



## Ruskin Bond as a living Indo- Anglian Poetic Genius

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Ruskin Bond for whom “India has always been an atmosphere, an emotional more than a geographical entity” and for whom “India is to be found in its small villages”, was born in 1934 in Kasuali, Himachal Pradesh and grew up in Jamnagar (Gujrat), Dehradun, Simla. His father, Aubrey Alexander Bond, noticed his keen interest in English poems, short stories, novels and essays, therefore, he named him Ruskin after the Victorian essayist ‘John Ruskin’. Despite of his British descent, he has made Indian soul its nature and a country itself the subject of his poetry. It is only because he was born and brought up in India. So almost all his writings mark him as an Indian writer. He looks at India as an insider and participant. Therefore, in spite of British origin, he has been included in the list of Indo- Anglian poets as his writings have the undeniable stamp of authenticity since he mostly writes about what he knows best.

Ruskin Bond, a renowned writer of fact and fiction and for over sixty years has been writing novels, essays , poems and children books, started his writing career as novelist . When he was seventeen, he wrote his first novel ‘The Room On The Roof’ which brought him John Lewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957 and also received the Sahitya Academy Award for English Writing in India for 1992 for ‘Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra’.

Though chiefly known for his short stories and novels in the history of Indo- Anglian Literature ,he has also written some short and long poems which reflect the poet in him . Actually poetry is a pastime for him because whenever he is fed up with short-stories and novels he starts writing some short poems to refresh his mind .These poems work like soothing balm for him. These poems have mere song like quality as we sing in daily intercourse of life. This is the reason that he has not written poems in a regular way as he has written short-stories and novels. He has only written them off and on. There is also another reason of his less poetry writing as he writes in his own words---“ Every now and then I indulge myself with a little poetry or light verse—something that I enjoy doing even if the results are not always published . It is very hard to sell books of poetry, and publishers are naturally reluctant to take them on

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Ruskin ‘s poems are published in four books---‘Delhi Is Not Far’, ‘Rain in The Mountains’, ‘The Rupa Laughter Omnibus’ and ‘A Little Night Music’. His first poem ‘Parts of Old Dehra’ was published in ‘The Illustrated Weekly Of India’ in 1952. About the inspiration of this poem at one place he himself writes---“The evening was pleasant and I sat on the veranda of the White House (a hotel which was built when I was a boy here)and wrote a poem called ‘Parts Of Old Dehra’:



*“Parts of Old Dehra remain.....”*

*A Peepal tree I knew And flying foxes. ”*

Ruskin ‘s poetry is a collection of several themes such as----Nature, harmony between Man and Nature, moral philosophy, human love and sympathy and autobiographical note.

Nature forms one of the chief and the most recurrent themes in the poetry of most of the poets and Ruskin is also among them because most of his poems speak of his deep love and concern for Nature. His Nature poetry is not a product of his imitation of the romantic creed of love for Nature as in the case of Derozio. Rather it is inspired by genuine and authentic love for Nature. All sorts of beauties and charms of the earth and the sky, the moon and the stars, the sun and the sunrise, the tress and hills, birds and flowers attached his poetic imagination. The seed of this attachment to natural objects and a realization of divine spirit behind them was implanted early in his life. As a boy living at his grandfather’s house at Dehra, he came in close association with the external objects of Nature but his response to external nature is more in the manner of Keats than in Wordsworth’s because the mighty world of the eye and the ear gave him poetic joy. His love for nature remained deeply seated in his heart through out his life, for the beautiful surroundings of Dehra conduced his poetic instincts and gave a spurt to his imagination. 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 because Wordsworth’s Nature poetry is full of mysticism but in Ruskin's Nature poetry there is no mysticism. Wordsworth’s poetry display the beautiful Western landscape but Ruskin’s poetry shows the beautiful Indian surroundings. In respect of trees there is a great similarity between the poems of Ruskin and Toru

Dutt. Ruskin’s poem ‘Banyan Tree’ may be compared with Toru’s ‘Our Casuarina Tree’ because both of them express the recollections of the childhood of the both as Ruskin writes:-

*“I remember you well, old banyan tree,*

*As you stood there, spreading quietly” (4)*

Ruskin’s description of Nature is not limited to trees, fruits and flowers but also to almost all the beautiful surroundings of Nature. He has described hills, mountains, gardens, weather and beautiful small creatures. In his Nature poems he conjures up beautiful images of the jungles in the lower regions of the Himalayas with the special references o Garhwal Himalaya. In his Nature poem ‘Garhwal Himalaya’ Ruskin sketches a very beautiful scenery of Garhwal

Himalaya in the following lines:-

*“Deep in the crouching mist, lie the mountains,*

*Climbing the mountains are forests*

*Of rhododendron, spruce and deodar-----” (5)*



In his Nature poetry he loves to paint not only the spring time, beauty of Nature, or what Coleridge called ‘Nature in Grove’ but also the other seasons of the year according to the Indian weathers. His Nature poetry is not with out sensuousness and concreteness. On the poetic level of sensuousness he is a combination of Keats and Wordsworth but can not be so great as they are.

Ruskin’s poems also bring both the harmony between Man and Nature. In regard of harmony between Man and Nature he has described all the beautiful objects of Nature with Man displaying their real relations. He presents Man trying to subdue the forests of Nature to make it useful for him. Since Man and Nature are found in close proximity in rural areas, than in the cities, Ruskin describes Man belonging to the countryside and engage in rural activities. In respect of harmony between Man and Nature most of the Nature poets talk about farmers and fields, gardeners and gardens but in this respect Ruskin’s concept is a little different. He not only talks about forests but also foresters that shows a real harmony between Man and Nature. It is only for the reason that foresters do their best to survive and protect the forests as he composes: -

*“You are the quiet man who do not boast*

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*With out your help to Nature’s thrust*

*This land would be bowl of dust”. (6)*

Moral philosophy is another part of Ruskin’s thematic quality. Morality and philosophy are, in essence, a consequence of Ruskin’s close, keen and correct observation of life because he does not see life in philosophy and morality, he sees morality and philosophy in 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 pure mind. As a result, his moral and philosophical poems are alive with life, have the real throb of feeling and re-freshness and warmth pulsates through them. His poetry bears the stamp of moral lesson as he speaks of the truth of life and death in his poem ‘The Words’ that which “cause life causes also decay”. In his another poem ‘A Song For Lost Friends’ Ruskin imparts a different philosophy about death-

*“No death but a summing-up of life”. (7)*

Ruskin is also aware of the small creatures and the lowly people whom he loves from the core of his heart. In his poems he has presented himself as a real philanthropist because he does not want to have any type of destruction of humanity as he himself writes in his poem ‘Do Not Go To War, My Son’ revealing the reality of wars to those countries who are always ready to fight . Ruskin believes that the man is most happy and healthy when he lives close to the heart of Nature . Life of towns or cities is artificial . So human nature can be found in its pure and original state in the rural area and in the lap of Nature as Ruskin has himself described in most of his mass level poems displaying their real language and condition. In his poem’ A Song For Lost Friend ‘ Ruskin shows his sympathetic nature:----

*“ The gardener, who looked after trees,*

*Also dug graves,one day.....”(8)*



Ruskin's thematic quality is not limited to Nature, harmony between Man and Nature, moral philosophy, human love and sympathy but it also carries autobiographical note in it. Most of his poems are his best biography and give us his complete view of the world. In some of his poems he takes his readers into his confidence and chats with them about his memories of places, his relations and friends. As a child Ruskin was very sensitive, he noticed each and every small activities in his surroundings which reflected him and he composed them in his poems because his poems reveal many glimpses of his own life and personality.

Through his poems we are introduced to his friends, colleagues, the members of his family and readers.

A great poet employs many methods to represent his poetic ideas in verse. So, we may take for granted that Ruskin's poetic art involves a good number of poetic techniques. The poetic genius of Ruskin is imaginative; simple, lyrical and symbolic. The language of poetry like the stuff of poetry comes from imagination. Ruskin's imagination is highly constructive and sublime in the sense that it is capable of harmonizing ideas among themselves, as well as, with the beauty of spontaneous expression. He converts his ideas into living beauties by the magic of powerful imagination by clothing them by sweet and harmonious expression as he writes: -

*But if the trees would walk. Lord*

*What a wonderful sight it would be*

*Armies of pines and firs and oaks*

*Marching over the moonlit mountains.*

The thing which strikes the heart and mind of the readers is the extreme simplicity of his poetry, for his simplicity is quite free from self-interest and ambition. Ruskin's poetry is, in fact, easy and simple but this apparent simplicity of his poetry is very complex. If we read between the lines of his poems, they reveal their hidden and deeper meanings. Like the other outstanding lyric poets, Ruskin may also be recorded as a lyric poet of power and beauty. His lyrics are not written in a very difficult literary style. They are full of simplicity. Symbolism is another poetic technique of Ruskin's poetry. In his symbolic poems Ruskin does not use very difficult symbolic words and his poetry does not look symbolic outwardly but if we carefully go through it, it reveals its real meaning. His symbols are all drawn from the ordinary common place objects and phenomena of Nature and from the everyday events and situations of life as he expresses: -

*The whistle of the engine hung on the forest's silence.*

*Then out of the tunnel, a green gold dragon,*

*Came plunging, then then thundering past*



The forgoing analysis of the numerous features of Ruskin Bond's poetry reveals beyond doubt that his achievement as a poet in Indo-Anglian literature is of no mean order.

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