

**Short Fiction in Indian Literature**  
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**Lecture – 10**  
**Hidden Fractures in Ruskin Bond's The Blue Umbrella – I**

Hello and welcome to this lecture the subject of this week is Ruskin Bonds the blue umbrella and the interpreted angle that I am going for this week is the hidden fractures in the narrative of the blue umbrella.

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Ruskin Bond

- ◆ Indian author, British descent
- ◆ Beloved writer of Children's fiction
- ◆ Room on the Roof
- ◆ John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957



Okay a brief introduction about the beloved Indian writer Ruskin bond he is an Indian author of British descent and he is well known as the author of childrens fiction. And his first work the room on the roof won the John Llewellyn Memorial prize in 1957.

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## Ruskin Bond

- ◆ Novellas
- ◆ 500 short stories, poems and essays
- ◆ Sahitya Academy Award (1992)  
"Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra"
- ◆ Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan



And he has written several novellas and over 500 short stories and poems and essays. He is also the recipient of the Sahitya academy award in 1992 and that award was for his collection our trees still grow in Dehra and he has also been awarded the Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan. So, he has been a very very well acknowledged and awarded and renowned author of British origin in the Indian subcontinent.

Okay now the blue umbrella it is set in the Himachal Pradesh.

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## The Blue Umbrella

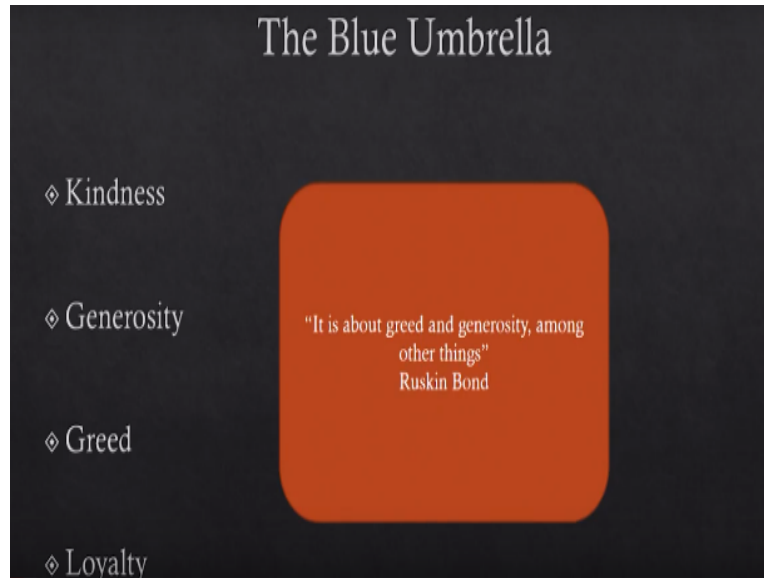
- ◆ 1974
- ◆ Himachal Pradesh
- ◆ Heart-warming story
- ◆ Binya and her favourite possession, a blue umbrella



In the hills of this particular region in India and it is a heartwarming story about a little girl called Binya and her favorite possession which is a blue umbrella. On first appearance it seems like a

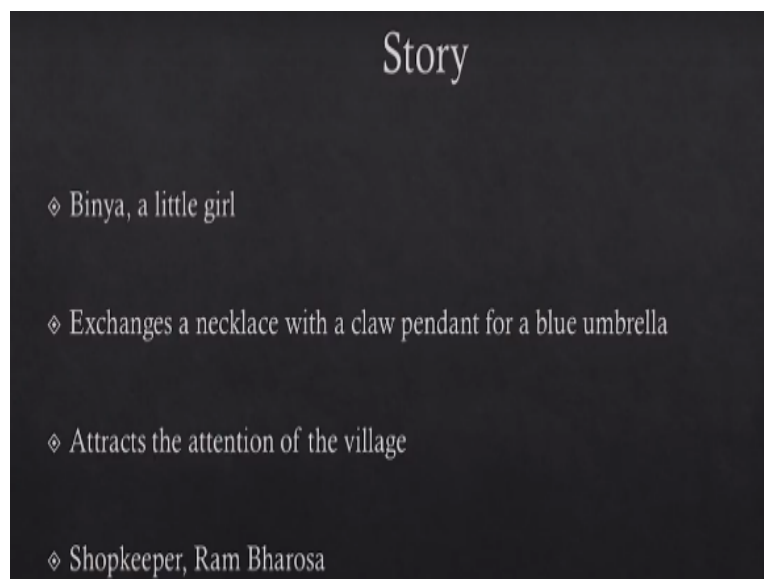
very very simple tale but there are layers to this particular short of fiction which we will unravel in our analysis.

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Now the major themes of this particular work are kindness, generosity greed and loyalty and Ruskin Bond himself has written that this is a work about greed and generosity among other things. So, he highlights these two qualities but let us also look for other themes which are kind of underpinning the narrative framework of this apparently simple tale of the blue umbrella.

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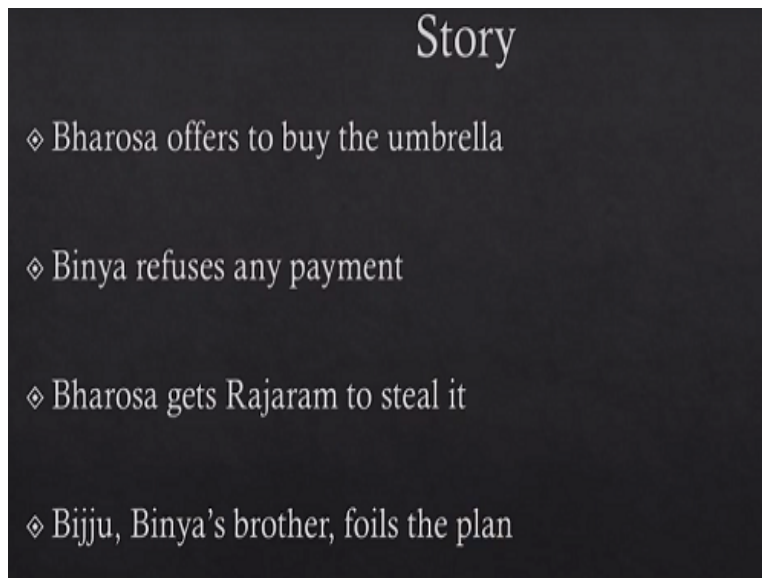
Now what exactly is the story so let us take a quick look at the story the set of events that happened in this particular fiction. As i said the story revolves around a little girl called Binya

her full name is Binya Devi but she is known as Binya in the village. In this hilly village in Himachal Pradesh and the story kind of begins when she exchanges a necklace which has a claw pendant a leopard leopard claw pendant for a blue umbrella.

From one of the women from the town who picnics with her family on the hills on the hills near her village. So this is the kind of the initiation point the beginning of the story and this particular blue umbrella with which this girl is fascinated by also attracts the attention of the entire village. And one of the people who was very much interested seriously interested in this umbrella blue umbrella is.

Ram Bharosa a shopkeeper an elderly shopkeeper who has a tea shop on the road to terri. So, he offered to buy the umbrella from Binya.

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But Binya refuses any payment and she will not part with her favorite object and eventually Ram Bharosa gets his shop assistant a little boy called Raja Ram to steal it for him and Bijju Binyas brother foils the plan there is a fight a little fight at the end of the story between Binyas brother Bijju and Raja Ram and Bijju gets the upper hand and finally snatches the umbrella back from this boy and gives it back to his sister.

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## Story

- ◇ Ram Bharosa is exposed
- ◇ The village community ostracize him
- ◇ Binya changes her mind
- ◇ Offers the umbrella to the shopkeeper
- ◇ Becomes common property

And what happened after that is that Ram Bharosa is exposed to the entire village as the man who has gone after a little girl possession and he is kind of exorcised by the entire community. Nobody visit is his shop and he is completely will be gone and he also is on the verge of financial bankruptcy and a Binya who observes all these changes that kind of happen to Ram Bharosa how he becomes very sad old man changes her mind.

And eventually offers her favorite object the blue umbrella back to the shopkeeper and at the end of the story Ram Bharosa makes this umbrella the common property of the entire village. So, whoever one wants to use the umbrella can borrow it from the shop and it becomes a kind of universal possession for the members of the village. That is how the story ends and Binya happily sings as she walks as she walks up the hills in her village.

So, let us take a closer look at this central character Binya.

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## Binya

◇ Age indeterminate

◇ Binya was probably ten. She may have been nine or even eleven, she couldn't be sure because no one in the village kept birthdays; but her mother told her she'd been born during a winter when the snow had come up to the windows, and that was just over ten years ago, wasn't it?

And how her character has been set up by the narrator at the beginning of the story we have a third person narrator in the story and he or the narrator is very well informed about the functioning of the society this hilly village in the Himalayas. And he says the narrator says that age is indeterminate she could have been 9 or 10 or 11 and this is the extract that were interested in.

In terms her in terms of her age the narrator says Binya was probably 10. She may have been even 9 or 11. She could not be sure because no one in the village kept birthdays but her mother told her she had been born during a winter when the snow had come up to the windows and that was just over 10 years ago wasn't it and that last tag wasn't it is again a hint that even that particular landmark.

Of great that happened 10 years ago is again the number of years is again very, very indeterminate. Nobody is absolutely sure when this big storm happened when this big winter storm happened so they they keep time according to major natural events in this particular village. And that is very interesting because it suggests that this village is not perhaps in touch with modernity.

Where people tell time according to a particular year and people are very very concerned about the passing of years.

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So, again this comment that no one in the village kept birthdays again hints at a very simplistic way of life if in this particular village. And again we are reminded of a similar reference in Summer Vacation by Kamala Das if you recall this particular story we remember that Naani Ammas daughter Amini we did not know about her age and Mudashi ask how old is she and her mother says I am not sure but she was born when there was this big flood years ago.

So, that kind of manner of keeping time suggests that people are away from this particular modern system of measuring time and measuring the passage of years. So, there are some parallels between this particular story the blue umbrella and summer vacation even the one is set in Kerala in the south and this is in the north in the Himalayas. So, village lifestyles resemble are very very similar in this context.

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## Binya

◇ Part of the mountains

◇ “Binya belonged to the mountains, to this part of the Himalayas known as Garhwal. Dark forests held no terrors for her. It was only when she was in the market town, jostled by the crowds in the bazaar, that she felt rather nervous and lost.”

So, again coming back to Binya as she is part of the mountains almost according to the narrative in this particular story and the narrator says Binya belong to the mountains to this part of the Himalayas known as Garhwal. Dark forests had no terrors for her it was only when she was in the market town jostled by the crowds in the bazaar that she felt rather nervous and lost. So, there is a fantastic narrative about the essential quality of characters Binya.

And the narrator suggests she is at home in the hills and the mountains and she was completely unafraid in this particular space where she was a little bit anxious and worried if she is jostled by the crowd in the bazaar in the market towns. So, we have a contrast being set up here something that we need to make note of.

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## Binya

- ◇ Mountains and dark forests are her “home”
- ◇ “she was at home on a hillside”
- ◇ Market towns and crowded bazars terrify her

Mountains and the dark forest home dark forest the darkness in the forest does not affect her and elsewhere in the story the narrator suggests that she was at home on a hillside and again it is the town life the way of life in towns and the bazaars that terrified her. So, it is almost as if she is part of the natural atmosphere of the Himalayas. That is the kind of sense that we get through the description of this particular girl in the blue umbrella.

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## Binya

- ◇ “Binya liked being on her own, and sometimes she allowed the cows to lead her into some distant valley, and then they would all be late coming home.”
- “she let them wander”

Binya liked to being on her own and sometimes she allowed the cows to lead her into some distant valley and then they would all be late coming home. Another interesting characteristic of Binya is the fact that she likes to wander by herself on the hills and in her family she is the one who is primarily involved looking after the cows. Therefore, she sometimes let the cows wander

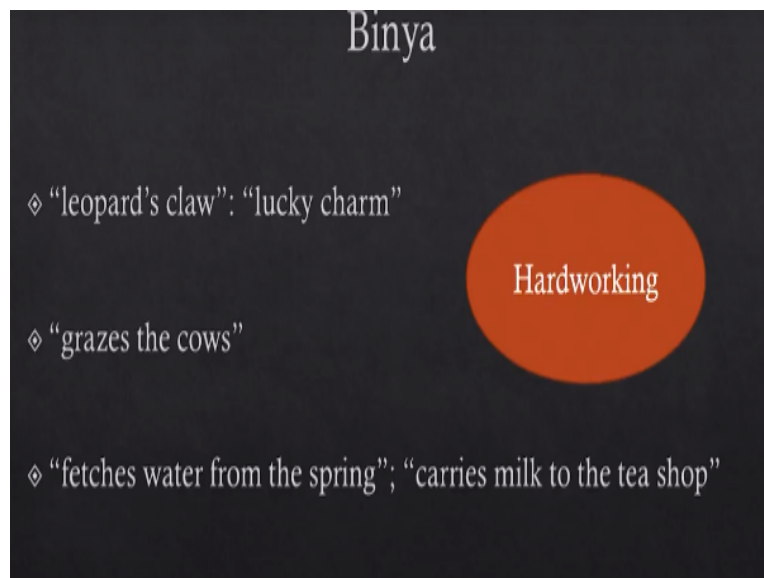
into some distant valley.

So, that she could follow them into those valleys and they all came back together and they would be late, again this suggestion or the notion that she liked being by herself alone on the hillside all with these creatures with these animals as against all the all the crowded you know all the crowded people the crowds in the bazaar is again a very interesting suggestion that is being highlighted here.

And the cows even the cows they seem to prefer Binya to Bijju because when you let them wander whereas would be interested in disciplining them and getting them back home on time. So, Binya is somehow outside of time is a part of nature is part of the Himalayas and Bijju her brother who is two years older than her that you know that age difference is reinforced and precise in the context of Bijju.

But it becomes very very exact age of Binya becomes very diffuse or confusing and indeterminate in the case of the little girl and we need to think about that gender kind of difference in the sense of keeping time for these two characters in mind as well. So, what is the what is what is the first interesting event.

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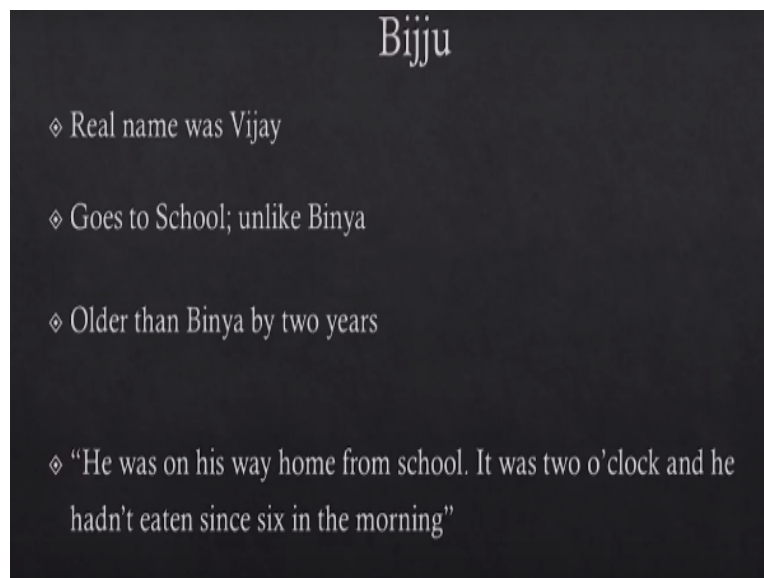


In the life of Binya at least when this short fiction begins is the fact that she trades her leopards

claw for this particular blue umbrella and she she wears this necklace of a glass piece on which hangs a leopard claw and that is her lucky charm and she also is very hardworking despite the fact that she likes to wander around this by the fact that she is kind of with nature you almost communing with them on her own.

She helps the family in grazing the cows she fed just water from the spraying she carries milk to the tea shop. She does a lot of hard work and that particular information is important to understand the social economical subtext to this particular family the family in which there is no father but just the mother and the two children Binya and Bijju.

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And coming back to Bijju the brother of Binya he is very interesting because unlike Binya he goes to school and his real name is Vijay but people all call him Bijju in this particular village and as I said a short while ago he is older than Binya by 2 years. The narrator is very very specific about that particular difference and there are lots of references in the story to the fact that Bijju is a school going boy.

And at one point in the narrative we have this reference we have the snare extract who says that he was on his way home from school it was 2 o'clock and he had not eaten since 6 in the morning so and he is on his way back from school to his home and the fact that he has not eat is again very important in underlining the kind of social economic context of this particular family

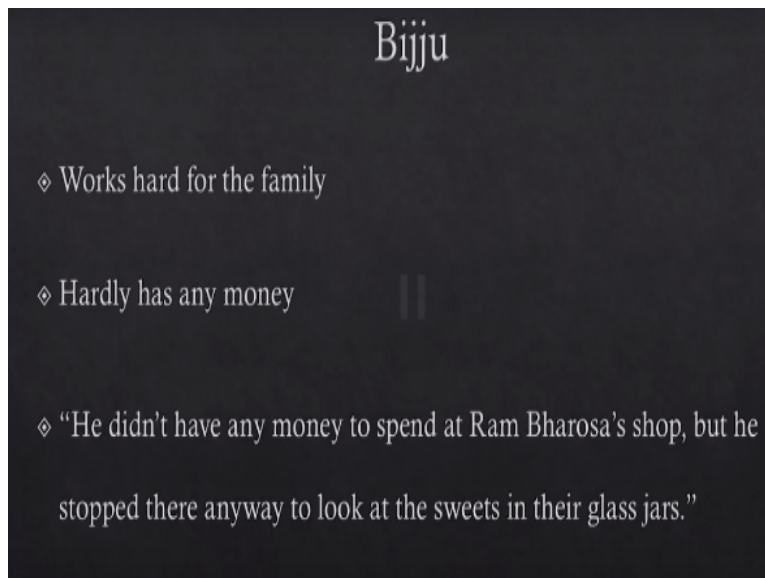
there raised a sense that this family is not very comfortable economically.

And there are other frontiers in the story we suggest that Bijju and Binya often do not have money to spare to buy sweets or toffees. So, they are hardworking they are not wealthy they are on the verge of poverty. They just have enough to get by barely that is the sense that the story gives us and these facts are something that are not very obvious when we read the blue umbrella. Because most of the readers do get taken away by the beauty of the landscape.

As described by the simple life style that these people who populate this world enjoy the love of the nature the description of nature you know it is very atmospheric it is too large that we kind of forget about the hidden fractures the hidden problems that underline the lives of these particular people in Ruskin Bond especially in the blue umbrella. SO, the one important thing that really strikes me when I first read are.

When I first read this section is the fact that Binya does not go to school but Bijju does even though there is just 2 years' difference between them. So, she is of an age when she is supposed to be in school but she does not go because of the economic status of this particular family.

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Bijju

- ◆ Works hard for the family
- ◆ Hardly has any money
- ◆ "He didn't have any money to spend at Ram Bharosa's shop, but he stopped there anyway to look at the sweets in their glass jars."

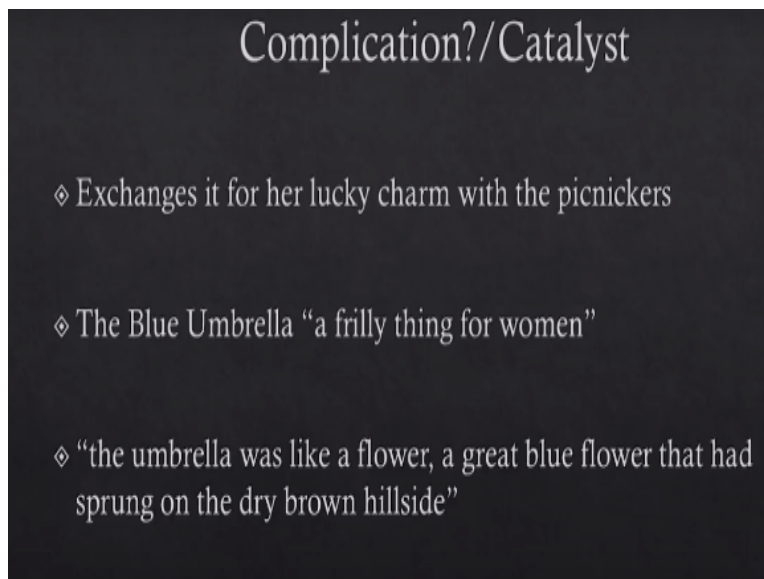
In terms of Bijjus characterization he is a boy who goes to school but that does not mean that he does not contributes to the running of the family. He works really hard and it is very interesting

to see that he also helps with the cows and he also helps with the other aspects of the family which need his attention and he hardly has any money to spend even when he is hungry and that is suggested in one very interesting episode.

When he returns from school it has been hour since he has eaten but he just stops by the side of the teashop and looks at all the sweets there in Ram Bharosa shop and at the narrator says he did not have any money and money to spend it in Ram Bharosa shop but he stopped there anyway to look at the sweet in the glass jars. That is a very important aspect of their lives and something that gets usually unnoticed.

Because of the charm with which the power of Ruskin Bond pen you know paints a picture of all these hilly terrains and the simple folk and the simple joys of their life. So, the pain somehow becomes marginal but in this particular an hour of the blue I am trying to explore the areas which show all these fault lines these serious issues that are somehow underneath the way of life of these people.

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So, what about the complication in the story the initiation the initiation also has the complication when Binya exchanges her lucky charm with the picnickers. She is creating a complication not only for herself but also for the entire village community. So, she is attracted by this blue umbrella which one of the women in the picnic party has and this episode happens when she is

wandering where has one day in the slopes of the hills.

And she comes across this party of picnickers who are enjoying a meal and she notices the thing and she watches from behind the trees and the narrator says that the blue umbrella is a frilly thing for women. But then to Binya the umbrella was like a flower a great blue flower that had sprung on the dry brown hillside. The contrast is beautiful there is like a flower on the brown landscape of the hill and that really attracts the attention.

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The Blue Umbrella

◇ “Normally she would have turned and fled, but the attraction was the pretty blue umbrella. It had cast a spell over her, drawing her forward almost against her will.”

“Spell”;  
“against her will”

“ gazes hungrily... at their food”

Poverty in the hills

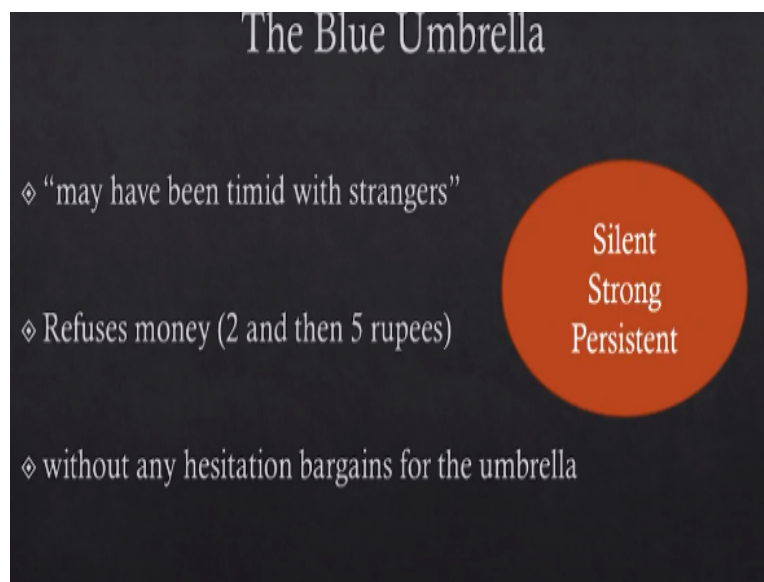
And the narrator says that normally should have turned and fled. But the attraction was the pretty blue umbrella it had cast a spell over her drawing her forward almost against her will. Binya usually does not like to be in the company of a lot of people that has been mentioned early on in the story. But then this blue umbrella makes Binya come out from her hide out from behind the trees.

And the narrator says that it is almost as if a spell has been cast on this little girl there is magic there is magic in this blue umbrella which is drawing this girl from behind her safety curtain of trees and despite the fact that Binya is also distracted by the display of food. There is a lot of food which the picnickers have and they are sharing the food but Binya gazes hungrily at the display.

But then but then she is primarily interested in the umbrella and that suggestion that she is gazing hungrily at the food again point to the poverty in the hills and one of the men also mentions the fact that they are all very poor in the hills and one of them notices the fact that she is dressed almost in rags. So, again all these references give us a picture that life is difficult for her for Binya and for her brother and her family in this hill village.

But then despite all the trials and tribulations and the scarcity they are kind of attracted and they have they derive a lot of joy in the beautiful things in nature in the hilly regions. So, they notice that she may have been timid with strangers.

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But then when she notices the blue umbrella somehow that object raises her timidity and she has the strength to refuse money twice. Because one of the men in the group the husband of the young woman he offers her 2 rupees first and Binya shakes her head saying no in exchange for the leopard claw necklace that she wears and then he offers her five rupees. Again she refuses and because the young woman the wife is insistent on having the leopard claw pendant.

He kind of suggest please look at the stuff that is there here what do you want in exchange and without any hesitation Binya points to the umbrella and gets it eventually even though they are offended somehow by her request. But then the episode hints at the silent strength the persistence in the little girl to get what she wants. So, that is made clear in this particular episode which

begins the story.

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So, once once the blue umbrella comes into the village economy of the hilly regions of the Himalayas it causes trouble and the shopkeeper Ram Bharosa he notices this blue umbrella that Binya has and he asks where did he get it from and she says I traded it for my leopard claw and he says it is just a pretty thing for ladies to play with. And the hint here is that this umbrella is for a lady what are you doing with it.

You are not a lady you are not expected to play with this sort of thing and the narrator comments and says that it was just a beautiful plaything and that was exactly why that was exactly why she had fallen in love with it the fact that she could play with this umbrella. And considering the context of Binya in the mountains most of her time is engaged in being productive contributing something to the family to the running of the family.

And since she does not seem to have anything to play with this particular object the blue umbrella becomes doubly attractive for to her and the narrator says that that is exactly why she wants to own that thing.

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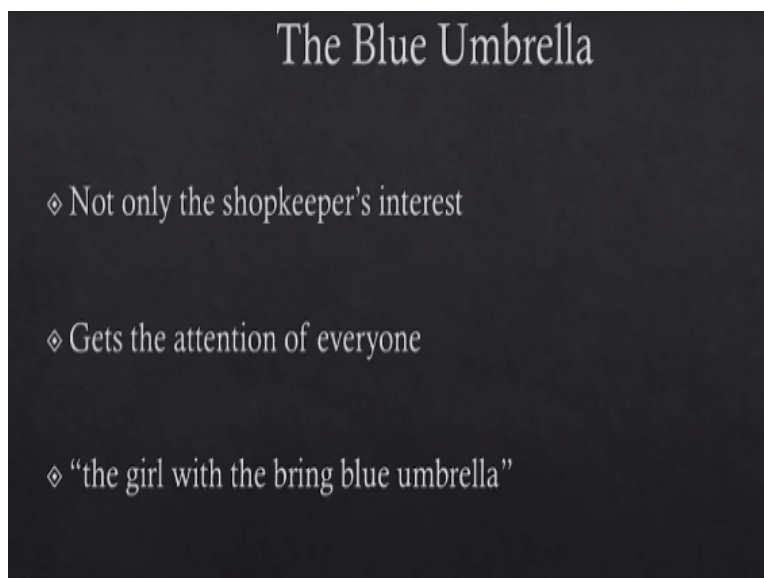




So, in the nonfunctionally of the blue umbrella is the most important attraction for Binya and added to that fact is that it is very aesthetically pleasing it is very it is very beautiful and the narrator says that it is like a patch of blue. And it is such an attractive thing to own to have and this beautiful materiality it is a material object that is beautiful and that is why Binya wants to own it because it is so very different to all the things that are in the village for Binya.

And the narrator says that they do have an umbrella home but it is black it is it is no longer in use and it is old. But this thing this beautiful thing this is something extremely attractive because it is not part of the village it is not a functional it is from the city and it is very modern and beautiful.

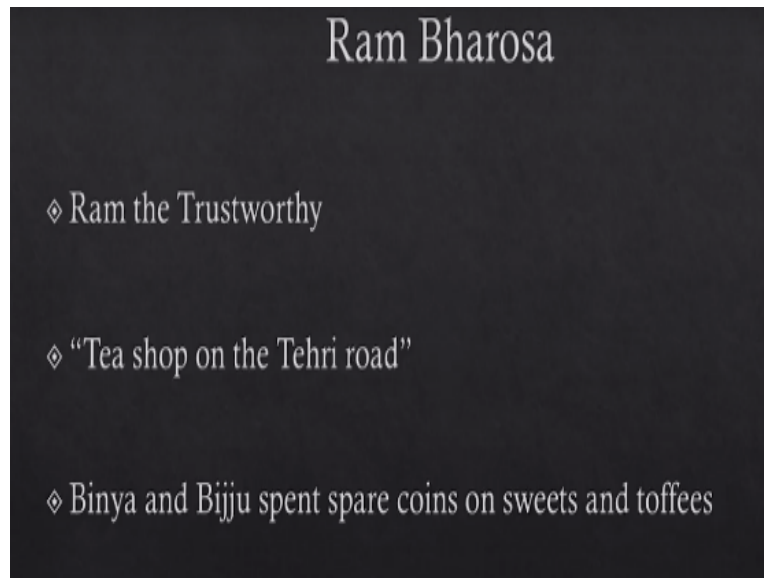
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So, it the blue cap captures the attention not only of the shopkeeper Ram Bharosa it gets the attention of everyone and once Binya walks with it everywhere she is kind of almost known as the girl with the blue umbrella. And so she gets noticed and perhaps that is an added attraction for Binya in owning this object which has come from the town from the city. The fact that she is known as the owner of this thing is very important to her.

Now let us look at the antagonist in the story.

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One of the chief antagonist in the story and that is Ram Bharosa and his name literally means Ram the trustworthy and it is an ironic name because as the story progresses everybody understands that he cannot really be trusted. Even the children know not to trust him so there is a lot of irony in the name and he as I said has a teashop on the road to Tehri. The place called Tehri and Binya and Bijju whenever they have a spare coin with them.

They spend it at Ram Bharosas teashop on sweets and toffees and he occupies an important position in the village in the village in this particular story.

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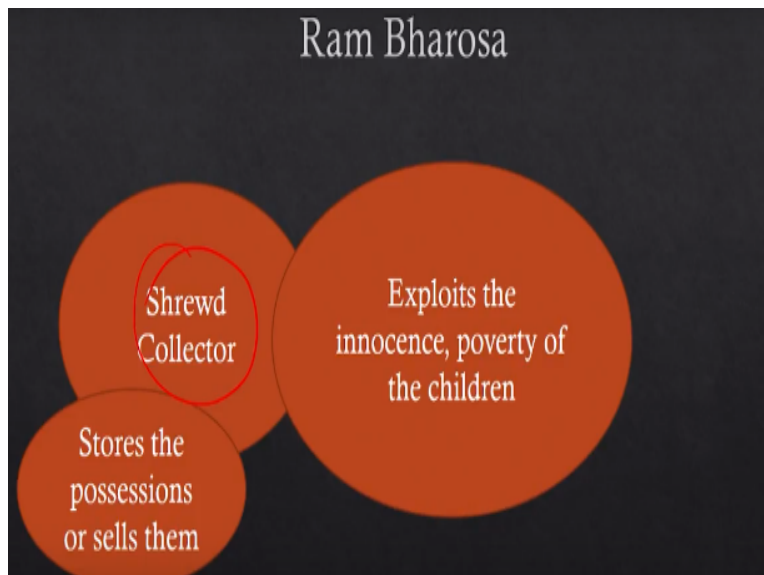
## Ram Bharosa

- ◇ Tempts the children to take sweets on credit
- ◇ “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”

Now Ram Bharosa also is not trusted by the children and that is made clear when the narrator suggests that even Bijju does not like to take stuff on credit from Ram Bharosa and he says that some sometimes the children get tempted by Ram Bharosa to buy sweets and toffee on credit and at the end of the month they buy more sweets than they can afford to pay him and therefore they have to hand over to Ram Bharosa some of their most treasured possessions.

Such as a curved knife or 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. So, we have an elderly trickster sort of character in this short fiction.

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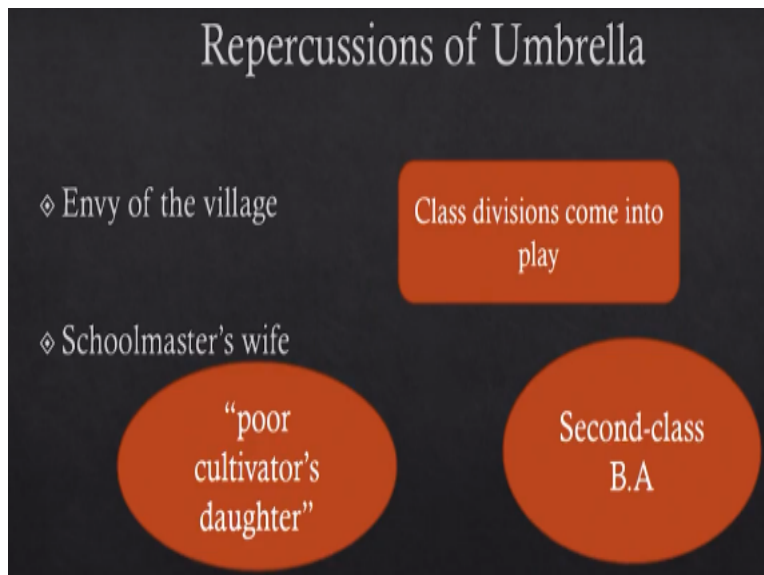


And we can see that he is the shrewd collector of stuff he likes to collect things just as children would love to collect you know intricate stuff. So, there is a parallel here between the children and Ram Bharosa because Ram Bharosa loves to own the possessions that the children love to own. So, we can see an equation between these two types of characters in this particular story.

And if you look at the kind of items that he gets from the children a curved knife or cutting grass a small object a small hand axes a jar for pickles or a pair of earrings intricate things lovely things and sometimes the shopkeeper keeps them in his store or sometimes he sells them if he is not attracted too much by these objects. So, the other he is a mad pie like somehow because mad pie likes to collect stuff that gets attracted by even though it is no longer of functional use for for it.

So, just like a mad pie Ram Bharosa also at times store things and it was not very clear that he exploits the innocence of these children because he temps them with sweet with these toffees and attracts them and his behavior suggests that he is also exploiting the poverty of the children from these villages and Bijju and Binya are clever enough not to fall into the trap the trap laid by Ram Bharosa.

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Okay so once the umbrella comes into the village once it enters the village there are

repercussions all around it becomes the envy of the village folk. Everybody is jealous of Binya and the Narrator lists out at least two special individuals to expose their jealousy. So, the first person narrator mentions are the schoolmaster's wife and she is annoyed by the fact that a poor cultivator's daughter is able to own such a pretty beautiful thing.

Whereas she herself who has obtained second class BA owns just a simple black umbrella. So, she is bringing into play the class divisions in society when it is understood that a poor cultivator's daughter is supposed to own something which is really very modest and assuming and she is not and the poor cultivator's daughters is not supposed to own a pretty little frilly thing which the ladies are supposed to have.

So, those kind of fractures in society are brought to the surface through the behavior of some of the characters in the village.

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Repercussions of the Umbrella

◆ “Her husband offered to have their old umbrella dyed blue; she gave him a scornful look, and loved him a little less than before.”

Relations becoming strained

Impact of material culture on emotions

And very interestingly the husband of this husband the schoolmaster offered to have the old umbrella dyed blue. She gave him such scornful look and loved him a little less than before so this comment is funny there is a comic side to this with the with the husband trying to please the wife by coming up with a solution. But that solution seems so silly so impracticable impractical to the lady to the wife that she gives him a scornful look.

And she loves him a little a little less for than before so the love the amount of love is somehow tied to the quality of the solutions the husband offers. So, that is very interesting and funny but interesting the most significant thing here is the fact that relations became become strained there is a tension there is a pressure on bonds bonds between human beings bond between bond between husband and wife.

Because of the presence of the umbrella in the village it so we can also see this from a larger angle to which is the impact of material culture on human emotions and sentiments and way of life. Such a small thing as a beautiful umbrella has the power to even touch a supposedly strong emotional bond between couples. So, that that relationship becomes evident.

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Picnickers

- ◆ 'My umbrella! exclaimed the young woman. 'She wants my umbrella. What cheek!'
- ◆ 'Well, you want her pendent, don't you?'
- ◆ 'That's different.'
- ◆ 'Is it?'
- ◆ 'The man and his wife were beginning to quarrel with each other.'

Ruptures between couples over the umbrella

Okay I want to compare this couple the schoolmaster and his wife to the young woman and her husband who were picnicking on the hillside and whose umbrella that Binya eventually gets by trading her leopard's cloth. So, I want to compare their exchange because we can see how how parallel there are resemblances between this couple and that couple too. So, this is the exchange that the young woman has with her husband.

Just before she offers her umbrella to Binya at the beginning of the story. So, when the young woman understands that Binya wants her umbrella she says she wants my umbrella what cheek how dare she you know what influence well you want her pendant dont you that is the response

of the husband you want her pendant is not it that is different is it the man and his wife the beginning to quarrel with each other.

Again the idea that the simple little thing the inanimate thing which comes in between the husband and the wife is very very important. So, ruptures between couples happen over the simple umbrella of this beautiful umbrella and again the idea that it is insolent of Binya to want to possess her umbrella this young womans umbrella is also very important because the woman things that she is not supposed to own such stuff.

She being a simple poor little kid from the hills and how dare she wants to own my beautiful umbrella and then again we see a sort of resemblance between the husband here the man here and the schoolmaster because both of them want to please their temperamental superficial materialistic wives. And there is this dysfunctionality in all these domestics that is that we see they do not seem to be perfect and the very men are less admirable than the men in such contexts.

In such marital context the woman come off badly they are shown as being too materialistic too class conscious that is something we need to keep our eye out for.

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The slide has a dark background. At the top, the title "Envy of the village" is written in a light, serif font. Below the title, there are three bullet points, each starting with a diamond symbol (◊). The first bullet point reads "The Pujari wants to assert his superiority over Binya". The second bullet point reads "“multicolored umbrella”". The third bullet point reads "Disappointed by his failure". To the right of these bullet points, there is a red oval containing the text "Spiritual folks are not unaffected" in a white, serif font.

Okay the other character who envies the blue umbrella is the pujari in the temple and bond

Ruskin bond specifically mentions this character in the story. So, the first reference is to the schoolmaster's wife and the next is to the Pujari of the local temple and he wants to assert his superiority over Binya by buying a multicolored umbrella from the city from the town. So, the multi-color umbrella again suggests a comic thought to this desire on the part of the pujari.

And he does really attempt to buy one and then he returns empty handed from the town saying that such things can be bought only from Delhi and not from the nearest town and he is really disappointed by his failure. And again this particular episode suggests that even the spiritual people are not outside of the pail of this idea of jealousy and again for them it is very jarring that this poor little girl cultivator's daughter has such a beautiful thing.

Whereas they who occupy the higher strata in society have no such thing. So, that is really affecting their psyche the egos in such ways that they really want to do something about it.

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## Envy of the village

◆ Sour grapes philosophy

◆ "Most people consoled themselves by saying that Binya's pretty umbrella wouldn't keep out the rain, if it rained heavily; that it would shrivel in the sun, if the sun was fierce; that it would collapse in a wind, if the wind was strong; that it would attract lightning, if lightning fell near it; and that it would prove unlucky, if there was any ill luck going about. Secretly, everyone admired it."

Now so some of them tried to get the better of Binya by trying to get the same thing or something better than the blue umbrella and which they fail to eventually and they are another group in the village who adopt the sour grapes philosophy. I mean if they cannot have it then obviously the umbrella is not good enough. So, this is the narrative that they form about the umbrella of the blue umbrella.



That Binya has most people console themselves by saying that Binyas pretty umbrella would not keep out the rain if it rained heavily that is it would shrivel in the sun if the sun was fierce that it would collapse in a wind if the wind was strong that it would attract lightning if lightning fell near it that it would prove unlucky if there was any ill luck going about secretly everyone admired it. So, this is a slightly funny part of very important passage.

Which kind of exposes the psyche of the people who are jealous about certain material stuff which the other possess the other person possesses. So, if you look at the list of things that would be fall on the umbrella it is very interesting that they say that the umbrella would not keep of the rain it would shrivel in the sun it would be affected by when it will collapse in the when and if a lightning strikes will attract it.

And if there was any ill luck any bad luck going about again the umbrella would attract it. So, that was the philosophy that they told themselves to console themselves for the fact that they do not have such an interesting object but a heart of hearts secretly deep down they really admired the umbrella.

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The slide has a dark background with the title "Envy of the village" at the top. Below the title are three bullet points, each preceded by a diamond symbol. To the right of the text is a large orange circle containing two lines of text.

Envy of the village

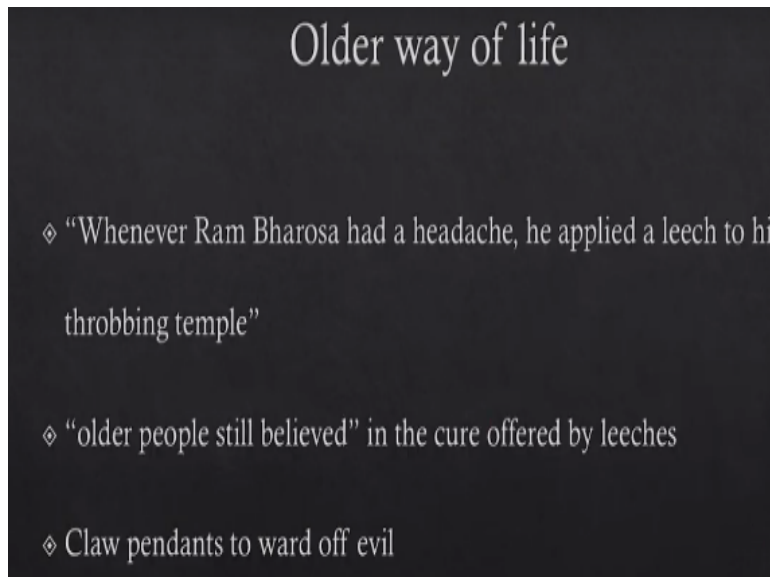
- ◆ All sorts of natural calamities would apparently afflict the umbrella
- ◆ Rhetoric (Parallelism)
- ◆ Notion of bad luck is disturbing

Natural world  
Anticipated calamities are from nature too

So, all the natural calamities are sourced from the region in which they lived so these hill folk could think about all these calamities because that is the one that they are familiar with and the passage is also very interesting for it is rhetoric it is put neatly there there is a lot of parallelism

in the way the sentences have been structured.

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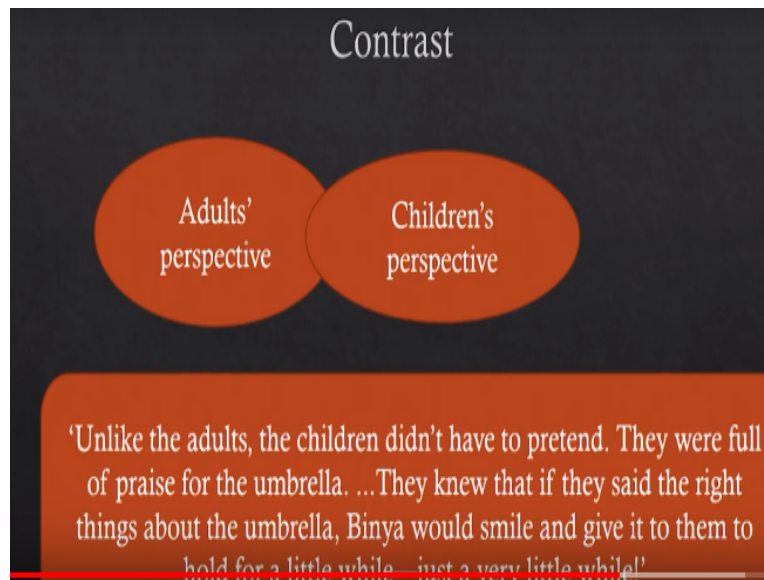
And again the idea of bad luck that is the most disturbing part in the extract is their idea that you know the umbrella is a magnet for bad things is as a notion that is really disturbing to understand about these village folk. So, the fact that they can wish bad on this umbrella something that a little girl possesses is really serious. And it is a little bit worrying on the part of the villagers.

So, but if we need to kind of put this desire in a particular context in the context of the period in which the hilly villagers lead their lives and we need to understand that it is related to an older way of life older way of life where if you had a headache you would apply a leech to your throbbing temple. So, there is a reference in the story where the narrator says that whenever Ram Bharosa had a headache he applied the leech to his throbbing temple.

And all the people still believed in the cure offered by leeches. So, this particular information kind of makes it clear to us that people lead very very simple and sometimes backward lives in the sense that modernity did not reach them in some areas. So, you know Binya wore claw pendants to ward off the evil so you know lucky charms were believed in and all these cure by leeches were also believed in by the people.

So, in that context the idea that you know bad luck will come to the person or the or the object of the umbrella is sort of understandable on the part of the village is for them it is all a piece you know lightning thunder of rain and sun and bad luck is all seems to be part of the same stories as same narrative that they kind of relieved every day understood experienced.

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Okay so the narrator tries to present a contrast between the adult's perspective and the children's perspective in terms of the intrusion of the blue umbrella in their village world. So, while the adults thought that you know this umbrella is not good enough the children thought something the opposite and they thought the reverse of what the adults thought. So, unlike the adults the children did not have to pretend they were full of praise for the umbrella.

They knew that if they said the right things about the umbrella Binya would smile and give it to them to hold for a little while just a little while. So, the children did not have to pretend unlike the adults who really loved the umbrella but then they pretended to themselves that it is not great and that it will create or bring bad luck on the person who has it. However, the children they really were full of praise.

They praise the umbrella and in the narrator says that in they knew that if they said good things about the umbrella to be an issue would lead them to let them hold the for a little time just a little so there is a nice contrast here between the children's desire and the adult desire and approach.

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But the big question is does the contrast between the children and the adults hold hold for a really long time in this particular narrative even for a short time. If you go back to that particular extract and see the statement they knew that if they said the right things about the umbrella. So, that set of words suggests that there is a little bit of manipulation on the part of the children too in which if they said the right thing not the wrong thing.

By the way they said the right thing about the umbrella it will have the right effect on Binya. And she would let them have the umbrella them carry the umbrella for a short time. So, children are also manipulative but for different reasons so we need to understand that nuance in in the attitude of the children preceded in the narrative. So, that black and white contrast between you know the goodness of children the innocence of children.

The purity of children versus the moral failings of the adults does not seem to hold water in this particular narrative. So, both the children and the adults have pretensions of their own but it but it is for different but the pretensions are for different effect and impact. So, that is what we need to understand okay let me come to the conflicts in the story.

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## Conflicts

◆ Nature

◆ “lifted the umbrella and carried it about six feet from the sleeping girl”

◆ “The wind was in a wicked playful mood. It would leave the umbrella alone for a few moments but as soon as Binya came near, it would pick up the umbrella again and send it bouncing, floating, dancing away from her.”

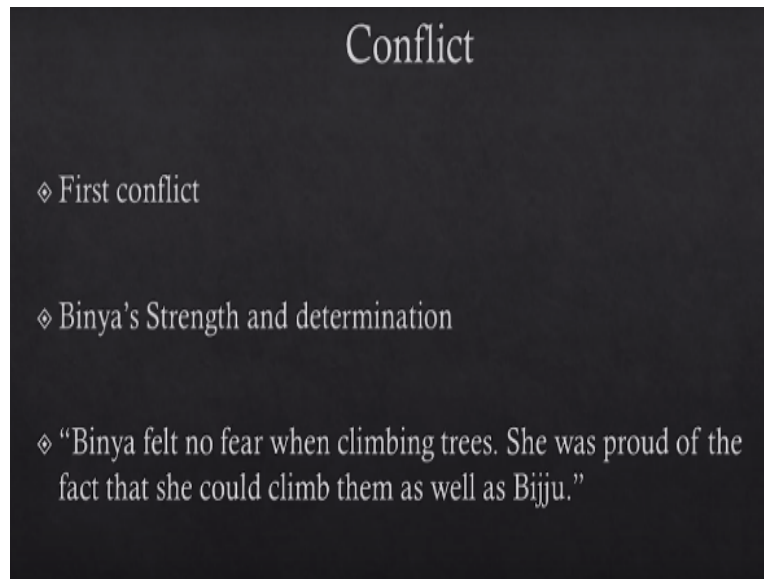
There are conflicts in the story even though they are resolved you know quickly and at least some of them are resolved quickly. So, the first conflict in the story is with regard to the umbrella and the source of this conflict is nature itself. Binya is sleeping by under the shade of a pine tree and there is strong wind and nature lifted the wind lifted them umbrella and carried it about 6 feet from the sleeping girl.

And the narrator expresses it beautifully and says the wind was in a wicked playful mood. The nature is being wicked here being playful here it would leave the umbrella alone for a few moments. But as soon as Binya came near it would pick up the umbrella and send it bouncing floating dancing away from her. So, here we have a girl who has been woken up by the strong wind.

And she realizes the wind has taken the umbrella and she tries to change the way and repossess it. But the wind is really wicked nature is really wicked and what it does is it takes the umbrella you know far away and drops it by drops it over the edge of a cliff and the umbrella falls into a cherry tree which is growing by the side of a cliff face and it is in a precarious position because the cherry tree is growing on the side of a cliff and that tree is about 80 meters from the ground

So, Binya does not think more than a second she just scrambled down the side of the cliff face and there is a lot of strength and determination in her.

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To get the umbrella back and the narrator says that she felt no fear when she was climbing those and many felt no fear when climbing trees in fact she was proud of the fact that she could climb them as well as Bijju. So, she is like a mountain goat she is like a she is kind of from in tune with nature. So, she just scrambles down the cliff face and then she gets to the cherry tree which is growing a slant.

And then she crawls on the on the trunk of the tree and then she looks down and only then she is slightly frightened because she is so far above from the ground and if she falls she would really hit the big boulders by the side of the river. So, what she does or she just entangles the umbrella from the branches and then she lets the umbrella fall down and umbrella gently kind of falls like a parachute on a thicket of nettles.

And you know in a short while she is back on ground back near the thicket of the clump of nettles and she retrieves the umbrella and then takes it home. So, this is the first conflict in the story.

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## First conflict

- ◊ Retrieves the umbrella from the cherry tree
- ◊ “She was as immune to nettles as Bijju was to bees”

She is “safe” from the elements of nature.

And she successfully retrieved the umbrella from a really precarious position on the mountains and even when the umbrella is caught in the thicket of nettles those stinging plants. She is immune to them she is unaffected by the nettles she does not care that she has been stung by these plants. But but she happily retrieves it and goes home and even though it is set up is really precarious and dangerous for the girl she is safe from the element of nature.

Because she herself seems to be a part of that you know set of elements associated with nature. So, she successfully gets the umbrella back so the nature itself seems to play with her in taking the umbrella away from her for a short while. Now the second conflict we have another conflict.

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## The Second Conflict

- ◊ Source in elements of Nature
- ◊ Encounter with a poisonous snake
- ◊ ‘Binya’s umbrella was open as usual. She thrust it forward, between herself and the snake, and the snake’s hard snout thudded twice against the strong silk of the umbrella. The reptile then turned and slithered away over the wet rocks, disappearing into a clump of ferns’

In which the umbrella is taken away from Binya for the second time and this source is this nature once again so the wind was wicked the first time now we have a creature from nature and you know this one tries to attack attack Binya and the episode is this when Binya is walking down a hilly part during the monsoon season. She encounters a poisonous snake Binya always has her umbrella open she thrust it forward between herself and the snake.

And the snake's hard snout thudded twice against the strong silk of the umbrella. The reptile then turned and slithered away over the wet rocks disappearing into a clump of ferns. So, this time the umbrella comes to the rescue of Binya somehow because she attacks this poisonous snake with the open umbrella. She kind of uses it is of weapon and the snake's hard snout thudded twice against the strong silk of the umbrella.

The umbrella does not does not kind of giveaway you know the clock does not tear even though the snake attacks it and in fact the umbrella successful in protecting the little girl to the reptile just you know retreats and slithers away. So, there are two things here the first thing is that it saves importantly it saves Binya from a poisonous snake. And the second thing is the amber alert though it is attacked.

We can see this as an attack on the umbrella too the umbrella is safe somehow because it is strong perhaps just like Binya herself you know. So, that is communicated in the second conflict in the story so the other the way to look at it is this.

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## Second Conflict

- ◇ Talisman; Protective charm
- ◇ Function of the Leopard's claw'
- ◇ Lucky or unlucky?

We can see the umbrella itself as a sort of talisman a kind of a protective charm which functions in the way the leopards claw is also supposed to function in protecting the girls from any kind of injury or danger. But then you know the opinion of the villagers when they see the umbrella as a kind of a magnet for bad luck is also seem to be realized. Because if you look at the first conflict Binya scrambles down the cliff face.

She gets down a precarious cliff side to get this particular thing. And what if she had fallen from so far above she would have died so the umbrella is kind of drawing her into danger that is one way to look at it and even in the second conflict she tries to attack the poisonous snake with the umbrella. What if the umbrella was not a good shield? what if you know the snake was successful in attacking and tearing the umbrella.

I mean is the umbrella again an unlucky object that she carries around. So, those are also some of the other interpretations people can come up with. Thank you for watching continue in the next session.