



ELEMENTS OF HORROR AND TERROR IN THE STORIES OF BOND

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ABSTRACT

In today's fast paced era of technological innovation and scientific intentions and discovery, dwelling upon the paranormal activities that results into horror sensation and scary feelings appears a bit unusual kind of task as to whether people in general are readily available to accommodate their open minds full of latest updates of world's smartest gadgets with those supernatural, mysterious and eerie kind of elements. It all seems credible when we come across Ruskin Bond's sharing his own experience of seeing the apparition of his late father-Aubrey Bond. Bond's selected stories replete with elements of terror have undoubtedly been successful in drawing his peruses from that beautiful ambience of oak and pine and cedar to the mysterious woods witnessing the frightening environment full of creepy horrifying surroundings. Bond has given a realistic touch to the description of the scenario making the readers awestruck and his quality of making unbelievable a believable one made him the Connoisseur of the mysterious and macabre.

Keywords: horror sensation, supernatural, mysterious, eerie elements of terror, creepy horrifying surroundings.

The term 'Horror' and its implication

As per Collins English Dictionary, horror is a feeling of great shock, fear and worry caused by something extremely unpleasant.

'Horror' can be described as feeling of terror or fear arising out of various factors like natural forces of nature such as rain, thunder, lightning, strong winds etc. It may also arise out of some kind of supernatural factors or scaring imagination or deep thinking or involvement into some elements that is hard to believe.

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1P a g e



As per www.dictionary.com,"an overwhelming and painful feeling caused by something frightfully shocking, terrifying or revolting".

As per www.merriam-webster.com," Painful and intense fear, dread, or dismay, intense aversion or repugnance."

Horror has an element of terror in it but seeing closely there is a difference between the two. Horror is an immediate feeling arising after the happening of something unusual or dreadful and in contrast to that, terror is a feeling that occurs before the horror feeling takes its formation.

As per <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Terror is usually described as the feeling of dread and anticipation that precedes the horrifying experience. By contrast, horror is the feeling of revulsion that usually occurs after something frightening is seen, heard or otherwise experienced. Horror has also been defined as a combination of terror and revulsion.

When a scary situation is faced, one gets horrified as the one witnessed in a horror film full of mysterious elements and suspense. The frightening surrounding could be created by imagining ghost, apparition, shadows etc. whereas terror has some one specific that is responsible to terrorize.

According to Ferriera,Avid Cinepints," Horror is the feeling that one can get from a scary situation. When one is frightened by a scenario such as the kind presented in a movie, it is said to be horror. It can be ghost or just a general feeling, mood or ambience.

Terror on the other hand has a specific person or entity behind it. Terror is the act which is inflicted on people to terrorize is to specifically go after people with the purpose of frightening. So one is a general feeling and the other is an intended malicious act on a person or more likely a group of people.

Text and Author

Bond is undoubtedly a prolific story teller which is quite evident from the wise range of his writings. We are aware of his wondrous imagination poured in his stories full of nature love and mellow magic of his beloved mountains.



Coming over to his stories with a diffusion of element of horror and terror, we can say that Bond knows very well how to create an eerie kind of atmosphere.

It is indeed a matter of debate and confusion as to whether the ghosts, spirits or apparition really exists but Bond has made it convincing by adding not only the scary hue to the ambience but also a nostalgic and romantic touch to it. His spine chilling sagas are comprised of gripping and thrilling sensations.

The element of fear, terror, panic and revulsion in the stories of Bond undoubtedly make the horror read an interesting affair. These stories are a successful attempt in passing a boring night or to get through a dull afternoon by dabbling one's mind in such a wonderful involvement of horror read.

His book *A Season of Ghosts* is a collection full of eerie, spinechilling and creepy ghost stories that transports us into the mysterious woods of Mussoorie that is made real like and vivid by Ruskin Bond's ghosts.

In the story 'Eyes of the Cat' from his book *Time Stops at Shamli*, we come across the characters of binya who has ventured into the dark forest where silent and darkest dense trees makes the environment horror struck. She starts walking fast. The following lines gives us the clear picture of the dark forest:

The short cut took Binya through the dark oak forest. The crooked, tormented branches of the oaks threw twisted shadows across the path. A jackal howls at the moon. Binya walked fast and her breath came in short sharp gasps.(138)

One can encounter the feeling of horror while reading these lines extracted from the story 'Whispering in the Dark' from *Time Stops at Shamli*

As I turned from the mirror thought I saw someone, something, some reflection other than mine, and move behind me in the mirror. I caught a glimpse of whiteness, a pale oval face, burning eyes, long tresses, golden in the candlelight. But when i looked in the mirror again there was nothing to be seen but my own pilled face.(119)

In the above story, Bond has been quite economical in his words has written from his heart that has made him an expert master story teller who is good at capturing atmosphere of the deserted cottage with a grotesque mirror of rococo design and portraits thing in the wall seems springing to life.



‘Whispering in the dark’ is a fresh kind of spooky story that is successful in changing the reader’s perception towards the theory of paranormal activities. The following lines from the same story compels the reader to conjure up the vision of that dark night in deserted cottage when you’ve retired to bed and as soon as you close the eyes some whispers break open your sleep—“I blew out the candle—and the darkness closed in around me, and the whispering began.....The whispering began as soon as i closed my eyes and couldn’t tell where it came from”.

The atmosphere created by Bond is so vivid and real like that these unconvincing stories tends to be convincing sometimes. In one of his other interesting story ‘The Haunted Bicycle’, the narrator while cycling along a quiet unfrequented forest road noticed a small boy standing in the middle of the road in such late hours, which was indeed surprising. The unusual behavior of the child made the narrator afraid and bound to think as to how this is possible. The reference to these lines from the text gives undoubtedly scary feelings:

“The wind was against us, and as i cycled on, i shivered with cold but the boy did not seem to feel at”. (112)

I noticed that the boy’s hands, which were raising on the handle bar, had grown long and black and hairy. Their tone now was menacing and far from childlike .I took a quick glance over my shoulder and had my worst fears confirmed. The girl’s face was long and bloated. Her legs, black and hairy were trailing along the ground. (113)

We are well aware of the fact that science denies the existence of such illogical or supernatural elements but Bond’s stories have in it some kind of paranormal happenings in some corners of the world. Bond has penned down several other spooky stories after ‘Whispering in the Dark’ that has scary and supernatural settings. He has immense quality of portraying real life like characters like ghostly kind that infuses feelings of fear and horror merely by imagining and the story woven around such characters sends scary goose bumps giving a feeling of ghostly presence around. It is indeed a treat reading Bond’s anthology. His other stories like, ‘A Face in the Dark’, ‘Susanne’s Seven Husbands’, ‘A traveler’s tale’, ‘The Overcoat’ have that real thrilling sensation. In order to bring his horror stories sound real Bond in one of his short stories has recounted his experience of seeing the apparition of his late father Aubrey Bond.

Roads to Mussoorie is a compendium of wonderful stories of varying kind born out of Bond’s wondrous imagination. ‘Some Hill Station Ghosts’ is meticulously written by Bond with a description of ghostly encounters. The horror and feeling of terror is created by a character of women in white sitting on the parapet by the side of the road. She is referred as Bhoot Aunty by the resider’s there and to offer her a lift is considered as to court disaster.



In the same story there is a description of a deserted house which is believed to be the haunted one. Strange sounds are heard in the night which makes the atmosphere very scary.

A terrifying experience of a character Mr. Jacob is mentioned here who does a night duty at the morgue. It's necessary to mention the following lines from the text that lends a convincing touch to the incident:

The morgue had no electricity, just a kerosene lamp, and after sometime i noticed that the flame was very low. Lamp went out and something moved very softly and quietly past me. I felt quite sick and could hear my heart pounding away. Presently the footsteps came nearer and nearer. Something cold and icy touched one of my hands. It was behind me. I was in the arms of the corpse. (82)

It is mentioned in the above story that after this horrifying experience, Mr.Jacob refused doing any more night duty at the morgue.

Bond has given a real like description of a woman in white who wore a wicked smile, was attractive and looks were extremely scaring with her canines protruding slightly in vampire fashion. An added mention is made of a house in Dehradun which was lying deserted with no inhabitants for several years. Chowkidars of the house himself tells that he hear strange sounds in the night. The following lines deserve mention, “The atmosphere of the place doesn’t bother him, but he does hear strange sounds in the night, like someone crawling on the floor and someone groaning”. (81)

Bond has weaved the story in several dimensions also mentioning about a place called Chakrata, where he come across a large black cat and when called out to it, the creature turned with the eyes of human and a face of ugly woman. Following lines are worthwhile to be mentioned:

The creature turned, and looked full at me with eyes that were human and a face of an ugly woman. The creature snarled at me, and the snarl became an angry howl. Then it vanished! (84)

In the above lines, Bond sends a fearful sensation by giving such an unusual description of a cat into human and then suddenly disappearing. It is undoubtedly true that stories having elements of horror and terror are enveloped with a kind of fatal attraction. It cannot be denied that the scarier, the better.



A face in the dark.... is a beautiful collection of stories with the equally fascinating mountain forests and set in and around the hills of Shimla and Mussoorie. Bond's writings are so immersive of horror elements that it makes the reader think twice before venturing out in the dark. The witches, ghosts, monster or wild creatures in Bond's stories are as real as people he writes about. Even if one feels hard to believe such stories with paranormal activities, one cannot deny its fatal attraction and it is indeed an enjoyable experience to bury in such sensational reads.

Sapna Pandey has mentioned the shrouded elements of Bond's writing in her research paper titled as 'Ghost and supernatural in Ruskin Bond's work' in The International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities.

Bond uses his plots to evoke a sinister atmosphere of thunder, lightening, whisper and figures seen by candlelight. The background of 'Whispering in the Dark' is scary. He writes from soul. He preaches man to love nature. It is really difficult to understand why and how he gives impetus to existence of ghosts. Bond portrays ghosts in such a way that readers are compelled to believe on the supernatural element. There is life beyond the circle of light that our eyes can see, in the realm of darkness which only a few have experienced.

Other stories 'Dead man's Gift', 'The Haunted Bicycle', 'The Eyes of the Cat' etc. are skillfully weaved to bring reader into another world and enhances the effect of terror.

After writing children's novels for a long time when asked about intrigued about the horror as a theme, Bond replies, "when i run out of real people to write about make up supernatural characters."

Dhemant Soni wrote in his paper 'Ruskin Bond-A mysterious Ghost Story Writer' about the interest and curiosity Bond garners through his remarkable stories like, A Face in the Dark, The Haunted Bicycle, The vision, Whistling in the Dark, The Black Cat, The Wind on Haunted Hill, The Ghost in The Garden, Eyes of the Cat, Night of the millennium etc.

Ruskin remarks that he doesn't believe in ghosts but saw them in wood, in a bar, in a crowd, in a deserted cottage or house etc. There is a description of haunted places, weird atmosphere and strange atmosphere which do not take place in real life.

A face in the Dark is full of fear and dark atmosphere of hills and one of his story The Vision in which Bond shares his own experience at Dehradun where he saw his father who was dead. Once while riding a bicycle he saw figure, also in the balcony and near mountain stream.



CONCLUSION

Stories of Bond are so catching that once started cannot be left unfinished. Such stories make reading very interesting and leave the readers with a grip of deep thinking as to whether such things can ever happen. His skepticism makes him align with us and adds credibility to his accounts. Bond's ghosts are not always scary, menacing, bloodthirsty creatures from hell who are an embodiment of evil instead they sort of coexist with us humans.

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