

Analysis of Symbolism and Power Dynamics in Ruskin Bond's

The Blue Umbrella

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Abstract

In this research paper, the complex representation of power relations and symbolism in Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrella* is explored, and how ostensibly straightforward elements of a children's novella convey rich socio-political significance. The research examines the symbolic role of the blue umbrella as a metaphor for longing, status, and change in a close-knit rural society. It is through this object that Bond quietly reveals the fluidity of power — how it is acquired, overthrown, and finally redefined.

Keyword: Ruskin Bond, *The Blue Umbrella*, symbolism, power dynamics, rural hierarchy, material desire, allegory, moral transformation

The article examines how people such as Ram Bharosa and Binya respond to societal ranks, with the umbrella serving as a signifier of agency, privilege, and jealousy. The innocent possession by Binya causes an unintended distortion of the admiration-respect equilibrium in the village, exposing undercurrent social anxieties. The desire by Ram Bharosa for the object attests to the deeper desire to be in command and recognized and illustrates how materialism conceals emotional and social vulnerabilities.

Through an examination of the umbrella as symbol and the emotional and moral transformation of the characters, the paper contends that *The Blue Umbrella* is an allegorical

novel that challenges conventional power dynamics and demonstrates the redemptive power of humility and kindness. The symbolic trajectory of the umbrella — from desired object to a tool of grace — is a trajectory from external validation to internal empowerment.

Introduction

Emotions tell a new story in “*The Blue Umbrella*” by Ruskin Bond. First published in 1980 and later in 1992 by Rupa publication explores the life of a simple child of a rural area. This magnificent work brings readers to emotions such as rage, jealousy and sympathy. This work that moves children and adults alike is a Children's fantasy Novella. But this work is simple yet intricate and can not be classified as a light read. It is in fact a work which in shadow explains how hierarchy and social class works. This light hearted work has been adapted into celluloid by Vishal Bhardwaj in 2005, winning a national filmfare award for the Best Children’s Film in 2007.

Akin to Bond’s other works, this one is depicted in a small village in the Garhwal hills where Biniya, a young girl around ten years old, is seen calling out for her cows. The very first scene of this novella frames an idea of how the plot would carry. The insight given here is that the simplicity of living and mind that the protagonist is carrying might hinder due to external forces.

“‘Nellu, Neelu!’ cried Binya. She scrambled barefoot over the short summer grass, the rocks, rean over the brow of the hill, all the time calling ‘Neelu, Neelu!’”(Bond,1974).

This sweet and innocent girl child depicted as a typical *pahadi* (mountain) girl with her fair skin, dark eyes, rosy cheeks and raven hair tied in a pigtail is on her days duty to let her cows, Neelu(Blue) and Gori(Fair), when she encounters a group of picnickers in the forest. She is fascinated with an ornamental blue umbrella that one of the ladies there had. Bond in his works has always glorified simple living and he does the same for his character Binya.

Ruskin Bond has been a lover of nature and in all his work he beautifies the simplicity of places he has lived in. His birth place is Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh. He spent most of his childhood in Dehradun with his grandmother. His schooling is from Bishop Cotton school Shimla. He graduated from Shimla as well and now lives with his adoptive family in Mussoorie.(V, 2023) He really has a thing for the mountains and his very first recognized work “*The Room on the Roof*” is a proof of his dedication to the sum and substance of the hills. Most of his works are semi autobiographical as they depict a young Bond exploring the forests or going about his daily chores. One that is a highlight in all his works is how he is characterized as a fanatic for mother nature. His knowledge of flora and fauna are commendable. His work “*The Book of Nature*” showcases his experiences as a child which built his base for such knowledge and exploration.

“There was plenty of space at the back of the house for shrubs and fruit trees, but the front garden was a maze of flower beds of all shapes and sizes, and everything that could grow in Dehra (a fertile valley) was grown in them-masses of sweet peas, petunias, antirrhinum, poppies, phlox, and larkspur; scarlet poinsettia leaves draped the garden walls, while purple and red bougainvillea climbed the porch; geraniums of many hues mounted the veranda steps; and, indoors, vases full of cut flowers gave the rooms a heady fragrance.” (Bond, 2004)

Most of Bond's works are semi autobiographical and nostalgic. This anglo-Indian writer wins hearts again and again by the simplicity of his work. In his books he mostly explores themes such as innocence, human behaviour, etc. Some major tools he uses in his works are vivid imagery, sensory details and personification. “The wind fanned Binya’s cheeks. The umbrella stirred on the grass”(25). Born on 19th may 1934, he has been called the writer of millennial by Niloy Chakraborty in his paper called “*Ruskin Bond as a writer of Millennial:*

A critical Study of Bond's The Blue Umbrella” . He researches and emphasises on how the nostalgic feature and simplicity of Bond's writing makes him the only author who has readers ranging from 10 to 70 years old. He calls him a writer of all generations.(Chakraborty, 2022)

He quotes U. Sumathy in his book “Ecocriticism in practice” and a critique by Nandhakumar K,N.Shamini, 2020 to further justify Bond’s love for nature.

“Nature writing is not just any writing that happens to mention the outdoors, the flora and the fauna. It is born out of love, respect and awe. It finds its subject during days of close observation of the natural world. It is the voice born out of a relationship with nature developed during those days. It is about the interconnections and interrelationships that form this world”(Sumathy, 2009)

“From the groovy hills of Mussoorie two watchful eyes have been observing everyday little events to make them a big reason for many famous literary writings. These are the eyes of an ordinary looking man, always lost in his imaginations. Instead of having an absent-minded attitude, he provided entertainment to children and grown-ups as well. Many people travel up to the hills of Mussoorie just to have a look at him. He actually has become a celebrity for a large number of his readers. Although he has name, fame, popularity and establishment in the world of Indian-English literature but he prefers to a life of person, devoted to nature thoroughly." Nandhakumar K, N. Shamini, 2020.”(Shamini, K, 2020)

“The Blue Umbrella” is a work where simplicity is contradicted with complexity of human behaviour at its best. Our main character, Binyadevi, is seen calling out for her domestic cows. She had taken them out for grazing. Hills have always been the secluded region of the country as they had been hard to go to. Binya’s village was no less distant than that, though it was near a famous hill station but far enough for people from plains not wanting to explore it.

It was yet another day for her, just her and her cows. In her short introduction by Bond, he lets us know that she is somewhere near 10 years old by counting the number of winters that have passed since her birth. Her father had passed away two years after her birth. This is important information as the lack of paternal presence has led her brother who is later introduced and her to act more mature than their age. Because now their freedom, safeguard and any guidance for the future is in their hands alone. There is not much involvement of their mother in these things as seen in the novella.

“Hypothesis 3 (H3): Parental death in infancy and childhood is more harmful to status attainment than parental death in adolescence.” (Feldbrügge, 2019). Bijju whose birth name is Vijay and Binya’s mother has been seen providing the mothers nurturing aspect but is not seen providing any harsh guidance which is stereotyped as the fathers duty. Both of these kids are seen free in an interesting manner which is that they have adult-like habits, including doing most things and making most major decisions by themselves, without consulting any adults. In the first chapter it is evident how confident Binya is in her knowledge of the mountain as she has ventured wherever she had wanted to. She is seen to be a bit lost in the bustling market of a nearby town because of its unfamiliarity. While calling out for Neelu and Gori she stumbles upon the fallen pine walking toward the spur of the hills. Including a description about her appearance, one important thing had been mentioned, and that was Binya’s Leopard Claw necklace decorated with glass beads. Such artifacts are tribal and taken as lucky charms, for identification of tribe or for spiritual reasons. In one of the tables from Shekhar Joshi’s book called “*Book on tribal art of uttarakhand*” he mentions an artifact called Rupen mal which is a necklace with colored beads, coins, teeth and claws. The setting of this work is in the Garhwal hills region of Himachal Pradesh but the Garhwal tubes mostly have common ornamentation.

Sl. No.	Ornament	Mode of wearing
1.	Bichhuwas	Toe-rings of Silver
2.	Keels	Small Stud/nose pin
3.	Nath	Nose Ring of Gold
4.	Karnphul	Ear Stud of Gold / Silver
5.	Munare	Heavy gold/silver ear ring
6.	Hansuli	Heavy Silver Ornament worn around the neck
7.	Chandrarhar	Necklace of Silver
8.	Rupen mal	Necklaces with Colored Beads/ Coins/ Teeth/ Claws
9.	Dubjyor	Necklace of Silver
10.	Dor	Armlets of Silver
11.	Chainpatti	Copper/ Silver/ Colored Glass
12.	Syundara (Teeth of Veena Kasturi)	hung on near the bust or waist
13.	Paunji	Hands
14.	Dhagula	Hands
15.	Attardan	hung on near the waist
16.	Kankuri	Ears
17.	Maijam	A strip on Feet
18.	Jhartar	Wire on Feet
19.	Amrittar	Feet
20.	Pulia	Feet
21.	Guloband	Gold around neck
22.	Jhumke	Ear
23.	Ginal	Neck
24.	Murki	Ear rings
25.	Bujani	Ear rings
26.	Gokhar	Ear rings

(Joshi, 2015)

In the very first chapter, she encounters a group of picnickers from the plains while venturing around the grasslands. These picnickers were mostly couples, men in summer shirts and women in saree. These jolly, laughing women and men were none of her concern as her vision had been blinded by a velvet blue umbrella which is used for ornamental purposes also known as parasol. Though her focus on the parasol had only been shifted after this sweet child had gazed over the food the picnickers had. She does get some of that food as the picnicker mistakes her interest in them for having some of it. Just as interested as she was in that umbrella,

they got interested in her leopard claw necklace. For people of the plain, this tribal artifact is an impossible dream to buy as it has no supply in the mainstream market. These necklaces are majorly made within the tribe. As they passed her some of their food while eyeing her over for being so weary yet so beautiful with rosy cheeks, one of the ladies demanded from her partner to get that leopard necklace for her. This can also be seen as a common philosophical idea that you do not admire what's yours but find value in what others have. This lady was interested in Binya's necklace and Binya in her umbrella.

The guy offered her the money in exchange for the necklace as he very well knew he could not find this anywhere in the market. As he explained this to partner, her whining had made him offer Binya a price for the necklace instead. He offered her 2 rupee as the starting bid, moving on to 5 rupee. The leopard claw pendant mistaken for a tiger's claw was at stake. Seeing Binya hold her pendant close to her he stated that it may not be hers to sell. But the women would not stop gnawing at it. So he simply asked her what she would want for that pendant. She confidently pointed at the umbrella to which the women exclaimed. Here she exclaims ““ My umbrella! exclaimed the young woman. ‘She wants my umbrella. What Cheek!’” to which the man counters ““Well you want her pendant, don't you?””(Bond, 12). Both of the feminine creatures were reluctant to let go of their items but curious to own what the other had. After a quarrel session with her husband and being called out for acting foolish, she impulsively picks up the umbrella and passes it to Binya. Binya quickly removed her necklace and gave it to her. The women there started examining the enclave as Binya started to twirl around the not so small looking umbrella according to her stature in her hands. This is where the first chapter of the novella ends with six more to follow. But the very first chapter is enough to give a brief idea on what has to come forward. The theme of greed, innocence and desire have already been depicted in the first chapter itself. The woman's desire and greed to have the necklace, Binya's desi and curiosity for the blue umbrella and the innocence in both

of these characters after they childishly get what they have wanted and examine it as if it were the most precious gem on planet earth.

The first chapter also foreshadows what will happen in the future. For an ornament that Binya already had, the pendant, she was bribed and almost snatched away from it due to the greed that the adults had. This is something that will continue in the work as she tries to find joy in letting go. This exactly is the point where microcosm in this work will be depicted as the village and its members will depict all aspects of human desire and how far humans will go for fulfilling their desire. In the next chapter, the sixteen pages of this work, highlight the fascination that Binya has with her new treasure. She always kept the umbrella open, regardless of where it was as to her it only looked beautiful when open. Bijju would sometimes shut it because it took too much space in the house but she would open it again and again. To her this umbrella was a dream that she could hold in her hands and twirl around with it. In these sixteen pages she is seen running around with the umbrella while doing her daily chores or relaxing. The attachment she has to the umbrella does not let her keep it out of her sight. She poured out her heart into a so-called silly thing by others. Ram Bharosa is introduced in this chapter as well. The antagonist of this work and a symbol of greed as his desires leads him to choose unforsaken ways to achieve them.

“Old Ram Bharosa (Ram the Trustworthy) kept the tea-shop on the Tehri road. It was a dusty, un-metalled road. Once a day, the Tehri bus stopped near his shop and passengers got down to sip hot tea or drink a glass of curd.”(Bond, 19)

He is also someone from whom you can expect to have all the valuables. He was a collector and would often buy or take away items from young kids in exchange for some money or if they were indebted to him. When he saw Binya walking up to his shop with the blue umbrella he inquired as to how she got her hands on her one. It is a lady’s umbrella and had

not much practical purpose other than being a beautiful plaything he said and asked her to sell it to him as it was of no use to her. But Binya has fallen in love with it while knowing that it was just a pretty thing. Ram bharosa offers her 5 rupees in exchange for the umbrella to which she counters with 15 rupees. He found it unreasonable and gave two bids of 10 and 12 rupee till Binya shook her head and stated her purpose of being at his shop. She just wanted to get some toffee. But this dialogue between the two characters already creates a base for the strong desire for the umbrella by both the owner and the wannabe owner. Ram's fascination held him hostage to his want. That day, just like Ram, every villager using the Tehri road had their heads turning on the site of the blue umbrella. It was making quite a statement. Binya walked her way to a pine tree. She sat down in its shade, enjoying its mellowness with her buddy next to her. She dozed off while her treasure layed next to her, shining its blue self. But the winds choose to play a trick on her.

As she was asleep, the wind felt a bit playful. It swished here and there till it found the umbrella and with one swift blow it pushed it six feet from Binya. The sound woke her up and in a hurry she ran to catch her umbrella. But the wind really wanted to tease her as everytime she felt as if she had caught up to the umbrella it would push it further away. It did the same till it pushed it off of a cliff. This precipice though was a one with wild cherry trees growing and a few stunned bushes. The wicked wind had gotten her umbrella stuck on the cherry tree. Binya, without hesitations, climbs down the cliff towards her umbrella. As a *pahadi* girl this is a normal play day for her but she still has to be very cautious of now stepping on the loose rocks. She climbed its trunk and got her hands on it. She was a skilled tree climber. But her umbrella now was torn in places. As she looked below she realized she could not climb back up with the umbrella in her hand. She had to let it fall, still open, cushioned by the winds. It fell into the ravine below, more specifically on the thicket of nettles. These nettles are very common, Binya is immune to it as Bijju is to bee stings. In the next twenty minutes she found

her way to the nettle clump, picked up her umbrella and walked her way back home. Sometimes letting go is better than hoarding on as in that moment that is the best you can do for both the parties. You can go back to the same but because of the already topsy-turvy happening the path may be full of nettles. Just like Binya, be immune to them. For if you desire so much, wait, let it come to you or gain the strength to move to it without losing assets.

Bijju had become immune to the bee stings as about four years ago he had knocked a hive out of an oak tree, and he was stung badly by the angry bees. It hurt then but now even if a bee stings him he feels nothing. In chapter three the bond between Bijju and Binya is shown. Bijju is hungry yet he runs with berry in hands saved for his little sister who is two years younger than him. And Binya is just as grateful for the berries as he is for her presence.

Both of these kids mingle well together and have learned to take care of each other as well as protect each other. On her way home while being covered in bilberries(wild blueberries of the kangora bushes) juice he stopped at Ram Bharosa's store. The backstory on his cunning acts where he had hoarded children's artifacts by manipulating them into being in debt with him. He is seen trying the same with Bijju as a way to get the umbrella through him but Bijju is smarter than that. He does not fall for the trap because he knows the consequences and goes straight to his sister who is out grazing the cows. No matter how much he wanted the candy at that moment, he was not ready to put something precious to her sister on line for it. Like stated before, these kids have the mind, presence and actions of an adult in terms of decision making and taking care of each other.

“Bijju shook his head. Some of his friends had taken sweets on credit, and at the end of the month they had found they'd eaten more sweets than they could possibly pay for! As a result, they'd had to hand over to Ram Bharosa some of their most treasured possessions-such as a curved knife for cutting grass, or a small hand axe, or a jar for pickles, or a pair of earrings-and these had become

the shopkeeper's possessions and were kept by him or sold in his shop” (Bond, 36)

Till this part in the novella is enough to give us a brief introduction on what has to happen ahead of us. According to Fretag’s pyramid, till this part of the work has covered exposition and rising action. Climax will soon be achieved as the story moves forward. This work specifying the microcosmic factors of “*The Blue Umbrella*” continues to dwell into human nature, desire and greed. All researches read on the novella included analysis of human psyche as an individual but none had anything about the characters and the village society portraying human society on a macro level. Hence, this work focuses on symbolism and power dynamics.

Chapter 1: Power Dynamics and Symbolism

Continuing the story, Biju is seen rushing towards Binya with a handful of bilberries. Binya was grazing their cows at that time. Seeing Bijju approach, she was excited to see what her elder brother had gotten her. Bijju had just avoided a credit with Ram Bharosa and now he gets to hold Binya’s umbrella while she munches on the berries. Two holes in the umbrella by the recent chase with the wind were fixed for her by her mother. After rewarding Bijju by letting him hold her umbrella till they walked back home she called out to her two main concerns that evening. Gori and Neelu came to her with a single call and they marched towards home. It had gotten dark by the time they reached home. From this part on, a break in the narration takes place and the story is landed on to the greed of the village people.

“Most of the people in the village were a little envious of Binya's blue umbrella. No one else had ever possessed one like it. The schoolmaster's wife thought it was quite wrong for a poor cultivator's daughter to have such a fine umbrella while she, a second-class BA, had to make do with an ordinary black one.”
(Bond, 39)

This chapter heavily portrays the power dynamics that a member of a society believes to be like. And how this break in hierarchy and power due to Binya's Umbrella showcases greed and jealousy of the others. The reason for the jealousy is simple, how can a girl like Binya who ranks lowest in power dynamics have something that no one else in the village can have regardless of their positions. Symbolism in this chapter is of when the young and free minded children are the ones who have no issue with Binya and her Umbrella and they honestly compliment it rather than questioning her justification of its ownership. This symbolizes two sides of the society, one that follows harsh social standards and one that follows an abundant mind set.

Children are taught to be an ideal adult who is kind, helping and successful. Here we see how greedy adults around Binya were. This is just a simple contradiction where society is what it is portrayed as versus how it actually is explained through the characters actions. Bond makes his intention very clear in the first line stating that the village adults were jealous of Binya's umbrella. In that mini society, away from the mainland, people did not have the luxury of anything fancy. The smallest of things which might be common for the folks in plains is something out of the ordinary for the people in the mountains. Binya's village members also had a simple life but their hierarchy division was done with the simplest things they owned. Note the things that they owned were not just something materialistic. It ranged between their names, jobs and personality. These things gave them an imaginary position in the power dynamic of the village where Binya's mother is in the bottom group. Binya's mother is widowed, had a shabby house to live in and two cows to earn a wage with. This is considered a poorer lifestyle than others living in the same shabby house but with a husband. That's how social politics works. This directly affects Binya and Bijju's stand in the society as the kids will always be related to their parents by the existing members. Hence, they were not treated as kids but as some unfortunate souls who do not deserve what is available to others.

Because of this reason, they could not digest how some good for nothing village girl with a bleak future got her hands on a beautiful umbrella. They tried to compete with it by trying to get the same but could not get their hands on it even after using all their might. Being a teacher is a highly respectable job and being married to one is a status symbol. The school master's wife could not fathom how she, the deserving one as she claimed to be, did not bear the ownership of such an exquisite umbrella. She constantly questioned and critiqued how Binya, A nobody, can be its owner. In her head it was unfair that an individual with no standing in the society can own something so unique that she with a good background and a BA degree could not possess. She could not find it to be fair that she had to use a normal black umbrella whereas a cultivator's daughter uses a fancy one. The husband came to the rescue of her wife's demand by offering to dye the umbrella that they had to blue. But he could not understand a lady's heart, hence, she loved him a little less with that idea of his.

The second one to try and compete with Binya's umbrella was none other than the Pujari of the village. One might want to question why a saint would want something so materialistic. He is not a woman like a school master's wife to adorn such fancy things. He has no one to show it off to. But because saints are considered to be the highest in power, he is used to being treated in that manner. But what is sad is that he feels the need to fight with a kid's childish desire to prove his status in the society. If Binya's umbrella was not the topic of attraction in the village he would not have thought to counter it by announcing to buy an umbrella with colours of the rainbow. With this thought and a heavy goal he stepped foot into the mainland's market.

Upon his return he was met with disappointment as he could not get his hands on the promised rainbow umbrella. How would he show his face in the society where he is given the top most position. He then grumpily announced that the multi- coloured umbrellas he was looking for were not available anywhere but in Delhi. The rest of the adults eyeing the umbrella

would just say negative things about it. They would call the umbrella a fancy item that will tarnish at the first drop of rain. How can they digest that a poor girl can have hold of something so expensive to the eye. For every weather condition they said it would not survive. The sun would shrivel it, the heavy rain would drown it, strong wind would collapse it, it would attract lightning and it would harbor ill luck if it surrounds it. But secretly they all admired it, they were just a bit jealous. Them pretending to not be amazed by it to keep their dignity had them lose their chance to hold it.

The kids did not pretend. They were pure and innocent. They were yet to be tamed and conditioned by societal norms. So, they openly appreciated her umbrella's beauty which got them a chance to hold it in their hands for a few seconds. They would complement its colour, its weight and how it was a perfect fit for Binya. They knew that if they complimented her umbrella enough, she would let them hold it for a while as a thanks for the compliment. The main and consistent symbol in this work is the umbrella. Readers can view the umbrella as a tool to break free from boundations or psychological conditioning. The ones who are tamed can not move forward and would hate the umbrella for existing and being so bright in their face as the rest would appreciate it. The blue umbrella is also a symbol of extraordinary. The village men were hit with confusion when they first saw the umbrella. This umbrella is the symbol of hypocrisy in power dynamics, as this same extraordinary umbrella would have been seen as normal by the adults who are part of the society if it were with someone with a higher position. It is only getting hate, even after being a perfect thing in itself because its owner is not considered to have a stand or say in anything.

Elaborating on the segment where an umbrella can be seen as a tool is when a mere piece of attraction becomes a cause of distress. It breaks the line between reality and assumption, innocence and conditioning and human nature demands to be submerged in a materialistic world. The umbrella is an answer to all unhappy people. It simply means, or must

mean to find happiness in the smallest of things. It may also mean to love everything and let its beauty shine to you. If you do not accept the things around you as it is or if you do not feel contempt as you desire for something that is of value to the world and not self, you will never truly be happy. The young kids who are fond of the umbrella and who believe its beauty are supporters of Binya. And the adults who see it as competition or survival of the fittest see it as something to be scared of. It is a matter of perspective and how easy human ego can be triggered. Hence, these conditioned humans go against the idea of a simple thing staying with a simple girl. Because they are conditioned to believe that resources are distributed among people according to their power dynamic.

They have categorized a few materialistic elements as something only a certain class can have. By doing so they are completely ignoring the fact that any and everything on this planet belongs to everyone regardless of their power differences. This story also reflects real life class difference as the umbrella becomes a symbol of materialistic wealth and social standing. This is viewed in the story when Pujari and the school masters wife is seen wanting to claim the umbrella for its status of being an extraordinary item beyond anyone's reach. This umbrella had given Binya a whole new status. She became the centre of attraction for kids and adults alike. Wherever she would walk with her umbrella open she would notice and talk about. Her words held more value to greedy people like Ram Bharose who used to ignore the child before. And that is because this child had no value and now the umbrella adds to her value.

“In Bond's "The Blue Umbrella," the narrative unfolds in a picturesque village, providing a lens through which readers can observe the socio-economic disparities and caste dynamics prevalent in rural settings (Bond, 1980) [2]. The character of Binya becomes a poignant representation of the challenges faced by individuals navigating the complexities of caste relationships in these

communities. Bond's nuanced portrayal highlights the impact of societal structures on personal aspirations and relationships.”(Majde, 2023)

The all to hated umbrella which is seen as something that can not withstand monsoon is faced with it. The clouds rumbled loudly as Binya sat there with her umbrella open. She was waiting for the rain. She was not afraid of what the rain could do to the umbrella. She has enough trust in it. She opposed everyone's idea on it being a play thing. A big drop of rain hit the ground and she raised her umbrella over her head. Because of the umbrella being made of silk, the rain drops broke against the cloth. She could see the raindrop moving through her umbrella. Soon she heard a cloudburst, and it felt as if she was standing under a waterfall. The umbrella held against the rain well enough. Only Binya's bare feet got wet with a few raindrops finding their way to the shivered glass. The umbrella had a curtain design around it with hanging glass pieces covering it. Her testing the umbrella in the parallel world is like one person testing their limits.

These limits are usually made by hierarchy and societal norms. While all the others were running around finding shelter from the rain, Binya stood there calmly as she had waited for the rain on her umbrella. She did not mind getting her feet wet or reaching home late as she had gotten what she had wanted. But Bijju could not get his books spoiled by the rain and took shelter in a cave. Bijju would have enjoyed the rain too otherwise. When he saw Binya approaching, he got under her umbrella and held it for her as he was taller while she held the books. They started marching towards their home. Binya called out Gori and Neelu whom she had taken out for grazing. They did not mind getting wet either. Their mother seeing them sauntering home called out to them to hurry in. This is when their mother asked them what they were doing out in the rain to which Bijju replied “Just testing the umbrella”.(45)

“Also, there are other relevant aspects of Freud's psychoanalysis that can be applied to the stories "The Blue Umbrella" and "The Little Match Girl." They

are Desire and pleasure principle) and repression. Furthermore, delving into the characters of "The Blue Umbrella" and "The Little Match Girl," we can apply Freud's concept of the Pleasure Principle is evident in both stories Binya's intense yearning for the blue umbrella in "The Blue Umbrella" and the little match girl's fantasies of warmth and celebration in "The Little Match Girl" exemplify their pursuit of immediate pleasure and gratification, even in the face of adversity. These desires profoundly influence their actions, motivations, and their coping mechanisms in difficult situations.”(Pavithira, 2023)

In a research work done by G.P. Muthu Pavithira, it is stated that this work can be through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory of 'Desire'. In this work Pavithira elaborates on how "*The Little Match Girl*" and "*The Blue Umbrella*" run by the theory of desire. In Binya's case it was the desire for the umbrella which cost her her tribal necklace. Which is further explained by this desire towards the umbrella to symbolize deeper emotional needs or wants. This can be justified by the acts and gestures that each character who longs for the umbrella reflects. Especially Ram Bharose as he is a lonely old man who lives alone. Somewhere his longing for the umbrella is related to his emotional desire to be noticed and paid attention to.

In chapter four monsoon has set in the village. From snakes to rats, all have come out of their burrow and into the living premises of humans to stay safe from flooding. The sun is yet to make a bold appearance. Because of the rainwater everything around them has become lush. Dewy grassland and seasonal flowers like lilies showing up in full bloom. Better picturized by Bond, the beauty of the mountain is at its peak. But this is also the season of leeches. Binya would come to a couple of leeches everyday. She always ran around barefoot giving leeches a chance to fasten onto her flesh. Once they had enough of their fest they would fall off. Binya would not notice their presence till they fell off. Of course this led to the part of

the skin where it latched onto being itchy and sore. These same leeches were used by the village people for various remedies. Ram Bharose would add a leech to his temple when he faced a headache. This is a very common practice in *Pahadi* people.

“The rains set in, and the sun only made brief appearances. The hills turned a lush green. Ferns sprang up on walls and tree trunks. Giant lilies reared up like leopards from the tall grass. A white mist coiled and uncoiled as it floated up from the valley. It was a beautiful season, except for the leeches.”(Bond, 46)

With the rain came the animals trying to not flood. Binya’s mother had to clear away the field rats settled in her roof as they ate away a good portion of her stored rice and grains. On the other hand, naughty Bijju would disturb the sleeping scorpions under the rock. This would amuse and entertain him enough for a good time. The snakes came up to bask in the sun as well. Binya has always set out for the hills where she is most comfortable. Just in front of her a few yards of distance she saw something slithering towards her. It was a black snake which had been frightened due to the clattering of a few loose rocks. It has taken the defensive mode and prepared to strike on Binya as she was in his path at that time. In a rush she put her umbrella forward as the snake lunged towards it. It gave it two good thuds before slithering away from between wet rocks. Binya, being equally scared and amused, rushed towards her home to tell her mother about how she had been saved by the umbrella. She was so immersed in this happening that she left her cows behind. Bijju to the rescue, kept his books aside to go look out for Neelu and Gori. After all the seasonal hardships that this umbrella had faced it had lost its colour a bit and had turned light blue from bright blue. The old Ram Bharose still had his eyes set on it.

Before he might have wanted to sell it to earn some profit but now he wants to own it. And he thinks that it is fair of him wanting to own it as he probably is the richest person in the town, so why should he not be the one who owns it. His reasoning gets relentlessly greedy and

so do his actions. The more he saw the umbrella the more he wanted it. Alongside his desire for the umbrella, Binya's family was doing well. Bijju had gotten off school due to the monsoon and he spent his time helping his mother. Neelu and Gori were producing enough milk for Binya's mother to use and sell. She would sell some to the Pujari for a lower cost. This depicts power dynamics again as Pujari's position in the society got him such deals from anyone under his status. Bijju delivered this milk to whoever his mother asked him to deliver it to. It is not like Bijju was not offered any other job. Of course the cunning Ram Bharose offered him to work on his tea stall as a way to put his hands on Binya's umbrella. But bijju did not have time. He had to help his mother out first. So, Ram Bharosa employed a boy from another village. This boy was called Rajaram. Now, this boy is a tamed kid who has already been conditioned to the ways of the society. He is mischievous and greedy. He can also be seen as little Ram Bharose. This young man is of sharp wit and a wicked mind.

This young boy had read his employer's expressions when Binya walked past his stall. He gave a long sigh which made Rajaram question him about why Ram Bharose is upset. In the dialogue that they exchange, Ram Bharose tells him that due to Binya he feels as if he has gotten sicker. Reason for his sickness being that he was not given what he had set his heart on by Binya, her umbrella. He tells him the tale of how Binya had refused to sell him the umbrella even for 10 rupees. Rajaram advises him to have bid higher, around 12 rupee to which he counters and tells him that the now shabby and worn out umbrella is not even worth 8 rupee. But at the same time, he still wants it. Rajaram tells him that he would not make profit on it to which Ram Bharosa states that its not the profit it's the umbrella he is after. The umbrella's beauty has bewitched him and he can not sleep peacefully knowing that it is not his.

This upcoming dialogue solidifies the symbolism of the blue umbrella. For Ram Bharose it is a symbol of his unattained emotions. He would constantly call Rajarm a wretch with his grumpy attitude. Rajaram asks him about his use of the umbrella. After all, why would

an old man want such a fancy thing? He has no one to visit, he is always alone in his shop. To this his Babuji replies with a sarcastic comment. He contradicts things like poppy in a corn field and its use there, the use of a rainbow and the use of Rajaram. He states that he has a soul and his soul desires the umbrella and its beauty to be his. He wants to feel his heart beating with the beauty in his hand. Rajaram had heard enough of his words. Babuji has already called him a numbskull once and a wretch for the third time.

“Of what use is a poppy in a cornfield? Of what use is a rainbow? Of what use are you, numbskull? Wretch! I, too, have a soul I want the umbrella, because because I want its beauty to be mine!”(Bond, 54)

He puts the kettle on to boil as he begins to dust the counters, all while muttering to himself that he is as useful as the umbrella. He gives Babuji’s desire a good thought before asking him about what he would get in return if he can get him the umbrella. The old man is confused. How would he even get the umbrella that Binya refused to sell him for such a high price. He asks him about what he means to which he questions again with what will you give me. This is when Ram Bharosa realizes that Rajamram is talking about stealing the umbrella. He is amused and delighted by the offer.

“You mean to steal it, don't you, you wretch? What a delightful child you are! I'm glad you're not my son or my enemy. But look, everyone will know it has been stolen, and then how will I be able to show off with it?”(Bond, 55)

He just needed a way to get his hands on the umbrella and this one seems like the best. He asks him a few important questions like what will happen when people get to know that it is stolen to which he replies that he should either gaze on it in a private area or get colored red in Tehri. He tells him that that is his problem to deal with and not his. He asks for three rupees in return. Ram Bharosa tries to bargain with him, asking him to lower the demand to two two rupees. This was to no avail as he questions Ram Bharosa’s desire for the umbrella and

compares it with the amount he is giving Rajaram. He curses him again but agrees to the set trade and asks him to get him the umbrella. The chapter ends here but because of the path Ram Bharose has chosen for himself he will soon face a shift in his power dynamic. He will become someone that the whole village shuns as he uses treacherous ways to fulfill his desires.

Power dynamics showcased in three stages. One where Binya rose in power with the umbrella, the second when Ram Bharose's decline and the last is the community influence. In chapter four, the downfall of Ram Bharose started. The second he planned to get the umbrella through unethical ways he was set to be burdened with shame. Rajaram goes on a hunt for the umbrella. Though he gets caught by Binya and Bijju. He also reveals who had assigned him to the task. The person who had done that was none other than Ram Bharose. His Nickname had changed from 'Ram the Trustworthy' to 'Trusty Umbrella Thief'. He lost all his clients, and the whole village had outcasted him for his deed. He had no customers coming to his shop and spent most of his time alone.

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