Assessment
A study of Ruskin Bond's poetry has been a delightful experience. His achievement as a poet is of no mean order. He is a poet of multi-colours and melody and beauty while through his poems, one is bound to be deeply involved in his aesthetic response to the things.

The foregoing analysis of the various features of Ruskin Bond's poetry – his themes, poetic vision, imagery and art – reveals beyond doubt that he has the soul of a true poet and is endowed with a powerful poetic sensibility which he displays both in his longer and shorter poems. That Ruskin is an individual talent above the then mediocrity is shown in his treatment of his themes with novelty. He has talent which could have matured with the passage of time. Ruskin has been praised for the simplicity and natural tone of his poetry. Without any poetical gestures of artificiality, he indited verses that can move us with their poetic beauty and sincerity. He is Indian in his every inch imagery and themes. Nature forms one of the chief and the most recurrent themes in the poetry of the most of the poets. So Ruskin is also presented as Nature
poet out and out because he has painted real beautiful Indian natural phenomena in his poems. Most of his poems show his deep love and concern for Nature. In his Nature poems he conjures up beautiful images of the jungles in the lower regions of the Himalayas with the special reference of Garhwal Himalaya in both poems and non-fictional books. In his passionate and deep love for Nature Ruskin may be compared to William Wordsworth, the high priest of Nature in English Romantic poetry but Ruskin's Nature poetry is very simple and short having song-like quality than that of Wordsworth's. His poetry is not without sensuousness and concreteness. He does not forget that poetry should be sensuous, impassioned and concrete. He is a combination of Keats and Wordsworth on the poetic level of sensuousness but can not be so great as they are. Most of his poems show his sensuousness because he has used sensuousness in his several poems. ‘Listen’ is one of them. In this poem Ruskin shows a very praiseworthy sensuousness. The following lines make it more clear:

“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.¹

('Listen')

It is surprising then that in this century, Ruskin Bond, like Tagore and Iqbal has given expression to his imagery that is as fresh as the world's first dawn and yet as old as history, conjuring up, as it does, visions of birds and flowers and trees, sun and moon and stars, clouds and wind and rain, hill and valley and cattle and the plough.

In this way in his Nature poems Ruskin has painted all the beautiful phenomena of Nature as the other Nature poets have painted in their poems. But in Ruskin's Nature poetry there is some difference and novelness than other poets'. In his Nature poetry Ruskin has painted real beautiful scences of the Indian landscapes – without taking help of other Nature poets. If we talk about the parts of the day in respect of Nature poems, most of the poets have written a lot about the dawn time, morning time, afternoon time. But in Ruskin's poetry it is not so. In his Nature poems he emphasizes the night time. Ruskin has composed at least six separate poems on Night and darkness - displaying the beautiful night scenes. These poems are – ‘So Beautiful The Night’, ‘Don't
Be Afraid of The Dark’, ‘A Nightmare’, ‘Lines Written On A Sleepless Night’, ‘Night Thoughts’, ‘A Little Night Music’ In these Nature poems Ruskin has described Night and its scenery in a very beautiful style and language as is illustrated in the following lines:-

“I love the night, Lord.
After the sun's heat and the day's work,
It's good to close my eyes and rest my body
It's a good time for small creatures :

(‘So Beautiful The Night’) 

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.”

(‘Don't Be Afraid Of The Dark’) 

The day has gone, sweet night comes on,
Its darkness helps me see.”

(‘Night Thoughts’) 

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Open the window
Let in the Night
All that is lovely

Blossoming Champa
And Queen of the Night

The Nightjar plays trombone
The crickets join in
An out-of-tune orchestra

Goodnight sweet Night.5

(‘A Little Night Music’)

These examples make it clear that Ruskin has described Night very beautifully in most of his Nature poems than other Nature poets have done; but it does not mean that other poets have not composed poems on Night. Most of the Nature poets have painted night and darkness very beautifully in their Nature poems but they have not composed poems especially on Night as Ruskin has done. The reason may be that his life has been miserable in some or the other way. He has given its glimpse in most of his
autobiographical poems. Ruskin's this description about Nature ranks him as a new and different type of Nature poet free from any type of imitation of other Nature poets.

Ruskin is a great poet of Nature, but he is equally great as a poet of man. We find a keen sense of facts of daily life in his poems. His words and phrases have an authenticity of expression that can be born only out of personal experience. Deep personal suffering has given a mellowness to his images and themes. Growing experience had revealed to him the undoubted truth that all our life is surrounded by mystery. The wonder and pathos of human life has brought a new sympathy and understanding to his works of imagination.

Ruskin is a poet of humanity. His is a poetry of man, his is a universal message of peace, love and joy. His poetic greatness is classical as he transcends the barriers of time and space. The affinity between Man and Nature expresses itself in a hundred incidental comparisons. In regard of harmony between Man and Nature Ruskin's description is indeed praiseworthy. He has presented all the beautiful objects of Nature with Man showing their real relation. The present lines of Ruskin's Nature poem ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ are suitable example of this harmony:

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“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’)

Ruskin also endows the simplest facts and phenomena of the world glory and grandeur and this reveals the most sublime truth of life in the simplest language.

Human love and sympathy is also a part of his thematic quality. Most of his poems are related to human love and sympathy which are very sensational. In his poems Ruskin has presented himself as great lover of humanity. Ruskin's love for humanity depicts him as a real philanthrophist. He likes human beings from the core of his heart. He does not want to have any type of destruction of humanity. His poem ‘Don't Go To War, My Son’ reveals this fact because in this poem Ruskin has drawn the reality of wars and has warned Man to beware of wars. Ruskin's this warning against war to humanity shows that Ruskin does not want
to cut off from humanity because without human love there is no universal peace. In respect of human love Ruskin has composed some separate poems on love showing moral philosophy and these poems are – ‘We Must Love Someone’, ‘Love Is A Law’, ‘Lovers Observed’, ‘Love's Sad Songs’. In these four separate poems of love for humanity, Ruskin has expressed his intense love for human beings making the readers understand the real meaning and utility of love in life as is illustrated in the following lines of above mentioned poems:

“We must love someone
If we are to justify
Our presence on this earth.
We must keep loving all our days
Someone, anyone, anywhere.”

(‘We Must Love Someone’)

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

(‘Love Is A Law’)

- - - - -, Love comes like a thief
Crouching among the bruised and broken clover
All flesh in grass.”

(‘Lovers Observed’)

Out of the four above mentioned poems, in the first three poems – ‘We Must Love Some One’, ‘Love Is A Law’, ‘Lovers Observed’ Ruskin has not only revealed his real love for humanity and brotherhood but also has imparted the humanity a great moral lesson about love that is very fruitful to every human being who exists at present. But in the fourth poem ‘Love's Sad Songs’ Ruskin has expressed his love in romantic way. In this poem he has displayed his extreme love towards a beautiful girl showing her physical and moral qualities and displaying himself inferior to the girl as is expressed by Ruskin himself :-

“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 forever and a day
If only she'd smile and look my way.”

(‘Love's Sad Song’)

In addition to these four love poems, Ruskin has also composed a separate romantic lyric, ‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’ which is full of the romantic attitude of Ruskin Bond. In it Ruskin has described all his romantic feelings for the beautiful girl Binya Devi in a lyrical way with the help of the natural surroundings to beautify the beauty of Binya Devi. Ruskin has revealed this feeling of romance in the following lines :-

“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
In the trembling air
The last sweet phantom kiss.”

(‘Love Lyrics For Binya Devi’)
Ruskin has sketched his characters in his poems with such a pity that they gain true sympathy of the readers. Persons in his poems are as simple as he himself is. His persons are tonga driver, innocent village boys and girls, shepherds, ploughmen and women and his own members of the family including mother and father, grandmother and grandfather.

Ruskin has displayed in his poems his love not only for human beings but also for small creatures such as – frog, fox, leopards, sheep, goats, dogs, lizard, mouse, squirrel, porcupines, ants, the bat, the bed bug, bees, fly, fire-fly, butterfly, moon-moths, whistling thrush, crickets and different types of birds as – yellow-birds, black-bird, Lady-bird, fever-bird, mugnah-birds, parrots, owl etc. Ruskin has displayed all these small creatures just as the living beings showing their real right on this earth as is explained here:-

“I'm a child of this Universe
Claimed the bug
As he crawled out of the woodwork.
I've every right
To be a blight”\(^{12}\)

(‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’)

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For Ruskin these small creatures are as living as human beings are. He has composed some separate poems for these small creatures such as – ‘A Frog Screams’, ‘A Bedbug Give Thanks’, ‘The Bat’, ‘Lone Fox Dancing’, ‘Butterfly Time’. He is so much in love with these small creatures that at one place in his poem ‘A Bedbug Give Thanks’ he thanks God to create such a small and beautiful creatures as is expressed by Ruskin:-

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

(‘A Bedbug Gives Thanks’)

Originality and simplicity are key-note of Ruskin's poetry. He does not believe in difficult literary words, for he wants to compose his poetry in such a simple language as we speak every day in life so that it may help even the ordinary and common readers to go through. Ruskin's this feeling for language helps him to impart naturalness and simplicity to his poetry in place of philosophical and difficult words. Like William Wordsworth and Robert Frost, Ruskin has employed the language of the mass living in the countryside in the lap of Nature using their daily intercourse. Some of his rustic level poems such as – ‘Garhwal Himalaya’, ‘A Song For Lost Friends’, ‘Hill-Station’ and ‘Love Lyrics For Binya
Devi’ are an apt example of it. In these poems Ruskin has described the language of the rustic people in a very simple language sketching the real picture of the countryside and the hills. In his poem ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ Ruskin has drawn a real picture of the people of Garhwal in a very simple language. These lines will clarify it:

“From the old spirit – haunted rocks
Pale women plough, they laugh at the thunder,
As their men go down to the plains”¹⁴

(‘Garhwal Himalaya’)

In the above lines Ruskin has described real temperament and activities of the people of Garhwal in a very simple language as if they (the people of Garhwal) were speaking it out in their own language. This simplicity and avoidance of long difficult words impart a peculiar simple diction to his poetry. In a nutshell Ruskin has employed very simple language in his poems with the help of original Hindi words giving them English shape as he has expressed in the following lines:

“But if you like a simple khana,
There’s nothing like a good banana”¹⁵

(‘Summer Fruit’)

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Ruskin’s philosophical preoccupations have been given profundity to his poems. Even abstract and philosophical ideas are expressed in a simple and appealing manner. So his poems are not merely shallow lyrics of human love and Nature, they are also mystic and philosophical. Ruskin has composed several such poems in which he has expressed a great moral philosophy as is, in fact, praiseworthy. Among his philosophical poems – ‘A Song For Lost Friends’, ‘The Words’, ‘Walnut Revisited’, ‘We Must Love Someone’, ‘Love is A Law’, ‘What Can We Give Our Children’, ‘Don’t Go To War My Son’, ‘Lost All My Money’, ‘Dare to Dream’, ‘Silent Birth’ and ‘A Quiet Mind’ are the outstanding ones. In these poems Ruskin has revealed the real philosophy of life towards all the aspects of life. In his philosophical ideas Ruskin mostly lays stress on Love and Death. In his poem ‘We Must Love Some One’ Ruskin draws an obvious philosophy for humanity as is expressed by Ruskin himself:–

“We must love someone
If we are to justify
Our presence on this earth.
We must keep loving all our days,
Someone, anyone, anywhere - - - - -.”16

(‘We Must Love Someone’)
In the above stanza Ruskin has exployed real philosophy of life that is *Love*. In the same way Ruskin has imparted a very appropriate philosophy about *Death* in some of his outstanding poems. But in his poem *‘A Song For Lost Friends’* Ruskin has drawn an actual philosophy about *Death* as is illustrated in these lines:

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

(‘A Song For Lost Friends’)

Very often Ruskin uses symbolism and yet there is no obscurity of expression. All his symbols are drawn from the ordinary common place objects and Natural phenomena according to the situation of human life. His poem *‘Kites’* is an apt example of it because this poem is teemed with several simple symbols and every symbol of this poem is drawn very beautifully showing real poetic versatility. In addition to it Ruskin has employed a very rare word *‘dragon’* (an imaginary serpent) in most of his poems and short stories giving the shape of a *‘dragon’* to the different objects of daily life. Thus *‘dragon’* is part and parcel of Ruskin's symbolic works.

Autobiographical note is very important in long and short poems of Ruskin Bond. We can portrait his life through his poems.
Most of his poems are his best biography and give us his complete view of the world. As a child he was very sensitive; he noticed each and every small activities in his surroundings which affected him. His poems as – ‘As A Boy’, ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ and many others are the best example of his autobiographical poems as we have expressed in the previous chapter. He spent his childhood with his parents but he could not enjoy it as other children do because of his mother's separation from his father. He was attached to his father more than to his mother.

During this span of ceaseless poetic flow he established himself as a poet of rare achievement and versatility. What makes him the strongest contestant for the Indo-Anglian literary renown is his prolific pen and poetic versatility. His fecundity and the ceaseless flow of his pen resulted in a happy union of massed strength and variety which is more than obvious in his immense poetic output.

Ruskin Bond's poetic genius is a matter of marvel. His poetry bears the imprint of a master's hand. His mighty imagination, his command over language, his handling of traditional English material form with magnificent assurance and his unerring ear for the rhythm of English poetry make him outstanding poet. There is in his poetry – both in the longer compositions and shorter poems

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— a strain of philosophical contemplation which gives it a distinctive place in the whole range of Indo–Anglian poetry.

His poetry is characterized by loftiest poetical flights, cosmic elevation, sheer sweep of imagination, smooth and lucid communication, concentrated imagery, excellent capacity for luminous phrase making and master of poetic craftsmanship. His short lyrics alone are capable of sustaining his mighty poetic reputation. We have already referred to his supreme lyrical genius which manifests itself in the manipulation of musical rhythm and the touching power of his lyrics.

In short, Ruskin is a poet of unusual power and versatility. No wonder then that he emerges as one of the most remarkable of Indian poets who wrote in English.

The Indianness of Ruskin is an open secret. His poetical ideas, sentiments, imagery, symbols and philosophy — all are basically Indian. But he is quite successful in transporting them into English Language. It shows his wonderful mastery of a foreign language as a poetic medium.


