made him forget his illness.
In ‘Cherry Tree’ Ruskin reveals autobiographical note. He points out that he sowed a seed of cherry into the ground and watered it only once and then forgot about it. But after a few months in the month of May Ruskin found a small cherry tree growing there that was either eaten by the goats or was cut off by the grass-cutter. Then one day Ruskin had to leave for Kashmir, when he came back from there, he found cherry tree quite young six feet in height. It bore a bright ripe fruit also. Ruskin laid on the grass and took delight in looking at the cherry tree. It was a fountain of joy for him. Ruskin expresses it in the following lines:—

“Eight years have passed
Since I placed by cherry seed in the grass
‘Must have a tree of my own,’ I said—
And watered it once and went to bed
And forgot; but cherries have a way of growing
Though no one’s caring very much or knowing,

I lay on the grass, at ease,
Looked up through leaves, at the blue
Blind sky, at the finches as they flew
And flitted through the drappled green,
While bees in an ecstasy drank
Of nectar from each bloom, and the sun sank.3

('Cherry Tree')

‘It Isn’t Time That’s Passing’ expresses Ruskin Bond’s autobiographical element and that is what he did in his boyhood and manhood lingered in his mind. Once he had a meeting with a black bird during the long summers. He liked this bird and its melodious song. He remembers:

“Black bird on the wing bird of the forest shadows.
Black rose in the long ago summer,
This was your song
It isn't time that's passing by,
It is you and I.”4

('It Isn't Time That's Passing’)

In ‘Parts of Old Dehra’ Ruskin recalls the recollections of his childhood. Once he was enjoying the evening sitting on the veranda of the White House (a hotel which was built when he was a boy there) and points out that during his childhood, there was greenery all around his house. There was a peepal tree, a mango grove where flying foxes appeared time and again. But unfortunately all these green trees and plants came to an end as, men built houses into factories. Even the rivers have turned into
ugly form. They are full of silt, but Ruskin is hopeful that Nature makes up for the loss that man has done. Mark how beautifully he puts this fact before us:

“Parts of old Dehra remain
A peepal tree I knew
And flying foxes
In a mango grove
And here and there
A moss-encrusted wall
Old bungalows
Gone to seed
And giving way
To concrete slabs,
A garden town's become a city
And the peole faceless
As they pass or rather rush
Hell-bent
From place of work
To crowded tenement.
So change must come,
Fields make way for factories.”

(‘Parts of Old Dehra’)
In his autobiographical poem ‘Walnut Tree’ Ruskin Bond reveals reminiscences of his childhood and tells that he had great liking for walnuts. He could not wait even for their ripening. One day he made his fellow boy drop the twenty three walnuts. Even though they were raw, Ruskin cracked them and ate them up. This shows Ruskin's liking for fruits.

In his poem ‘Walnut Tree Revisited’ which may be called the second part of ‘Walnut Tree’ Ruskin appears to be extremely in love with the walnut tree. He visited this tree in all the seasons. In autumn, he found it bare. Then in September he found this tree glittering. Then he composed some beautiful lines as he imagined in his boyhood about the tree :

“Outside the closed window,
Touched no more by feet and questing fingers,
But turning its own fingers
To the stanting winter sun.
Not one leaf left, where hundreds
Glittered like spears int the forest of September.”

(‘Walnut Tree Revisited’)

The poet also promises the tree to visit it when the parrots bring shrill portents of another spring. He writes :–
"But I will wait until the parrots bring
Shrill portents of another spring;
(And I will love you with the same sweet pain,
If you and summer care to visit me again)."

('Walnut Tree Revisited')

Ruskin's poem ‘Boy In A Blue Pullover’ is also autobiographical one. In this poem Ruskin gives a true account of his boyhood days when he used to take pity on the poor boys. He tells how a poor boy clad in a faded pullover was happy to find a nickel one-rupee coin. Although this rupee belonged to Ruskin. He had lost it, yet he did not reveal this fact to the boy simply because he did not want to discourage the happy mood of the boy. Ruskin asked him what he would do with the money. The boy told him that he would purchase a buckle for his belt. Ruskin thought that it was the pressing necessity of the boy which he wanted to fulfil; Therefore, Ruskin let him go scot free to enjoy and fulfil what he really wanted. Ruskin reveals this autobiographical incident in the following lines :-

"Boy in a faded blue pullover,
Poor boy, thin, smiling boy,
Ran down the road shouting,
Singing flinging his arms wide.

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I stood in the way and stopped him

What's up? I said, ‘Why are you happy?

He showed me the nickel rupee-coin.

I found it on the road’, he said.

And he held it to the light

That he might see it shining bright.

And how will you spend it,

Small boy in blue pullover?

I'll buy –

I'll buy a buckle for my belt!.”

(‘Boy In A Blue Pullover’)

In his autobiographical poem ‘Lost’ Ruskin gives an account of his travel to London. Actually Ruskin did not want to leave for England, still he had to go there, for his father wanted him to go there. In this poem he tells that there he did not see the scenery which he had expected like those of his own nativeland. To his satisfaction he saw the tea-slop and a cow at rest which presented a village scenery. This poem not only shows Ruskin’s autobiographical note but also his great love for his motherland including its natural surroundings. Ruskin describes it in the following lines :-
“I boarded the big ship bound for the West.
The clean white liner.
In the noon-day heat
Coolies thronged the sun-drenched pier.
yet I saw only
The village I had left,
And a boat at rest
On the river's shallow water
In the shade of the flowering
Long red-fingered poinsettia.
I saw not the big waves
But the ripple of running
Water in the reeds.
We came to London, lost in November mist:
In an ash-grey dawn at Tilbury dock
I longed for the warmth of a kiss
of sunlight.”

(‘Lost’)

In another autobiographical poem ‘Banyan Tree’ Ruskin explains some of his recollections of his childhood. He had great love for trees especially for the banyan tree. Which was in his own ‘out house’ on ‘the melon ground’. He used to stroll in the
faded garden of his father's home. There he found the same banyan
tree hidden by a dark green wall of ‘aerial roots’. The poet touched
the tree out of the affection. To his surprise, he felt the tree singing
for him. This is his best autobiographical poem which reveals his
great love for trees. Ruskin recalls it in the following lines :-

“I remember you well, old banyan tree –
As you stood there, spreading quietly
Over the broken wall.
While adults slept, I crept away
Down the broad veranda steps, around
The out house and the melon-ground
Into the shade of afternoon - - - - - -.
Those summer in India no one stirred.”

(‘Banyan Tree’)

In his poem ‘The Bat’ Ruskin introduces an account of his
childhood days. According to his experience, the bat swoop down
only to take some insect for their food. A bat used to come through
his window into his house. This bat appeared to be different from
others. Sometimes it settled upside down at the foot of his bed,
and Ruskin let it lay there in order to have its company. Ruskin
writes it in the following lines :-

(195)
“But there’s a bat I know
Who flies so low
He skims the floor;
He does not enter at the window
But flies in at the door,
Does stunts beneath the furniture.

At the foot of my bed,
I let him be
On lonely nights, even a crazy bat
Is company.”

(‘The Bat’)

Ruskin’s ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ is also an autobiographical poem. In this poem Ruskin draws all the beautiful natural scenes of Garhwal Himalaya which he enjoyed in his childhood. In addition to these natural surroundings, Ruskin also portrays the lowly people of Garhwal Himalaya as herdsmen, shepherds, ploughmen and women with their pet animals. Ruskin would enjoy the company of these rustics, for these people were not only the part and parcel of his pastime but also a part of Ruskin’s thematic quality as we have described in the preceding part of this chapter entitled human love and sympathy. But we can also mention it as

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an autobiographical poem because all these incidents also show the autobiographical elements of Ruskin's life. The following lines can be given in support of this statement: -

“Deep in the crouching mist, lie the mountains.
Climbing the mountains are forests
Of rhododendron, spruce and deodar–
Trees of God, we call them–soughing
In the wind from the passes of Garhwal;
And the snow-leopard moans softly
Where the herdsmen pass, their lean sheep cropping
Short winter grass.
And clining to the sides of the mountains.”12

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

The longest poem ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ by Ruskin can be placed among the epic poems. This poem is through and through an autobiographical poem. It consists of seven long stanzas and every stanza reveals the recollections of his boyhood. At the very outset of the poem Ruskin gives the sum and substance of the autobiographical note in a single sentence. The sentence is:-

“The past is always with us,
for it feeds the present - - - - ”13

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)
In the first stanza of this poem Ruskin points out how he sought pleasure in looking the train coming out of a tunnel with a thunder voice and enjoyed the sight everyday waving hands to the travellers. This sight is still lingering in his mind as he remembers:–

“As a boy I stood on the edge of the railway-cutting,
Outside the dark tunnel, my hands touching.”

(A Song For Lost Friends)

In the second stanza he talks about his short journeys with his father to natural surroundings or ruins of old forts and palaces near the ‘tomb of Humayun’ and also adds that some years ago there used to be seven cities in existence. In the same stanza Ruskin gives a glimpse of his family life and separation of his father from his mother. Ruskin always pondered over the matter that his father took him to different natural surroundings to give him pleasure but he never talked of bringing his mother back to him and it pinched him at heart. One day his father asked him to leave for England the next year after the war is over but unfortunately his father died the same year and Ruskin had to go to his mother and step-father at Dehra where he enjoyed Seth Hari Kishore's guava garden. He mentions this garden in the following lines:–

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“One day I slipped into the guava orchard next door—
It really belonged to Seth Hari Kishore
Who'd gone to the Ganga on a pilgrimage—
The guavas were ripe and ready for boys to steal
(Always sweeter when stolen)
And a bare leg thrust at me as I climbed.
There's only room for one, came a voice
I looked up at a boy who had black berry eyes
And guava juice on his chin, grabbed at him
And we both tumbled out of the tree”\(^{15}\)

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In the third stanza Ruskin introduces his meeting with his new friend in the beautiful mustard field and also the promise which he kept to him to meet each other when they (Ruskin and his friend) would grow into men and also remembers the day when he visited a movie, ‘Gone With The Wind’ with his new friend. The movie was finished late at night so Ruskin had to go with his friend to his house and for the first time he had to sleep without his father at night. The next morning when he rose up, he saw that his parents had arrived there by a car. They were very much angry with Ruskin for staying out. They carried him home without letting him have the breakfast which had been served by his friend. This event took to Ruskin's heart.
In the fourth stanza Ruskin refreshes his recollections with a banyan tree. He also called it his first tutor as well as his friend of the lonely. Then he tells about his companionship with Bansi, a tonga-man who took him for rides. He remembers a very important event and that was the tonga-driver, his new friend lost his fare-trip which could earn him a lot of money. So he borrowed Ruskin's pocket money in order to purchase a present for his mistress. Along with it he gives an important piece of advice:

"A man who fails well is better than one who succeeds badly."16

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In the fifth stanza of this poem the poet recollects the miserable and humble life of a gardener who also digs graves as we have already discussed while describing Ruskin's human love and sympathy. The poet then remembers his friendship with leper boys. Although his mother strictly warned him against playing with the leper children. One day he was dragged home for playing with leper-children. He was forced by his mother to take bath so that he might not catch leprosy.

In the sixth stanza Ruskin gives an account of his friendship with a boy named Manohar. Ruskin sold his bicycle for thirty rupees to help him go his home. He also gave him company all the
way long his home so that he might not feel uncomfortable in the journey on such a rough and tough way. Ruskin remembers his meeting with his friend, Manohar in following lines:

“I forgot how we met
But I remember walking the dusty roads
With this gentle boy, who held my hand
And told me about his home, his mother,
His village, and the little river
At the bottom of the hill where the water
Ran blue and white and wonderful,
‘When I go home, I'll take you with me.’
But we hadn't enough money.
So I sold my bicycle for thirty rupees.”17

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In the seventh stanza Ruskin throws light upon the life of the poor people living in the Himalayas. These people though poor enjoyed the sun-shine and sun-set without showing their poverty and miserable condition. On them, there is no effect of a respected oldman's advice in respect of bread and butter, for they have completely devoted their attention towards the sunsets as Ruskin remembers in the following lines:–
“I remember his wisdom.
And I remember faces.
For it's faces I remember best.
The people were poor, and the patriarch said:
'I have heard it told that the sun
Sets in splendour in Himalaya—
But who can eat sunsets?’"\textsuperscript{18}

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

Thus the whole poem is an account of Ruskin's life history. In this poem Ruskin has drawn all the incidents of his life in a very beautiful poetic style.

In this way through these above discussed poems we get abundant details about Ruskin's friends and relations with the beautiful description of natural scenes to give originality to his autobiographical poems.
REFERENCES


