Poetic Techniques

(i) Imagination
(ii) Simplicity
(iii) Lyricism
(iv) Symbolism
Now let us have the privilege to reveal Ruskin's poetic technique as the fourth chapter. Good poetry is a fruit of the poet's talent and technique. Talent is natural ability for composing poems. It may be described as 'a special gift of God', and it is a part of genius. Perhaps it can not be produced by human efforts. It is a special inborn faculty which is consummate, intellectual and highly creative. If a poet is a genius, his poetic talent is also a genius. Technique means the technical skill and art that means the method of representing artistic impression in verse. A great poet employs several methods to represent his poetic ideas in verse. So we may take for granted that Ruskin's poetic art involves a good number of techniques. He is a great artist and his poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions. Like Shelly he breathes poetry as flowers breathe fragrance. That the poetic vision and literary impulse behind Ruskin's poetry informed by a genuinely Indian note is beyond doubt. His shorter poems give unmistakable proof of his powerful sensibility and unfettered imagination. But his extant poetry not to talk of future poetic
greatness which as foreshadows, is as much remarkable for his mastery of poetic technique as for note of Indianess. He uses Indian imagery in English idioms and the tone is conversational, honest and direct. Ruskin is a superb artist in using imagination, simplicity, lyricism and symbolism, so the poetic genius of Ruskin is full of — (i) Imagination (ii) Simplicity (iii) Lyricism and (iv) Symbolism.

(I) **IMAGINATION**:

The language of poetry, like the stuff of poetry comes from the imagination. The imagination operates freely, whether upon the visualized objects which are its material or upon the language which is its principal instrument, only after there has already operated a selecting faculty. The language of poetry is, to the language really spoken by men, exactly as the objects which the imagination visualizes are to their correlates in the sphere of sense. Ruskin's imagination is highly constructive or sublime in the sense that it is capable of harmonising ideas among themselves, as well as, with the beauty of spontaneous expression. He converts his ideas into living beauties by the magic of his powerful imagination by clothing them with sweet and harmonious expressions. He produces lines of haunting beauty by his harmonious blending of words, music and imagination and above all, by almost inveriable
turning his theme and verses to the inevitable spiritual purpose. The luxuriant abundances of imagery enriches the beauty of his poems. His imagery is largely drawn from the world of Nature – different seasons, heavenly bodies, different times of the day, flowers, trees and birds. These images reveal his neo-romantic spirit and concern for the infinite and the vague.

In the fifth stanza of his very long poem ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ Ruskin Bond produces a very high imagination. He used to play with some lepers. But his mother did not let him play with them. She chided him severely and dragged him home in disgrace. He was given a bath, his clothes were thrown away and even his servants did not touch him at all. Here, Ruskin's imagination began to prevail upon his mind. He put's away all the marbles which he had won from the lepers. He placed them in his step-father's cupboard with the thought that he could be effeted with leprosy. Ruskin expresses this imagination in the following lines:

“So I took the marbles I'd won.
And put them in my step-father's cupboard
Hoping he'd catch leprosy from them.”

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In the seventh stanza of the same poem Ruskin once again displays high imagination that is if he were a village boy grazing
sheep and cattle, he might not have been able to go through the works of William Shakespeare. Though he was living in the hills yet, he never missed home in Dehra where the works of Shakespeare were lying in dust without any protection because he was enjoying, the beauties of Nature and the poor people living there. His imagination in this respect may be appreciated from the lines given below:–

“Could I have grown up a village boy.
Grazing sheep and cattle, while the Collected Works
Of W. Shakespeare lay gathering dust.
In Dehra? - - - - - - - - - -”

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

Ruskin Bond has exhibited a very high imagination in his poem, ‘So Beautiful The Night’. In it he imagines that the trees are stretching their arms in the dark and whispering to the moon so as to say that they need her silvery light. Ruskin indites it in the following lines:–

“I'm watching stars from my windows.
The trees are stretching their arms in the dark.”

(‘So Beautiful The Night’)
Then Ruskin imagines that the oak trees are walking and marching over the moonlit mountains. This sight would be extremely charming if really it happens so. Ruskin imagines it in the following lines:

"But if the trees could walk, Lord
What a wonderful sight it would be –
Armies of pines and firs and oaks
Marching over the moonlit mountains."^4

(‘So Beautiful The Night’)

Ruskin has a profound love for gardens and had a dream of possessing a garden of his own. Bacon also had the same liking. So he wrote an essay ‘Of Gardens’ because he wanted a methodical garden. But Ruskin liked a garden a little untidy, unplanned, full of surprises. It was his liking that inspired him to write a poem on it. ‘There Are In My Garden’ is the poem which he composed out of his great liking for gardens. This poem is the outcome of his imagination to have his own garden and he imagines it in the following lines:

="There are in my garden
The burnt bronze petals
of shattered marigolds
spears of golden rod"
bending to the load
of pillaging bees
two armoured lizards
a map butterfly
and a division of ants.....”

(‘There Are In My Garden’)

The same feeling Ruskin expresses in his non-fictional book ‘Rain In The Mountains’ when he writes—, “But I have always had this dream of possessing a garden of my own. Not a very formal garden – certainly not the ‘stately home’ type, with its pools and fountains and neat hedges as described in such detail by Bacon in his essay ‘Of Gardens’. Bacon had a methodical mind, and he wanted a methodical garden. I like a garden to be a little untidy, unplanned, full of surprises rather like my own muddled mind, which gives even me a few surprises at times.”

Ruskin Bond's short poem ‘Listen’ is also full of imagination. He imagines the different types of happenings in Nature. The wind in the trees, summer grass's singing, dew's falling, moans climbing upon the sky, rattling and humming sound of pebbles, and trembling leaves all appear to be very mysterious and surprising to Ruskin as he imagines :—

(211)
“Listen to the night wind in 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.”

(‘Listen’)

In his poem ‘Phantom Lover’ Ruskin produces a very high imagination about a lover. It is his imagination that lover is a phantom that comes and disappears stealthily in the dark or in the night. Nobody knows about a lover's appearance and disappearance. Mark how suggestively Ruskin refers to his imagination in these lines :

“Night upon night
When the world's asleep.
You come to me,
Our tryst to keep.
Held captive, in thrall,
As the stars look down,
Body and soul

(212)
From night unto dawn.
Silent you come
And softly you go.
Ours is a love
That none must know.”

(‘Phantom Lover’)

In his short poem ‘A Quiet Mind’ Ruskin Bond introduces a high imagination. He asks God for giving him a quiet mind, a gentle tone of voice and a sound and healthy body. He asks for these things with the imagination that if he gets them from God, he will be able to listen to all that is good; the gentle voice will please all those who come in contact with him and a sound and healthy body will give him the real joys and pleasures of life. Healthy body as he imagines will enable him to run in the right direction, knowing where he is going. Ruskin expresses this imagination in the following lines:

“Lord, give me a quiet mind,
That I might listen;
A gentle tone of voice,
That I might comfort others;
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!\(^9\)

(‘A Quiet Mind’)

In the poem ‘Walnut Tree Revisited’ Ruskin has given a very high imagination. He imagines that the visit of the parrot will indicate to him that walnut tree has grown with its freshness. Then he will see the tree with affection to enjoy the summer season as is revealed in the following lines :-

“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).”\(^10\)

(‘Walnut Tree Revisited’)

In his another Nature poem ‘Banyan Tree’ Ruskin introduces a high imagination in the last lines. The poet had a lot of affection for trees. Banyan tree is his favourite tree. He visits this tree everyday and finds a lot of satisfaction. One day when he shyly touched the old and rugged banyan tree, to his surprise, he felt that the tree was singing a song to him. It is the highest imagination
on the part of a human being that he listens a musical song from a
tree. Ruskin expresses this imagination in the following lines :-

“Intruder in your pillared den, I stood
And shyly touched your old and rugged wood
And as my hands explored you, giant tree,
I heard you singing!”\textsuperscript{11}

(‘Banyan Tree’)

In his small poem ‘The Fern’ Ruskin Bond indites a few
lines on his imagination. He prays to God to provide him a rock
to which he may cling in the times of troubled waters. It is his
imagination that this rock on which fern grows would give him
strength to face all the difficulties as the fern remains firm even
surrounded by the whirling waters. It is still other imagination of
the poet that he will get the quiet patience from the maidenhair
fern surviving on the rock. Ruskin composes it in the following
lines :-

“When I’m surrounded by troubled waters, Lord,
Let me find within a rock to cling to,
And give me the quiet patience of the maidenhair
Who has learned to live with the rock.”\textsuperscript{12}

(‘The Fern’)

(215)
In the poem ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ Ruskin Bond introduces some imagination. It is his imagination that there are some rocks in Garhwal Himalaya which are still haunted by the evil spirits, still the poor women who look pale due to weakness, work there without any fear of evil-spirits; On the contrary they laugh at the thunder and even sing songs in praise of the Himalaya. Ruskin shows this imagination in the following lines:

“From the old spirit-haunted rocks.
Pale women plough, they laugh at the thunder,
As their men go down to the plains:
Little grows on the beautiful mountains
in the east wind.”¹³

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In his a little longer poem ‘Lost’ Ruskin Bond is lost in an imagination. When he lends on the earth of London in the month of November, he imagines that in the month of November which is full of mist, he will enjoy ‘a kiss of sunlight’. It is the call of his heart and his heart felt desire. Ruskin imagines it in the lines as follows:-

“We came to London, lost in November mist:

In an ash - grey dawn at Tilbury dock

(216)
I longed for the warmth of a kiss
Of sunlight.”\textsuperscript{14}

(‘Lost’)

Imagination is the distinguishing part of Ruskin's poetry and he uses it in almost all his poems. In his poems he has employed whatsoever he has imagined. The word ‘dragon’ is also a part of his imagination. So he has used this word as a symbol in his several poems. In some of his poems Ruskin shows this word ‘dragon’ both as symbol and imagination. In his poem ‘As A Boy’ Ruskin imagines that ‘a green-gold dragon’ is coming out of the tunnel but this is not ‘a green-gold dragon’ but ‘a running engine of the train’. Ruskin uses this imagination in the following lines :-

“As a boy I stood on the edge of the railway cutting,

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.”\textsuperscript{15}

(‘As a Boy’)

In his non-fictional book ‘Rain In the Mountains’, Ruskin clearly shows the imaginative word dragon revealing his real
feeling about this word – “I turned and ran to my father. ‘A
dragon!’ I shouted. There's a dragon coming out of its cave!’

“Since then, steam engines and dragons have always inspired
the same sort of feelings in me – wonder and awe and delight. I
would like to see a real dragon one day, green and gold and –
because I have always preferred the ‘reluctant’ sort – rather shy
and gentle; but until that day comes, I comes, I shall be content
with steam engines.”16
REFERENCES


(II) **SIMPLICITY** :

Simplicity is the key-note of Ruskin's poetry which leaves an unending impression on the heart and mind of his readers. His simplicity is quite free from self-interests and ambition. It provides spirit of soothing, sweet music, tender grace and worth of marching forward with pride. A very fine sense of word values, a musical perfection of their expressive force, give them an appropriateness, a freshness, a force of suggestion, that seem to renew them. In this way he attains pure natural simplicity enriched with sweet grace imagination, sentimental passions, and human worthiness. Ruskin does not believe in the so-called pure literature because he thinks that poetry must be integral part of life. So at one place in his book *Delhi Is Not Far* he writes, – “People often ask me why my style is so simple. It is, in fact, deceptively simple, for no two sentences are really alike. It is clarify that I am striving to attain, not simplicity.

‘When you talk you sound quite complicated’, said a friend. And I had to explain that I’ve spent forty years trying to simplify my style and clarify my thoughts!

Of course some people want literature to be difficult. And there are writers who like to make their readers toil and sweat. They hope to be taken more seriously that way.”¹

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Through this expression we come to know that Ruskin's ultimate aim is to free the language of poetry from the shackles of philosophical and difficult words, and impart to it naturalness and simplicity. So there is a simplicity of diction in his poems, and also a clarity of meaning conveyed through that language. Ruskin believes in the language of the masses living in the countryside in the lap of Nature. So he has composed several poems about the simple country-folk with the words actually used by them and has raised the common rustic speech to the level of literary language. Like Wordsworth, Ruskin has employed the language actually 'used by men' in their daily intercourse, but made it suit the purpose of his poetry. The use of short simple sentences helps him in conveying his meaning clearly. His use of simplicity and avoidance of long difficult words impart a unique simplicity to his diction efficiently. This simplicity may be illustrated from some of his poems in which he uses simplicity.

Ruskin Bond writes everything quite simply whether short story or novel, prose or poetry, all his compositions are an example of simplicity. In 'There Are In My Garden' Ruskin gives a vivid description of the different kinds of trees, flowers, birds and insects of the garden in a very simple language. This simplicity may be seen in the following lines :-

(222)
“There are in my garden
The burnt bronze petals
of shattered marrigolds
spears of golden rod
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”

(‘There Are In My Garden’)

Ruskin Bond is really the poet of simplicity and it appears in his almost all the poems on a mass scale. He likes simplicity and the scenes he obtained from his poetic composition. This simplicity is much helpful for giving charm and colour to his poetic career, so he has prepared verses on flowers. In his poem ‘The Message of the Flowers’ he describes Indian flowers in a very simple language using simple English and Hindi words that can be easily understood. He has defined each and every flower with its charm and attractiveness. Ruskin has described not only the charm and attractiveness of the flowers but also their inspiring
qualities in a very simple language as is mentioned in the following lines :-

“Carnation  
Ah, a woman's love comes with this flower.
C Cherish the moment!

Cornflower  
How delicte you are!

Daisy  
The power of innocence.

Daffodils  
You purify the air.
You're chivalry, gratitude and care.

Jasmine -  
Flower of perfection,
you stand high in my affection”

(‘The Message of The Flowers’)  

Ruskin Bond compares his actions with different types of natural phenomena and natural objects like wind, rain and earth respectively in a very simple language. The following lines may be the best illustration :-

“Like the wind, I run;
Like the rain, I sing;
Like the leaves, I dance
Like the earth, I’m still”

(‘The Wind And The Rain’)
In the poem ‘Rain’ Ruskin describes the rain in very simple words. How does the rain give life to the plants, and how does it present a lovely and charming scene and when the rains are over, the sun-shine makes the whole earth bright and pleasant. Ruskin draws this beautiful scenery of the rain in a very simple language as is illustrated 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 drain pipe
Collects in a puddle in the middle of the lawn—
The birds came to bathe.
When the sun comes out
A lizard crawls up from a crack in a rock.
‘Small brown lizard
Basking in the sun”

(‘Rain’)

In his another poem ‘Rain In The Hills’ Ruskin describes rains in the hills in very simple words. There is no hardness of
language at all. Simplicity is the extraordinary charm of this poem. He has described the loneliness in the hilly-sides where there are rains and how this loneliness creates ‘menace’ to him. How simply Ruskin describes:

“As I pause near a window, the rain stops.
And starts again
And the trees, no longer green but grey
menace me with their loneliness”.6

(‘Rain In The Hills’)
Their thin fields of calcinated soil torn

From the old spirit-haunted rocks”

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In this poem Ruskin also depicts different moods of Nature like the thunder, winds and spirit haunted rock including rustic people with their natural feelings towards these objects and this description is really very simple. These people are not afraid of thunder on the contrary they make fun of it as Ruskin describes it as follows:–

“Pale women plough, they laugh at the thunder,
As their men go down to the plains”.

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

Ruskin Bond's simplicity of expression and description even of an insect is really worth praising in his short poem ‘Butterfly Time’. In it he explains that in the month of April butterflies swarm across the valley to suck ‘nectar’ from the flowers. They themself are bright and colourful as the flowers are. This simplicity can be seen in the following lines:–

“April showers
Bring swarms of butterflies
Streaming across the valley

(227)
Seeking sweet nectar

Yellow, gold and burning bright

Red and blue and banded white.

To my eyes they bring delight!

Their a long and arduous flight,” 9

(‘Butterfly Time’)

In ‘View From the Window’ Ruskin describes the condition of an ill-person in very simple words and this ill-person is none else but Ruskin himself. He reveals the fact that all the natural things like – trees, leaves and grass give a sickman relief. When he was laid up with fever, he sat by the window and looked out of it the natural beautiful scenery that he describes in a very simple language in the following lines :–

“I’m in bed with fever

but the fever’s not high

Beside my bed is a window

and I like looking out at all

that’s happening around me.

The cherry leaves are turning a dark green

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

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 window sill.

He's been coming everyday since I've been ill."¹⁰

(‘View From The Window’)

Simplicity of expression of colours of different objects on the earth in verses is an extraordinary talent of Ruskin Bond. His poem ‘Look For The Colours of Life’ is an apt example of this simplicity. He describes the unique things of this universe giving them real natural colours to beautify his Nature-scenery Ruskin draws this scenery in very simple words as follows :-

“Colours are everywhere,

Bright blue the sky,

Dark green the forest,

And light the fresh grass,

Bright yellow the lights”¹¹

(‘Look For The Colours of Life’)

In the same poem Ruskin further explains that there are somethings also in this universe that are colourless, yet they are the part and parcel of human life. For instance the wind and the rain have no colours. But they give colour to other objects of Nature. Ruskin very simply expresses it in the following lines :-
“Only the wind has no colour
But if you look carefully
You will see it teasing
The colour out of the leaves
And the rain has no colour
But it turns the bronzed grass
To emerald green,
And gives a golden sheen
To the drenched sunflower.
Look for the colours of life–
They are everywhere
Even in your dreams.”¹²

(‘Look for the Colours of Life’)
“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 long chain of Ruskin’s poems, ‘Lost All My Money’ is the simplest one. In this poem Ruskin Bond reveals the fact that the city life is monotonous and full of hardships of all sorts. People are not happy there, yet they have to confine themselves in them for their bread and butter. In village Nature reigns supreme because real life dwells there. Ruskin displays this simplicity in the following lines :

“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 .......”

(‘Lost All My Money’)

As far as the simplicity is concerned, it is found in almost all the poems of Ruskin Bond, whichever poem may be observed.

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His very short poem ‘Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark’ is the best example of it. In this poem Ruskin very beautifully and simply describes the importance of darkness in our life which is considered a terrible and futile part of the day. But according to Ruskin, there is nothing either good or bad but our thinking makes it so. Therefore; we should take the darkness in optimistic way. Ruskin expresses this thinking very simply as follows:-

"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."15

('Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark')

Simplicity is every inch in Ruskin's poems. Such simplicity is very rare to be found in the poems of other poets. It is only because Ruskin draws every natural object in a very simple language. The pools in the hill side are the very trifle objects of Nature and are seldom described and painted in the Nature poems. But Ruskin very simply paints the pools in the hill side in his
Nature poem ‘The Pool’. This simplicity can be examined in the following lines:-

“Where has it gone,

the pool on the hill?

The pool of our youth,

when Time stood still,

Where we romped in its shallows

and wrestled on sand,

Closer than brothers, a colourful band,

Gone is the pool, now filled in with rocks”\(^{16}\)

(‘The Pool’)

Ruskin’s poem ‘This Land Is Mine’ is also very praiseworthy for its simplicity. In this poem Ruskin very simply displays his proximity with this land revealing his real association with the tiny natural objects as ‘the dust’, ‘the grass’, ‘the tender leaf’ and weathered bark’ till his demise, for these natural objects are the essential parts of his life. The truth is that he has grown in the company of these never failing companions of life. Ruskin displays this simplicity in the lines under mentioned :-

“This land is mine

Although I do not own it,

This land is mine

(233)
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”\textsuperscript{17}

(‘This Land Is Mine’)

The another part of Ruskin's simplicity is the use of Hindi words giving them English shape. Ruskin's this type of simplicity can be seen in his poems, short-stories and novels. Ruskin has used some prevalent Indian words to make his verses all the more simple. His excellent use of Hindi words can be observed in some of his poems. ‘Summer Fruit’ is one of such simple poems. Ruskin's this poem is full of simplicity with the combination of Hindi and English words because in this poem Ruskin has very beautifully drawn the Indian fruits giving them Hindi words as well as English words to beautify his poetic rhythm. This type of simplicity can be seen in the following lines :-

“But if you like a simple khana,
There's nothing like a good banana.
No? Something more exotic?
May be some lichis in your pockets.
Or would you like a large tarbuj –

Its sweeter than a good kharbuja.”18

(‘Summer Fruit’)

In the concluding lines of this poem Ruskin very simply puts out a question to the children about the difference of two melon fruits — ‘water-melon’ and ‘musk-melon’ which are called – ‘Tarbuj’ and ‘Kharbuja’. in Hindi. Ruskin not only interrogates the children about the differences of these fruits but also asks their liking for them. Ruskin expresses this simplicity in the following lines :-

“Tarbuj, Kharbuja – oh, what’s the difference?
Tell me, children, and your preference”.19

(‘Summer Fruit’)

In his another poem of such type of simplicity ‘Granny's Proverbs’ Ruskin very simply reveals his liking for his favourite Indian dishes ‘tikkees’ and ‘chaat’ of which almost all the Indians are fond of. Ruskin draws this simplicity in the followng lines :-

“But sometimes we’d sneak away to the bazaar
To feast on tikkees and chaat
– And that was heaven!”20

(‘Granny's Proverbs’)

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(III) **LYRICISM**:

The lyric, a prominent kind of personal or subjective poetry, is of Greek origin and in ancient time it was used only for songs that could be sung with sweet tune of a musical instrument named ‘lyre’. But now it is taken to display any short non-narrative poem which expresses the feelings, emotional states and subjective experiences of the poet. The chief features of a lyric are emotion, melody, imagination, compactness of thought, and a unified effect. A lyric may be long or short, rhymed or unrhymed, independent or a part of a longer poetical work. Some of the renowned lyric poets in English are Robert Herrick, P.B. Shelley, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Bridges and W.B Yeats and among the American lyric poets are - Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost and if we talk about the out-standing Indo-Anglian lyric poets they are – Toru Dutt, Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and Harindranath Chattopadhyay.

Like these prominent lyric poets, Ruskin Bond may also be recorded as a lyric poet of power and beauty. The distinguished feature of his lyric is song like quality. They are not very difficult literary lyrics like those of Sarojini Naidu and Man Mohan Ghose. The lyric is Ruskin’s most natural mode of poetic composition, and it comes to him effortlessly as leaf comes to a tree. Most of
his lyric poems have the quality of shortness and brevity, subjectivity, imaginative vigour, musical quality and simplicity of diction and style.

Ruskin Bond is an Indo-Anglian poet who has spent most of his life among the hills of the Garhwal Region, so his lyrics convey his emotional responses to the natural surroundings of the Garhwal hills of the countryside. Natural beauty, love of Man, contemplation of human destiny on this earth, the miseries of poor rustic people, and the scenes of life and activities in that region, form the chief themes of his lyrics. In his lyrics Ruskin uses a homely language as is used by common man in a very simple way. This simplicity is only for clothing and covering a body of deep wisdom and a lofty and philosophical world view, as may be conveyed through some of his lyric poems and these lyric poems may be divided into three parts – Nature lyrics, love lyrics and the lyrics which deal with the themes of his childhood.

Ruskin is out and out a Nature poet as it has already been explained in his thematic quality. Ruskin as a lyric poet is best seen in his Nature lyrics. ‘A Little Night Music’ is a fine example of it. In it he appreciates the sweet and pleasing life of flowers for their sweet smell, attractive colours and refreshing joy. Some of the flowers are given honourable names for their beauty and
fragrance as Champa flower is called ‘The Queen of the Night’. Even the birds, mouse, frogs, crickets etc enjoy the beauty of the flowers at night creating musical sound in a lyrical way as illustrated in the following lines :-

"An owl strikes a note
And the frogs in their pond
Sing out as they float.
Along on their lily-pads-----
The Brain-fever bird
Is calling on high
'Brain fever, brain fever!'
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The crickets join in
An out-of-tune orchestra
Making a din!
I lie awake listening”

(‘A Little Night Music’)

Still once more sweet musical tone can be seen in the same poem giving the different types of sounds of a leopard, deer, breeze, window, etc. in a musical way as is expressed in these lines :-
“A leopard’s out hunting
The swamp deer calls.
A breeze has spring up,
It hums in the trees
The window is rattling.”

(‘A Little Night Music’)

Like ‘A Little Night Music’, ‘So Beautiful The Night’ is also a musical composition of Ruskin’s love for night which is also a part of Nature. In it he points out all the Nature scenes of the night giving it (night) the form of a lyric as he expresses in the following lines:

“The night-jar calls tonk-tonk!
The timid owl peeps out of his hole in the tree trunk
Where he has been hiding all day
Insects crawl out in thousands.
The wind comes down the chimney
and blows around the room.”

(‘So Beautiful The Night’)

In this stanza Ruskin takes delight in the sound of the ‘night-jar’ and the activities of the owl which peeps out of its hole like a timid fellow hidden among hills etc.
Again in the same poem Ruskin describes Nature in its full bliss in a lyrical way. He expresses it in the verses as follows:

“I’m watching the stars from my window.
The trees are stretching their arms in the dark.
and whispering to the moon.”

(‘So Beautiful The Night’)

‘View From The Window’ is the best lyric of Ruskin Bond. In this lyric he shows his love for Nature and its small creatures as hawk-cuckoo, squirrel, mynah birds, fever-bird etc. But a hawk-cuckoo is the main source of joy for him. On hearing its melodious tones, he retires into a sound sleep and he draws this picture of Nature in a lyrical way as follows:

“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.”

(‘View From The Window’)

Besides Nature lyrics, Ruskin Bond has also put his pen to paper to compose love lyrics. His long poem ‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’ is a fine example of it. In this lyrical poem Ruskin displays his profound love for Binya Devi showing her real beauty.
In the opening lines of this poem Ruskin produces a real rustic picture of the beauty of Binya Devi as well as Nature in the lyrical style :-

"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".6

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)

At one occasion his love for Binya Devi comes to a climax when he writes :-

“We turn and kiss
And the world swings round,
The sky spins, the trees go hush
Hush, the mountain sings –
Though we must leave this place
We've trapped forever

(243)
In the trembling air

The last sweet phantom kiss.”

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)

Although Ruskin’s ‘Song For Lost Friends’ is an autobiographical lyric, still in some of the stanzas of this poem he composes love lyrics. In the fifth stanza of this poem Ruskin shows his intense love for his friend, Bansi’s song and shout of which he is very fond of. In this stanza Ruskin not only describes the songs and shouts of his friend Bansi, a tonga driver but also the sound of ‘wheels creaking’, ‘seat shifting’, ‘pony’s farting’, ‘dog’s barking’ and ‘tonga’s rattling’ in a musical tone. Ruskin composes all these lyrical sounds in the following lines:

“The rattletrap tonga and the winding road.
Through the valley, to the river-bed,
With the wind in my hair and the dust
Rising, and the dogs running and barking,
And Bansi singing and shouting in my ear.
And the pony farting as it cantered along,
Wheels creaking, seat shifting
Hood slipping off, the entire contraption
Always about to disintegrate, collapse

(244)
But never quite doing so--like the man himself....

All this was music."^{8}

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

In his love lyrics Ruskin not only displays his love towards human beings but also for the small creatures. His lyrical poem ‘A Frog Screams’ is a fine example of it. In this poem he enjoys the melodious sound of a ‘frog’s screaming’ and composes it in a musical way that may be seen through the following lines:–

“Standing near a mountain stream
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”.^{9}

(‘A Frog Screams’)

In this lyrical poem Ruskin not only shows his love towards small creatures but also his sympathetic nature after saving the life of a frog from the clutches of a snake.

‘Song For A Beetle In A Goldfish Bowl’ is another love lyric of Ruskin Bond in which he expresses his love for beetle and cricket. In this lyric Ruskin Bond describes the struggle of a beetle against a goldfish which has caught it to eat it up. After a
fierce fight, the beetle gets itself free from the clutches of the
goldfish. But as the ill luck would have it, the beetle is once again
captured in the hands of the poet and the old fish is very happy to see it. Ruskin describes all this in a lyrical form in the following lines:

“A beetle fell into the goldfish bowl,
Hey-ho!
The beetle began to struggle and roll,
Ho-hum!
The window was open, the moon shone bright,
The crickets were singing with all their might,

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

With my finger and thumb
The beetle I seized.
The goldfish looked pleased,
The window was open, the moon shone bright,
I thrust the beetle far out in the night,
And he bumbled away in a staggering flight,
Ho-hum, hey-ho,
Good night!”

(‘Song For A Beetle In A Goldfish Bowl’)
Ruskin has composed not only Nature lyrics and love lyrics but also a few lyrics in which he describes the recollections of his boyhood. His poem ‘As A Boy’ is a fine example of it. In this poem Ruskin describes in a lyrical way the scence of a train passing through a tunnel among the hills of Dehra and the whistle of the engine that he used to enjoy in his boyhood. Through this autobiographical lyric Ruskin makes us feel the importance of the natural musical compositions in the following lines :-

“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’)

Ruskin Bond is a peculiar lyric poet in the sense that he has composed very short lyrics with great charm and attraction. ‘It Isn’t Time That’s Passing’ is such a nice lyrical poem which expresses his autobiographical element. These musical lines may make it more clear :-
“When the whistling-thrush released
A deep sweet secret on the trembling air,
Blackbird 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.”

(‘It Isn’t Time That’s Passing’)

‘Lost’ is another charming lyrical poem which deals with the recollections of his boyhood. In it he explains some sights of the place where he started his journey from and the place where he got down from the ship. On reaching the city of London, he found no charming sights except that of ‘rippling running water’ in the reeds. Ruskin displays this natural musical sight in his lyric as follows:

“I saw not the big waves
But the ripple of running
Water in the reeds.”

(‘Lost’)

In Ruskin's lyricism there is nothing of the unstrained passion and therefore, none of the sung melody. In his lyricism there is the music of the mind not the tonic music of the ear. His
poetry conveys his emotional state, their meaning, their colour and light and power. Still there are some poems in which he expresses an emotion mainly by the musical sound of words. In his poem ‘Rain’ Ruskin shows his skill as a great lyric poet when he composes some musical lines:

“It rattles on the roof,
Gurgles along the drainpipe
Collects in a puddle in the middle of the lawn—
The birds come to bathe.”

(‘Rain’) 

Ruskin’s very short poem ‘Listen’ is the best lyrical poem. In this poem he draws the attention of the readers to listen to the lyrical sound of the natural objects like the wind, grass, pebbles, leaves, moon etc. Just see the lyrical note in the following 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.”

(‘Listen’)
In his above mentioned poem ‘Listen’ Ruskin produces lyrical quality in a very sensible way. Ruskin's this lyric shows his sensuousness towards the natural objects such as wind, grass, leaves, pebbles and moon etc.

Let the subject be what so ever, Ruskin is able to weave it in rare lyrical verses. This shows his real lyrical genius. Most of his short poems are excellant in lyrical intensity and melody, ‘Rain In the Hills’ is also the best example of this type of lyric. He expresses this intensity and melody in the following lines :-

“In the hushed silence of the house
when I am quite along, and my friend, who was here,
has gone, it is very lonely, very quiet,
as I sit in a liquid silence, a silence within,
surrounded by the rhythm of rain
the steady drift
of water on leaves, on lemons, on roof,
 drumming on drenched dahlia's and window panes,
While the mist holds the house in a dark caress.”16

(‘Rain In The Hills’)

All these lyrical illustrations prove Ruskin’s greatness as lyricist.
REFERENCES


2. Ruskin Bond : Ibid, p. 34.


IV) **Symbolism**: 

Symbolism is the practice of representing things through symbols. The word ‘symbol’ is derived from the Greek word ‘symballein’. It means to put together. Another Greek word ‘symbolon’ gives the meaning of a sign or token. In this way symbol is a sign which may be put together an abstract thought. There may be two kinds of symbols – traditional and personal. For instance “Cross” is a symbol of Christianity and in Hinduism “Aum” is the symbol of God. In British culture “lame” is the symbol of meekness, “lion” that of courage and “oliver” that of peace. Whereas a personal symbol is one whose meaning is known only to its maker and is intentionally kept hidden. Therefore, symbolist poetry of personal symbolism has a built-in obscurity. In this way symbolic poetry is evocative rather than descriptive. A symbolic poet does not convey his meaning by direct statement. He uses words with symbolic meaning to convey his ideas. Any concrete thing may, therefore, be used as a symbol which may be a word, a phrase, a clause, a name, a picture or even a sign. For instance a red plus in a white circle is the symbol of red cross or the doctor or medical help. A red triangle is a symbol of family planning. In literature its scope is wide because literature deals more with abstract ideas, feelings or moods than with concrete
objects. Sometimes symbols create confusion because symbols differ from country to country but it happens in social content. But literature, being universal, does not suffer from such problems.

Ruskin Bond also claims that the great memory of Nature can be evoked by symbols. Many of his poems are simple and plain, but some of his poems are rich in symbolic content and have symbolic overtones. So Ruskin may also be known as a symbolic poet as is evident from his poems. Ruskin enriches his poems through symbols which add deeper meaning to particular situations, events and happenings. W.B. Yeats was truly symbolist poet who drew his inspiration from the French symbolists. But Ruskin is not a symbolic poet of the order of yeats. Still he is in the line of yeats and hence a truely modern poet. His symbols are all drawn from the ordinary common place objects and phenomena of Nature. The common objects of Nature symbolise human passions, ideals and longings. The objects of Nature symbolise the creative joy of the eternal and their beauty is the expression of his delight in the art of creation.

Ruskin’s ‘Lost All My Money’ is a verse par excellence in symbolism. In this poem he pictures the incident of his boyhood from rural life. He is perplexed to lose all his money then he ponders over the city life quite away from hills and fields and
realizes the flaws and defects of the city life, where there is nothing but sickness and sorrows. City life is a symbol of sickness and sorrows. Living in cities means living in sorrows and meseries. Then Ruskin at once comes back from materialism to spiritualism. His loss of money is a symbol of absence of spiritual grace, therefore, he prays to God to help him. To him the loss of money symbolises the loss of the grace of God and this loss can not be made up with anything else but for the grace of God. As Ruskin points out:

"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 ......
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I've lost all my money
And I can't bribe the guard,
So help me, O Lord,
On my way home- - - - - ---"!

('Lost All My Money')

Ruskin’s ‘Walk Tall’ can also be appreciated on the symbolic level. The poem describes the experience of an ant which toils
hard to carry its food to home feeling a lot of trouble without admitting any defeat. Its effort is really worth-appreciating. The poem invites a symbolic interpretation as well. What the ant carries for its food like a banner in its hands is ‘the cosmos seed’. The ‘cosmos seed’ is the symbol of a banner and for the ant it symbolizes the banner of victory against all the hardships of the way and the atmosphere. The water collected through rain drops has been given the symbol of the sea which the ant crosses in a very difficult endeavour. Though, for a tiny creature like an ant it is an extremely difficult task to carry its food through the sea of rain drops, still it decides to move on. On the symbolic level the poem presents the predicament of the ant when it faces the sea of rain drops. The destination of the ant is determined by the spirit behind the trait of the little creature. Ruskin expresses this symbolism in the following lines :-

“Small red ant, now crossing a sea.
Of raindrops; your destiny
To carry home that single, slender
Cosmos seed,
Waving it like a banner in the sun”

(‘Walk Tall’)
‘Kites’ is another extremely symbolic poem. In this poem Ruskin relates a common incident when as a youngman he used to make kites and fly them, but as the poem progresses, Ruskin quietly introduces a deep philosophy that his poems are ‘filmy things’ like the kites torn by the wind when it was caught in mango trees.

An important criterion of great poetry is that it does not yield its meaning at the first reading. But when we read the poem between the lines, the real philosophy comes to the mind. The poet gives a symbol of his poems to the kites. Just as the kites are caught in the trees, similarly his poems strike the heart of the readers and therefore some of them call these poems filmy things as it has been illustrated in the following lines:-

“My poems are filmy things –
Torn by the wind, caught in mango trees,
Gay sports for boys and dreamers.”

(‘Kites’)

Ruskin symbolizes in his poems the gay sports for boys and dreamers. He also gives his poems a symbol of ‘silent songs’. Then he endows his kite a music of a violin which sings a mournful song like that of the wind in the tall deodar trees. The mournful song of the kite is a symbol of Ruskin's sad song which he
composes in his ‘Silent songs’ (his poems). This conveys through these lines:-

"Gay sport for boys and dreamers
My silent songs. But once I fashioned
A kite like a violin,
She sang most mournfully, like the wind
In tall deodors." ⁴

(‘Kites’)

In the last line of the poem Ruskin embodies the kite his poems. His kites are the symbol of his poems as he himself declares:-

"- - - - - - - - - - All my kites
Are torn, but for your I'll make a bright.
New poem to fly" ⁵

(‘Kites’)

‘The Message Of The Flowers’ is also rich in symbolic overtones which stands for flowers imparting a number of messages. The Crysanthemum flower has three symbols. When it is red, it is the symbol of love, when it is white it symbolizes youth and when this flower turns to bronze colour, it symbolizes truth as Ruskin conveys through the following lines :-
“Crysanthemum — When red, it’s love.

When white, it’s youth

When bronze, it has the ring of truth.”

(‘The Message Of The Flowers’)\(^6\)

In his poem ‘A Nightmare’ Ruskin uses an excellent symbolic art in the very opening lines. He paints life in a quite different outlook. He gives life the symbol of gamble. According to him life is really just like a gamble in which a man can be either victorious or loser. Ruskin draws this symbol in the following lines:-

“Cupid, with his famous dart,

Struck me just above the heart –

‘Life’ he said, ‘is just a gamble’”\(^7\)

(‘A Nightmare’)\(^7\)

In his poems Ruskin has very beautifully drawn symbols taking the help of very ordinary words that are not looking symbolic out-wordly but if we read between the lines of them, they produce their real symbolic meanings as is illustrated in the above mentioned examples. The most important word of his symbolic poems is ‘dragon’ which means ‘an imaginary serpent’. Ruskin has employed this word in most of his poems giving the shape of dragon to different objects of Nature. In his poem ‘Lovers
Observed’ Ruskin very beautifully draws a nice symbol. In this poem he uses the symbol ‘dragon’ for ‘a lady bird’. Ruskin very simply gives ‘a lady bird’ a shape of ‘a dragon’. With the help of this symbol Ruskin very simply paints ‘an ordinary lady-bird’ as a dragon as is expressed by Ruskin in the following lines:-

“But for a lost ladybird
Anonymous lover brushes a dragon
Fly from his face.”

(‘Lovers Observed’)

In his another poem ‘As A Boy’ Ruskin uses this word ‘dragon’ as a symbol but in this poem he uses ‘dragon’ for ‘a running engine of the train’ that passes through a tunnel. This symbolic expression not only shows Ruskin's symbolism but also his imagination as we have discussed in the previous part of this chapter entitled ‘imagination’. Ruskin draws this symbol in the following lines:-

“The whistle the of 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.”

(‘As A Boy’)

(260)
In his non-fictional book ‘Rain In the Mountains’ Ruskin also uses ‘the dragon’ showing the same feeling and appearance and writes it in the present lines – “The First Time I saw a train, I was standing on a wooded slope outside a tunnel, not far from Kalka. Suddenly, with a shrill whistle and great burst of steam, a green and black engine came snorting out of the blackness.

I turned and ran to my father. ‘A dragon!’ I shouted. There's a dragon coming out of its cave!’

Since then, steam engines and dragons have always inspired the same sort of feeling in me - - - -.”

Ruskin has mentioned this word ‘dragon’ not only in his poems and non-fictional books but also in his short-stories and novels. In his very well-known short-story ‘The Kite Maker’ Ruskin very differently sketches this symbolic word ‘dragon’. In this story Ruskin gives the kite which was made by Mahmood, a major character of the story, the shape of a ‘dragon’. These lines make it more clear : –“Everyone had, of course, heard of the ‘dragon kite’ that Mahmood had built, and word went round that it possessed supernatural powers. A large crowd assembled on the maidan to watch its first public launching in the presence of the Nawab. At the first it did not budge from the ground. This disc
made a plaintive, protesting sound, and the sun was trapped in the little mirrors, making the kite a living complaining creature."

All these illustrations show Ruskin a different type of versatile genius in the respect of symbols because his symbols are drawn from the ordinary common place objects giving them simplicity and avoiding hardness of symbolic words as have been employed by other symbolic poets.
CHAPTER-IV (PART-IV)

REFERENCES


