

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

THE APPROACH AND REPRESENTATION OF STYLE IN THE COMPOSITION OF RUSKIN BOND

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Article Received: 24/05/2022
Article Accepted: 19/06/2022
Published online: 22/07/2022
DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.10.3.25](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.10.3.25)

Abstract

Bond's novels and short stories possess a high rank and highlight individual drama against larger social, moral, and metaphysical issues. This paper urges his work that gives and insight into various universal themes such as the worry between the past and present, city's hoi-polloi against rural values, the dignity of ordinary folk, preservation of the environment, and living in harmony with nature and much more. Ruskin bond secures and outstanding place in the entire range of Indian English fiction with his beautiful art of expression. His attachment to the profession of writing makes him a sort of guardian angel of Indian English writing- scripting novels, stories children's tales, literary columns in newspaper and editing anthologies and above all his belief in the noble virtues of humanity.

Keywords: Nature, style, composition

Introduction

The style of Ruskin Bond is adapted by the impression he accepts towards his audiences and the distinct pleasure he adorns in the piece of composition. It is the result and the final expression of his prevailing outlook on the totality of existence. Style "is the means by which a human being gains contact with others; it is personality clothed in words, character embodied in speech. If handwriting reveals character, style reveals it still more"¹. Gaustav Flaubert says, "Style is life! It is very life-blood of thought! E. Gibbons puts it, more briefly: "Style is the image of character"². Bond's narrative art can be analyzed in the light of the previous discussion. Bond's style unmistakably carries the mark of his graciousness. It is the 'dress of the modest' and cordial personality. It is marked by aptness of expression, clarity of vision and self- expression of

notion which confirms more his moods, disposition and accentuates the virtues he possesses and commands. Swapan Kumar Banerjee says, 'The crystal clearness in his writing shows the child-like, pure heart he is gifted with "(Benerjee, Garhwal Poet). His simple and crystal-clear style never loses its charm like the serenity of the Himalayas. He writes with energy, enthusiasm and expertise. His narrative style differs from book to book and adds extra appeal to his originality.

Style of Composition: Bond has a very individual writing style. He writes in a subjective way and never uses a lot of satire and consequently humour. Since Bond started off his literary career writing articles for newspaper, most of his stories are in episodic form. He is a master using various methods in his piece of writings. As a cliff hanger, he is able to keep his readers interested in his stories.

Truth- telling encompasses the theme (truth) and the technique (the way it is told). The fictional world of Bond focuses the truth of day –to- day experiences. He churns his writing out of day-to-day happenings capturing the essence of loving in its most crystallized form. The common place theme of Bond is elevated by the well- drafted narrative art and his desire to ‘tell a good story’. The artistic value of his stories lies in his method of execution. Kempton has rightly observed, ‘a noble theme may sound merely pretentious under poor telling’³. “Form and technique are the vital elements of fiction; scene, detail, dialogue all the elements that makes the creative creation of life”⁴. Bond has achieved a perfect craftsmanship by paying attention to every detail and “working with love care”⁵.

He is content to present his lofty thoughts through clear narration and expressive expression, unlike the clever wordplay and verbal pyrotechniques of many Indian English writers. He states forth his invigoration and refreshing ideas without using any challenging devices or ambiguous articulation. He does not believe in dissecting the knowledge of the readers by plunging them into the web of language and expression. He seems to go with the opinion of F.L Lucas who says “...it is bad manners to give them (readers) needless trouble. Therefore clarity. It is add manners to waste their time. Therefore brevity”.⁶

His explicit use of language with positive embellishment enriches his style. About the clarity in style, Aristotle says in the Rhetoric: “Style to be good must be clear, as is proved by the fact that speech which fails to convey a plain meaning fails to do just what speech has to do” (Aristotle Rhetoric) Bond’s well- Structure and comprehensive style is the result of his constant efforts. He exerts his soul to write vividly and forcibly. He has often being questioned why his “style is so simple”⁷. He says that his style is in fact: deceptively simple, for no two sentences are really alike. It is clarity that I am striving to attain, not simplicity... I have spent forty years trying to simplify my style and clarify my thoughts! I have always tried to achieve a prose that is easy and conversational⁸. He even challenges the critic: And those who think this is simple should try

it for themselves”⁹. The person “I” is major ubiquitously in Bond’s writing. It further becomes convincing with his first-person narrative and convey a certain reliability and actuality to his stories. The storyteller in most of his writing works as a freelancer who fights back to create his outstanding place in the fictional globe or an Anglo- Indian boy who gets spellbound by Indian shade or a man meeting someone on the roadside. The one met could be anyone in his depiction. It can be a burglar, a retard, a strange but funny guy, a little child, an outsider, a merchant and sometimes a phantom. The artiste says James Joyce residue like Deity in this construction, within or last, or beyond and above his creation. Ruskin Bond remains soundless yet expressive, hidden yet ever there behind the subjects and style of his writings. Nearly his story reveals some facts of his life and experience. This self-representation is repeatedly fully clad in a web of envision. The reader can from more or less and corrects idea about him, his life and his character.

Literature Review

Oscar Wilde acclaim that “One’s style is one’s signature always” go fit with Bond’s style of writing. He has expanded his individual approach of narration. His imaginative excellence and ability of story- telling is something exceptional. His narrative is noticeable with ease of tone and deepness of meaning. He puts into his style a traditional obedience, a deeper flowing hallucination, a sense of taste, an auditory thought, a well presented onomatopoeic sense and a fine sense of humour. He respects his work of writer and pays a much interest in his style and his content. His prose does not attain result by a difficult deception but with a floating beat and impulsiveness of expression that signs the spontaneity of life itself. It is his extraordinary skill that makes his amusing, unsurpassable but simple prose that appears natural. The writer reads the multifaceted mindsets of his characters and describes it in his unique simplicity of style. His trademark literary style has always been a simple choice of words that is woven together in a incredible way, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. David Davidar extolling his narrative art says the style of Bond bears his distinctiveness: “deep yet uncluttered, evocative yet

spare, gentle yet searching and still the writing flows as strong and as vibrant as it has ever been and that is something we continue to be grateful for"¹⁰. The 'lamp of Bond's writing is lit 'with his explicitly narrated stories, evocative characterization, well-constructed plot, natural flow of vocabulary and above all his use of inimitable and lucid style.

Imagery plays a fundamental role in Bond's literature and secures an excellent place for him in the group of visual artists of various writings. His engaging and rich images create the picture dynamic and efficient. Revealing descriptions tell the understanding of the reader and represent the affluent poetic receptivity to his writing. His writings are subtle and suitable and originate itself with the requirement of circumstances. The descriptions skillfully integrate all kind of sense qualities as it is auditory, affectionate, kinesthetic, thermal, and expand the control of language. Some repeated images are: lizards scampering on the walls and ceiling; the mountain path dipped through oak, descriptions of rhododendron and maple trees; the auditory murmuring sounds of books and stream; the rustling of dry leaves from the trees and green grass; the shadow of clouds on the Mussoorie hills that is breathtaking view; the loveliness of first snowfall in the mountain; the slushy and muddy roads in the rainy season; people found leisurely spending time, smoking hookah and chewing paan (beetle); the buzzing of the flies on the sweets; barefoot boys riding buffaloes or chewing on sticks of sugarcane; people relishing jallebies, golgappas, tikkies by the road side vendor; stray dogs and cows moving in the alleyways; pot bellied shaped man. Bond's descriptions cause a mental reproduction of sensations. He deals with the question of where the meaning in our life comes from. He believed that it came from an intimate relationship with nature. The use of wide tentative imageries is an invaluable resource of his language. The language he uses is clear and accessible to even casual readers. In addition, the surface themes of Bond's writings are usually easy to understand. Keen insight made his language outstandingly delicate. Bond feels it is the best medium suited to his temperament. His stories are marked by restraint, reticence and moderation both in theme and style. His penchant for short story

and novella, first person narrative, lucid language and digression free plot are characteristic traits of his writing that attracts young readers. The concentration span of children in general is short. They prefer shorter fiction to longer one. The children enjoy the first person narrative because it gives them an idea that a child is narrating the story. The lucidity of expression makes it easier for the children to grasp the plot. Because of the multilingual culture and three-language-formula of Indian Education System the Indian children sometimes face difficulty to master English Language at a very young age. They like to read the stories where they do not have to hassle with the language. The young Indian children become the ardent readers to Bond because of the simplicity of his language and exactness of expression.

The words of F.L Lucas go in favour of Bond's lucid narrative : "This is all affection – fiddling with phrases and trifling with cadences! It is easier to criticize but to achieve clarity is the difficult task: "Just as 'common sense' is far from common, simple English can prove in practice far from simple to attain"¹¹. David lodge has also pointed out "style is not a decorative embellishment upon subject matter, but the very medium in which the subject is turned into art"¹². The apparent simplicity in Bond's writing is crystallization and culmination of his art. The simplicity is also symbolic of the setting and characters in his stories. Almost all his characters are drawn from hilly regions and rustic life living in the foothills or mid-hills of the Himalayas. Bond's language suitably goes with the character portrayed. The language used by the characters never seems to violate their social class, status and age. It never loses the ground of reality. Praising his style Namita Gokhle says; "The simplicity of Bond's writing style has the hallmark of a greater writer. The unpretentious, underplayed quality of his work, its control and mastery helps the reader to effortlessly navigate the meandering flow of ideas and events"¹³. Rajnish Wattas in an interview asks Bond, "Your lucid style has endeared you to many readers but it has not quite given you that place in the "hall of fame" as has been given to internationally acclaimed writers dealing with more complex themes. What is the reason for this?"¹⁴ Bond says" "This is because I

haven't been published very much abroad. For that reason I wouldn't particularly be very well known there. You have to be published in England or America to be reviewed by critics and also for your books to appear in the bookshops. It's a very strange system; unless a book is published there it is hard to find it in the bookshops"¹⁵.

An Expository style of writing- Bond's language has virile force and a mastery which conveys the maximum of meaning in the fewest and simplest words. He has mastered the language and never seems to hesitate for expression. It is to the ease, the modification and the beautiful naturalness of his prose that Indian English writing owes. His works has never seen departure from the standard English. English is the language of Bond's emotional make-up as well as intellectual make-up. For Bond the spirit and the language both are his own. Bond's love for India and expertise in language resulted in his everlasting and enriching gift to Indian literature in English.

Bond has created a positive experience and tone through words that defines subject matter and significance. The most pleasant excellence of his language is its straightforwardness and truthfulness. His special use of Latin and French phrases and expressions are understandable to readers. It is because he puts them into a thorough description so that one could connect the sense. Bond rarely uses sentences of complex grammatical structure with such dependent and subordinate clauses, as make the logic tricky to pursue. His simple and short sentence helps to understand meaning in its fullest sense.

Accurateness and exactness, the hallmark features of Bond's evocative style sprout from his minutely observed and vividly described scenes and settings and characterization. He observes things that others would fail to notice and makes them come alive through skillful handling of clear writing style. Like a professional sculptor, he carves out multicolored and meaningful images by his straight description and scenic clarification. The pictures that effloresce from his fiction garden are uncomplicated yet genuine. He says: "My forte is observation, recollection, and reflection"¹⁶. His fictional world

gleams with realistic and graphic description of scene and background. He cheers up the atmosphere with vigorous and strong image before leading us towards the root of story. This helps the readers to measure the importance of the representation portrayed.

Bond is the most important stature of the Indian writing in English. His approach is marked by the subtlety of the expression and revelation. The common use of auditory imageries adds a charisma to it. It makes the refined description pleasing. He creates sound imageries directly observing the various components of natural world and manmade world. The very insightful ears of Bond never fall short to hear both cacophony and symphony: the blares of the horns, the jungles of the tongs, the cow and the school bells, rattling and swishing of the rain on the grooved tin roofs, the clip-clop of a pony carriage, the creaking of the wheels of a bullock cart over rough country roads, the sound made by the dry and thirsty earth, as it sucks at a sprinkling of water, sound produces by a child while drinking thirstily water running down his chin and throat, creaking of a door at its hinges, the warbling of the birds, the roaring and chattering of the animals, the whispering to the plants. The exhausting list of the acoustic imageries heightens the result of Bond's refreshing style and racy language.

Bond's art is 'spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions. The emotions are recollected from his life experience. He belongs to the tradition of subjective writers who are adept in shaping the record of personal life into memorable and creative piece of art. The autobiographical nature of his fiction makes him an Indian Charles Lamb. With his meticulous deftness and craftsmanship, he shapes the events and incidents of his simple and single life into artistic force. He works the best from very close to his experiences as James Joyce does in his portrait of the Artist, Lawrence in *Sons and Lovers*, Samuel Butler in *The Way of All Flesh*, Wordsworth in his epic poem *The Prelude*, R.K Narayan in *Swami and Friends*. Talking about the writer's attitude who explores their mind for their subjects Salman Rushdie says that he too follows the same trend: "I have never had a reader in mind. I have ideas, people events, shapes, and I write 'for' those things,

and hope that the completed work will be of interest to others”¹⁷. In this sense Bond proceeds Rushdie in some aspects.

Bond shares a unique relationship with nature and most of his writings celebrate his deep association with it. His pantheistic philosophy sees a spirit in trees, mountains, rivers, birds and animals. The exquisite portrayal of Himalayan landscape with its moods, its seasons, flora and fauna are unparalleled of its kind. His pastoral vignettes are evocative, filled with bird- trills, the flash of butterfly wings and the smell of the wet earth after rain. Nature is always present in his works with all its colorful vibrating and soothing forms, sometimes in the background and sometimes actively participating in the course of the action. The solace in its peaceful embrace, its importance in our lonely and stressful life and aversion to the crowded man-made world brought Bond closer to the world of nature. Like a child he loves to play beneath it, like a tired traveler he takes shelter under it and like a devotee he sings hymn in its praise. The murmuring sounds of brooks and rivulets, whispering sounds of the wind, rustling of dry leaves and grass and the shadow of clouds on the ancient Mussoorie hills enchant his mind and soul’s eye. These are, for him, watch towers. He marvels at nature’s infinity. At times there is a sense of déjà vu while reading his work- there is morning- there is morning- dew freshness and a timelessness of the hills permeating it. If Bond’s humanism makes us to identify the beauty ‘within’ his natural description of the beauty ‘in the world around us’, and awakens our minds to old- world charms and snow peaked hills.

Conclusion

Bond’s beautifully crafted stories speak directly to the reader as if he is right there, chatting with his audience, rather than spinning a tale on paper. They have a haunting quality that holds the reader’s heart enthralled. His characters are lively embodiment of the magnanimity of his soul and reveal his insight into human psyche. He excels in shaping his wide experiences into delightfully readable stories. His short stories are well finished and are well finished and are integrated works of art. He can leave the reader numb in just a handful of

words when he writes about solitude and suffering and his subtle sense of humour can equally be disarming. Ruskin Bond’s readers appreciate the sensitive and thoughtful expression in his writings. The distinguishing gentleness of his manner springs out of his profound belongings to life and things. He is artistic writer who has ability to change any frame of mind or situations into an artistic incident.

Through Bond’s insight life, understanding of children and capturing the ultimate truth – reality, this study has analyzed threadbare the idiosyncratic proportions of Bond’s imagination highlighting his artistic attainment. As far Bond’s personality is concerned, he himself resembles the calm and balanced attitude of a Himalayan saint who for the last fifty years has been scribbling Indian stories because he loves this soil. In the true spirit of ancient Indian principle, Satyam Shivam Sundaram, he is recreating a world that is true, beautiful and good for all. They inspire the readers for living a better life. Bond writes:

After forty years of writing very little money and not much recognition outside India. But I have sung my songs and told my tales. And I doubt, if I would have done my better in other circumstances. As a boy reading was my religion, writing helped me record its journey¹⁸.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my PhD supervisor, Prof Ravi K Dhar- Director JIMS- Vasant Kunj New Delhi, for his continuous help and guidance in writing this research paper.

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