




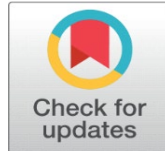
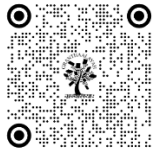
EXAMINING THE EMOTION OF LOVE IN RUSKIN BOND'S SELECTED WORKS THROUGH STERNBERG'S TRIANGULAR THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This paper applies Robert J. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love to explore the emotional and psychological foundations of love in the works of Ruskin Bond. The study aims to uncover how intimacy, passion, and commitment evolve, intermingle, or deteriorate amid wartime tension and suspended moments by focusing on two specific texts: *A Flight of Pigeons* and "Time Stops at Shamli". The findings reveal that Bond's characters often confront intense emotional attachments that are ephemeral and tragic, shedding light on the spectrum between companionate, romantic, and unfulfilled love. The study employs Sternberg's diagrammatic framework to illustrate love as a construct that collapses under the weight of silence, time, and circumstances rather than simply existing as an emotion.

Keywords: Love, Ephemeral, Passion, Commitment, Bonds, Emotional, Unfulfilled

1. INTRODUCTION

Ruskin Bond, one of India's most beloved storytellers, often weaves narratives exploring the depth of human emotions, particularly the sensation of love. His portrayal of love is not confined to romantic ideals but extends to familial bonds, platonic relationships, and the subtle, unspoken connections between individuals. Love does not erupt in Ruskin Bond's novels; instead, it lingers in the sleepy hill towns and chaotic battle zones. In Bond's writing, love is more about reflection than consummation. A powerful analytical tool for comprehending this reflective aspect of romantic feeling is Robert J. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, which consists of the triadic parts of closeness, passion, and commitment (Sternberg 119). A triangle is frequently used to illustrate the idea, with each vertex representing a different component (see Fig. 1).

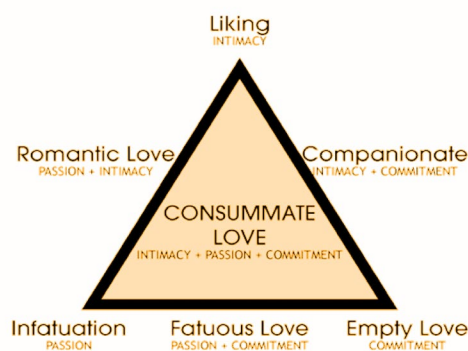
Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons* and "Time Stops at Shamli" offer opposing landscapes: one depicts a moment in time that has been suspended, while the other depicts a wartime confinement that ironically promotes emotional emancipation. When taken as a whole, they reveal the disjointed structure of human love. In *A Flight of Pigeons* (1978), Bond delicately examines love amid the turbulence

of 1857 colonial India, showcasing complex relationships grounded in cultural and emotional contrasts. Similarly, in one more short story, "Time Stops at Shamli", which is about unfulfilled love, one may find the absence of connections and yet the presence of solid human emotion.

The Triangular Theory of Love by Robert Sternberg provides a significant framework to analyse Ruskin Bond's treatment of emotions concerning love stories. Sternberg's theory posits that love comprises three components—Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment—which interact to form different kinds of love. This model offers a lens to dissect the layered emotional relationships that Bond creates, where love often transcends cultural, political, and personal barriers. Intimacy concerns relate to the deep, hidden, emotive sphere of human nature, which, from a relational perspective, may exclude the platonic conception of relations in human connectivity and sudden separations.

1) The Triangular Theory of Love: A Comprehensive Outlook

The framework of emotion as love is identified and explained from several perspectives, especially the psychological framework. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love has been instrumental in understanding the multifaceted nature of love. As Sternberg describes, intimacy is the closeness and emotional bonding between individuals. At the same time, passion involves physical attraction or emotional stimulation, and commitment refers to the decision to maintain the relationship over time. Combining these components results in different types of love, such as romantic, companionate, or consummate.



Source: "Triangular Theory of Love." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangular Theory of Love.

Sternberg's theory provides a comprehensive framework that analyses the emotion of love and categorises human expressions into different phases. These components form combinations that characterise various types of love to reveal a dynamism where some relationships may achieve equilibrium, thus attaining fulfilment. Without the necessary balance, one may observe unfulfilled love in relationships. There are numerous interpretations to delineate the truth of the emotional sphere of love, which provides a positive perspective on relevant literary texts, including the novel *A Flight of Pigeons* and the story "Time Stops at Shamli".

1.1. UNRECIPROCATED LOVE IN RUSKIN BOND'S A FLIGHT OF PIGEONS

In the narrative of *Ruth*, Ruskin Bond illustrates shared compassion and humanity in the face of war, with the character's instinct for protection igniting an unforeseen kindness. Sternberg's theory offers authentic insight into human relationships, especially Javed's love, which encounters religious constraints for Ruth Labadoor. This framework analyses distinct forms of love and their interactions, shedding light on Javed's complex feelings for Ruth. Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons* serves as a rich context for examining Sternberg's model while highlighting its limitations. The novella portrays the challenges faced by Ruth Labadoor, a British girl, and her family during the 1857 mutiny. A key relationship in the story is between Ruth and Jawed Khan, who harbours deep affection for her. Javed's feelings for Ruth can be understood through Sternberg's triangle; his passion is evident in his actions, while his commitment is evidenced by his protective efforts amidst the socio-political strife between their communities. Nevertheless, the intimacy in their relationship remains unclear, as Ruth does not fully return his feelings. This disparity in Sternberg's components highlights the cultural and emotional obstacles affecting their connection.

Javed's passion for Ruth is evident in his fascination with her; however, his actions reveal a lack of deep emotional understanding and respect for her autonomy. Ruth and other refugees are captured and controlled by Jawed Khan and his group of henchmen (Bond 41). His romantic inclinations are shaped by societal pressure and personal confusion, leading to an unbalanced relationship that never fully develops into a loving connection. His inability to commit genuinely indicates that his feelings are more about immediate desire and emotional arousal than lasting, meaningful love.

Passion takes centre stage in the novella. In Javed's scenario, his feelings for Ruth predominantly reside within the realm of passion, accompanied by a slight sense of intimacy, yet lacking genuine commitment. This incomplete version of love often triggers

internal conflict as his soldier duties overshadow his yearning for emotional closeness. His passion prevails as the primary element of his emotional bond with Ruth. Sternberg states this situation likely mirrors infatuation, marked by passion but devoid of intimacy and commitment (Sternberg 123). Examining his feelings for Ruth through Sternberg's triangular theory of love uncovers a character struggling with inner conflict, societal expectations, and emotional instability. Jawed's emotional path provides a glimpse into the intricacies of love. Sternberg defines passion as encompassing physical attraction, sexual desire, and romantic excitement (Sternberg 120). His deep fascination with Ruth is apparent in his obsessive behaviour towards her. He mentions to Marium, "I had seen your daughter long before the outbreak when I took a fancy to her" (Bond 50). However, his passion is unbalanced by a lack of shared intimacy or genuine commitment. This discrepancy results in love that is neither rooted in mutual understanding nor deep emotional ties, but instead propelled by impulsive attraction and the exhilaration of desire. The passion central to the protagonist's love suggests a mature yet obsessive form of affection. Such love is typically one-sided and is not considered a healthy expression of love. He feels trapped by Ruth's beauty. Bond clarifies Jawed Khan's infatuation with Ruth through the narrator's lens.

"...But, oh, Chachi!" he exclaimed. "How can I make you understand the fascination this girl exerted over me when she was in her father's house? The very first time I saw her, I was struck by her beauty. She shone like Zohara, the morning star. Looking at her now, I realise the truth of the saying that a flower never looks so beautiful as when it is on its parent stem. Break it, and it withers in the hand. Would anyone believe this poor creature is the same angelic one I saw only a month ago?" (Bond 46)

As noted earlier, Sternberg emphasises that passion can generate strong emotional arousal, frequently without a basis of trust or shared experiences. Jawed's behaviour exemplifies this; his involvement with Ruth exhibits emotional intensity but falls short of the depth characteristic of enduring relationships. His feelings towards Ruth appear more possessive than collaborative, classifying their relationship as "infatuation" in Sternberg's model. Infatuation, driven by passion, is devoid of intimacy or commitment, leading to a fleeting and typically unstable connection.

A decline in intimacy within relationships may occur at a fundamental level, reflecting the second element of Sternberg's intimacy model. This element highlights the emotional closeness, bonding, and sharing typically fostered over time in a healthy partnership. However, such intimacy can wane, as illustrated in the novel *A Flight of Pigeons*, where there is scant evidence of true emotional closeness or understanding between Jawed and Ruth. Jawed's interactions with Ruth appear more transactional, driven by his desires instead of a shared emotional connection. He expresses his frustration about his situation with Ruth, asking his mother, "Tell me, Marium, how much longer am I to wait?" after dinner (Bond 92). Sternberg notes that intimacy requires open communication, mutual respect, and a sense of safety in revealing one's deepest thoughts and feelings. Conversely, Jawed experiences love as an emotion but lacks intimacy; he admits, "The girl has been in my mind for months. I am not Jawed if I let the opportunity pass me by" (Bond 51).

Thus, Jawed's relationship with Ruth lacks closeness and communication, as his actions do not indicate a genuine willingness to know or understand her on a deeper level. Instead, his feelings appear rooted in external attraction rather than a meaningful emotional bond. This absence of intimacy undermines the potential for a balanced relationship. It reinforces the power dynamics at play, with Jawed seeing Ruth more as an object of desire than a partner. He shares his thoughts with Mariyum, Ruth's brave mother:

"I am an impatient man, Marium, and life is not so long that I can wait an eternity to quench my desires. I have restrained myself out of respect for your wishes and for you. But my desire to call your girls my wife grows stronger daily, and I am prepared to take any risk to have her for my own" (Bond 58)

Sternberg's theory emphasises the significance of commitment in maintaining long-term relationships by stating that commitment may stem from a lack of desire and connection. According to this theory, accountability and loyalty are essential components of trust. Sternberg argues that commitment provides stability and a shared vision for the future, enabling love to endure over time (119). Jawed's hesitancy to commit to Ruth reflects the transient nature of his emotions and his emotional immaturity. Although Ruth excites him briefly, his lack of commitment makes his love fleeting and shallow. This absence of dedication suggests that his feelings for Ruth are akin to infatuation, characterised by vigorous intensity but minimal commitment. His impulsive and often self-serving behaviour illustrates his genuine lack of dedication to Ruth.

The protagonist struggles to commit to any course of action fully, much less a relationship with Ruth, because he struggles to balance his responsibilities as a soldier with his desire for love and connection. "He had not expressed any enthusiasm for the massacre at Muhamdi, where a company of sepoys finished off the few Europeans who had managed to escape from Shahjahanpur" (Bond 89). This passive phase highlights his lack of dedication to either cause.

Sternberg's typology amplifies infatuation and the desire for physical intimacy, describing the combination of high passion with low intimacy and commitment as infatuation rather than pure love. This state can result in emotional highs and lows, with feelings that can fade as quickly as they emerge. Jawed's infatuation is often intense yet fleeting. His infatuation with Ruth reflects his internal conflict and the significant social pressures he faces. His intense passion lacks the emotional depth and future-oriented commitment essential for a lasting relationship, which is vital in any loving connection. Infatuation can lead to problematic behaviours, including possessiveness, jealousy, and impulsivity.

Javed displays characteristic traits throughout the novel, with his emotions swinging between deep attraction and frustration. Bond recounts the moment when the captive women walk barefoot, accompanied by him, as Jawed Khan marvels at Ruth's striking

beauty. From Ruth's perspective, Bond writes, "These are the Firangans who were hiding with the Lala! How miserable they appear. But one is young-she has beautiful eyes! They resemble her mother's -notice!" (Bond 41). This difficulty in managing his emotions leads to a turbulent dynamic in his relationship with Ruth, which cannot endure over time. Sternberg points out that infatuation without intimacy or commitment often dissipates quickly, resulting in feelings of emotional void or regret. By applying Sternberg's theory to Javed's relationship with Ruth, we see that his feelings are primarily driven by passion, devoid of the anchoring elements of intimacy or commitment. His infatuation with Ruth reflects his internal emotional conflicts and societal pressures as a soldier in a war-torn setting. Ultimately, his affection for Ruth is transient, unstable, and characterised by a lack of mutual comprehension, echoing Sternberg's idea of infatuation. Without the profound emotional bond that intimacy provides or the reassurance of commitment, the protagonist's love remains superficial, propelled by fleeting desires instead of enduring affection. His love for Ruth is obsessive and possessive, and he needs control amid chaotic circumstances.

1.2. "TIME STOPS AT SHAMLI": LOVE SUSPENDED IN INTIMACY AND SILENCE

Ruskin Bond's brief novella, titled "Time Stops at Shamli" (1964), masterfully conveys the spirit of small-town India and the transient nature of interpersonal relationships. The story begins when the unidentified narrator disembarks from a train in the tranquil hamlet of Shamli, ostensibly due to a minor train issue. However, we subsequently get the impression that he might have had more profound, personal motivations. In this short story, Bond depicts a fleeting encounter between two characters whose shared past is imbued with unspoken love and melancholic longing. He meets several individuals during his brief stay, including Miss Deeds, the rigid schoolteacher; Mr. Dayal, the eccentric hotel manager; and most significantly, Sushila, a woman from his past. The narrator and Sushila are experiencing unresolved love and tension through whispered exchanges and shared silences. Bond expresses, "I was standing up now, though still leaning against the trees for support. Though I had never thought much about the sound of her voice, it seemed as familiar as the sounds of yesterday" (Bond 98). Sinha observes, "Bond's landscapes are charged with psychic resonance; the town of Shamli is a metaphor for emotional entrapment (98)". The oppressive heat and inertia of the place underscore the characters' inability to break free from their psychological and societal constraints.

Ruskin Bond often blurs the line between autobiography and fiction. "Time Stops at Shamli" reflects his experiences of emotional isolation and unfulfilled love, which are common themes in his writing. Bond admitted that many stories blend memory and fantasy. Sushila may represent someone he loved but never dated. His novels revisit themes of desire and lost possibilities, hinting at his emotional landscape. The author's ability to express so much with so little sets "Time Stops at Shamli" apart. The author visits his past and expresses:

She was near me, and I could look at her home closely. Her cheeks did not have the same freshness -they were pale -and she was thinner now, but her eyes were the same, smiling the same way. Her fingers, when she took my hand, were the same delicate fingers.

Talk to me, she said, "Tell me about yourself." (Bond 98)

The town of Shamli is depicted in sepia-toned nostalgia through straightforward yet evocative prose. Bond uses lyrical language to create a sense of stillness and nuanced emotional depth in his story. Due to this style, readers can lose themselves in a world as lovely as it is transitory, which critics have praised for capturing "the quiet rhythms of rural India."

Bond lets mood, stillness, and subtle gestures speak for him instead of using intricate storylines or dramatic turns. His art is distinguished by its subtle emotionality. One review notes that "the novella's strength rests in its silences." Bond's understated prose heightens the story's melancholy. His sparse dialogue with Sushila pulses with unspoken longing, allowing readers to feel what the characters dare not voice (Pradhan)." The ambience reflects the beauty of brief interactions and offers more than mere background. The title reveals a deeper metaphorical dimension. "Time Stops at Shamli" signifies a transitional place between past and future, nostalgia and release. Bond uses the train station as a metaphor for transience, where memories are evoked but not settled (Sangal). The dialogues are loaded with implication, illustrating what Pradhan calls Bond's "subtle melancholy" that allows "the quiet desolation of his characters to resonate more deeply (78).

The novella's potential autobiographical aspect adds significant emotional depth. Ruskin Bond often reflects on his life, admitting that many of his narratives are "part experience, part imagination." This creates a subtle emotional tension that permeates the narration. Bond's portrayal of love in "Time Stops at Shamli" aligns with a diminished triangular love. It offers readers a complex psychological and emotional landscape that reflects Sternberg's less-explored love triangle dynamics, particularly companionate and empty love. Let us analyse how this story blends all the elements of this theory.

2. EMOTIONAL INTIMACY PORTRAYS LOVE UNDERNEATH THE SURFACE.

A key narrative element is the profound emotional connection between the unnamed narrator and her lost love, Sushila. Even with the passage of time and physical separation, their bond reveals an exceptional sense of familiarity and comfort. Sternberg characterises intimacy as "feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness" (121). This is evident in the narrator's view of

Sushila when he shares, "I felt that her charm and attractiveness and warmth could not have been appreciated, or even noticed, by that curiously distracted man (Bond 100)." The writer shares her longing for the lost love and longs for the same physical closeness. He elaborates, "I took her hand, and my feet churned up the mud at the bottom of the stream. As the mud subsided, I saw Sushila's face reflected in the water, and looking up at her again, into her dark eyes, the old yearning returned, and I wanted to care for her and protect her (100)." The delicate memory of intimacy suggests they have preserved emotional closeness despite her absence. This reserved intimacy is the most potent aspect of the triangular structure, reinforcing the story's emotional depth.

3. THE SHADES OF FADING PASSION IN A WITHERED LOVE

Contrary to intimacy, which quietly thrives in memory, passion seems nearly absent in the present interaction. Sternberg defines passion as the "drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation" (123). The reunion depicted in "Time Stops at Shamli" shows a notable lack of love or physical emotion. The narrator's internal conflict suggests more restraint than desire, and his feelings remain unspoken. Nevertheless, the emotional undertone occasionally quivers with repressed longing. Bond alludes to unexpressed yearning, regret, or feelings of abandonment by stating:

I remembered having heard that Sushila had been married to a man she didn't like. I remembered having shrugged off the news, because it meant she would never come my way again, and I have never yearned after something that has been irredeemably lost. But she had come my way again. And was it still lost? That was what I wanted to know... (Bond 102).

The fervour that once ignited their relationship is now absent. The writer, filled with unpleasant feelings of being rejected again by her love, contemplates as he shares: "I could say no more. I was angry again and rebellious, and there was no one and nothing to rebel against. I could not understand someone who was afraid to break away from an unhappy existence lest that existence should come unhappier" (102). What once may have invigorated their bond now lingers as a ghostly memory, rendering their relationship more mournful than passionate. Passion as a component exists in the story but is not reciprocated at the required times by both the characters, missing its substantial presence in Sternberg's triangle of love relationship.

4. SUBTLE COMMITMENT AND PASSIVITY

Sternberg defines commitment as the choice to love someone and the determination to sustain that love (124). This narrative portrays commitment as the most delicate and unclear aspect. Although the narrator and Sushila share a profound emotional connection, they hesitate- perhaps even struggle—to express their feelings. Bond emphasises non-commitment by depicting this emotional paralysis and its subtle devastation. The narrator's beloved grapples with indecision and uncertainty regarding her emotions. While the narrator aspires to encourage her to embrace a new life of love away from Shamli, she battles with her commitment. She expresses her conflicting wishes, saying, "I will get there before you. But if I am not there, then do not wait; do not come back for me. Go on your way. It will mean I do not want to come" (Bond 108). This illustrates the absence of commitment, as described in Sternberg's triangle, which severely impacts the emotional dynamics between the two lovers. In the end, the narrator contemplates, "I was not disappointed. I had never really expected her to come. Unattainable, Sushila would always be more bewitching and beautiful than if she were mine"(Bond 110). This silence, indicative of a commitment void, is more damaging than any outright dismissal. The characters' inaction arises from their acceptance of societal and temporal constraints, coupled with missed opportunities, rather than a disinterest in one another. Once filled with promise, their love is now rooted in nostalgia and hindered by emotional stagnation.

"Time Stops at Shamli" portrays love in a psychologically transitional space. It encourages us to explore its deteriorated forms rather than merely conforming to Sternberg's ideal triangle. Intimacy and commitment without passion, i.e., a "love found in long-term marriages where passion has faded but deep affection and commitment remain" (Sternberg 128), can sometimes evoke companionate love. In other instances, it resembles empty love, where dedication endures without passion or closeness. Nonetheless, this narrative occupies a space between the two categories, demonstrating how authentic human connections often challenge established psychological frameworks. Therefore, the story's "Time Stop" is not solely geographical; it is also emotional- a moment when love is felt but not expressed, remembered but not revived.

5. CONCLUSION

The narratives in Bond's works featuring a love theme depict romantic relationships that are no longer active, yet refuse to end when viewed through the lens of Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. The story's emotional resonance is rooted in longing and lack rather than fulfilment, a theme Bond masterfully handles with restraint. Love is rarely a perfect triangle in literature or real life; instead, it is more commonly fragmented, with missed opportunities, stillness, and remembrance carrying just as much emotional weight as love or yearning. Bond's tale serves as a reminder that some love stories are written in pause rather than action, where time halts during those moments. Both tales, *A Flight of Pigeons* and "Time Stops at Shamli", depict incomplete triangles: *Pigeons* represents desire and obsession, while *Shamli* focuses on closeness and remembrance. However, they conceptually agree that

circumstance is the real enemy of love. For Pigeons, the limitations are fear, culture, and conflict; for Shamli, they are time and indecision. Bond's sparse writing style enhances this emotional calmness, offering observation rather than catharsis. According to Sternberg, love fails when "one or more of the components weaken" (Sternberg 130). These traits are precisely portrayed, making Bond's lovers unique. Thus, it is evident that fatuous love may not be sustainable in the long term. It may be intense, but it lacks emotional intimacy and may fizzle away.

Ruskin Bond's tales poignantly depict love that is abruptly interrupted, whether by hesitant lovers or by obstacles. Sternberg's triangular model sheds light on these emotional intricacies. Bond's stories defy tidy resolutions concerning love, as seen with Sushila and the narrator, who gradually separate in Shamli, and Javed and Ruth, who navigate a cultural gap in Pigeons. In these narratives, love remains unfulfilled, becoming more memorable as an intense feeling than as an active experience.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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