

A Study of Freud's Dual Instinct Theory through the Selected Works of Ruskin Bond

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Abstract

Human behaviour is determined by the kind of desire they have in the context of a situation. Any desire chosen by humans constitutes the Freudian concept of life and death instincts. Naturally, it is human tendency to prolong the lifetime and anticipate pleasure. Obviously, they would try to obstruct death and painful experiences in life. If there is good, then there is bad, similarly life and death are part and parcel of nature. According to Freud, there is something beyond pleasant experiences which should also be accepted by people as part of nature. Life is a circle, it starts from the inorganic and so eventually sooner or later it would definitely return to it from where it has begun. This comprehension provides humans a balanced life that would be more fruitful and ethical. The paper attempts to throw light on the Freudian dual instinct of life and death through the select works of Ruskin Bond.

Keywords: Desire; Duality; Instinct; Life and death; Pleasure and Pain.

Introduction

Pleasure and pain are the two ultimate results of any sort of desire. The great mystic Kabir Das was a predecessor; his extrapolations on desire help people to understand Sigmund Freud's conception of psychology. The pleasure and the pain are equated with the Freudian Dual-Instinct theory of Eros and Thanatos. "...we should willingly acknowledge our indebtedness to any philosophical or psychological theory that could tell us the meaning of these feelings of pleasure and 'pain' which affect us so powerfully." (Freud). Through Psychoanalysis Freud laid the foundation for personality study which centered on varied desires like love, sexuality, conflict, anger, aggression, power, etc. are serving as the driving force behind Eros and Thanatos. Situation theory proposes that a person and his/

her situation are inseparable. This notion proves that the interaction and desire of a person arise depending upon their situational context.

Freud's Dual Instinct theory delineates two kinds of drives known as the Eros - life instincts and Thanatos - death instincts. These are the dualistic driving forces of man's psyche that is responsible for a person's behaviour:

Two things are, however, decisively determined by these conditions: first the preponderance over all outer stimuli of the pleasure and 'pain' feelings, which are an index for processes within the mechanism; and secondly a shaping of behavior towards such inner excitations as bring with them an overplus of 'pain'. (Freud)

The Eros and Thanatos are held responsible for most of human behaviours, though not all. Eros deals with the aspects of sex, nurturance and affiliation. It is a metapsychological energy that prompts to look after life which "increases tension, maintains disturbance and creates larger wholes." (Devi 101). It acts as a binding factor wherein it holds all living things and also known as sexual instincts. The prime concern of Eros is self-preservation and pain avoidance by centralizing on the facets of pleasure, thirst, hunger and reproduction. It is regarded as inevitable for the growth and sustenance of human lives.

Thanatos indicates the aggression of self-criticism and depression towards oneself whereas the aggression of anger and prejudice towards others. Freud figured out that the goal of all lives on earth is to return to the inorganic which is ever before the origin of organic. The behaviour of self-destruction is an embodiment of death instincts. The energy created by Thanatos transforms into anger, prejudice and violence whenever it is directed towards the other people. If it takes an inward turn to oneself, then it would result in depression and induces one in the path of self-destruction.

India's most adorable writer Ruskin Bond wants to instill an optimistic note while writing for children which is a representation of Eros. He has been spreading his magic with the help of his pen since 1900 who has been equally adored by children and adults. Bond is better perceived as the Indian 'William Wordsworth'. His style of writing is perspicuous and distinct in a way that is actually trying to make the readers understand the ethos, culture, uniqueness and landscape of India. This outlook makes the readers to connect with their society and helps them to experience even the minuscule ordinary pleasures of life, which are nothing but the vein

of life instincts. As an entrepreneur and an ardent fan of Bond, Nandita Aron reinforces the notion of Eros that, "Ruskin Bond's words help me find my own words. His attention to minute details of everyday life encourages me to make time for small pleasures - to observe a wildflower growing in a creek and hear the chirping of a bird. This internal process of appreciating life drives me to live fully," (qtd. in Krishna). The present paper attempts to explicate Ruskin Bond's select works, "A Rupee Goes A Long Way" and *The Blue Umbrella* in the light of Sigmund Freud's Dual Instinct Theory by accentuating the life and death instincts as the dualistic nature of human life.

"A Rupee Goes A Long Way" portrays various exchanges and encounters of the protagonist named Ranji who has an outdated one rupee coin with which he tries to buy jalebis but the shopkeeper rejects the coin by saying that, it is of no use. He keeps on exchanging things for this coin among his friends and neighbours and thereby finally attains a real one rupee coin. The other story *The Blue Umbrella* centers on a young girl named Binya who got a beautiful blue umbrella as in exchange for her leopard's claw. The entire village is head over heels in love with the blue umbrella and tries to own it. Ram Bharosa, a famous shopkeeper envies Binya's umbrella which led to many adventurous journeys in the storyline. Consequently, Bharosa has been changed into a good human being only by Binya's kindness and patience.

Desire as a Driving Force of Life Instinct

Ultimately, it is the desire, not the desired, that we love.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Life without desire seems to be void. Desire is the only root cause for the creation of life on earth which results in providing pleasure as well as pain depending upon people's desired actions. The nature of desire is a dynamic one that alters as per the wants or needs of humans explicitly or implicitly influenced by their situation. There is no limitation in determining the amount of desire a person has. One may have innumerable desires during one's lifetime, some of them may be easily attainable whereas many of them remain as dreams and are hardly achievable. As Willa Cather rightly stated that, "The world is little, people are little, human life is little. There is only one big thing - desire" ("Desire Quotes"). Hence, desire is found to be the driving force behind human lives that would continue to exist as long as there is life on Earth.

Historically, human lives have been designed and practiced in a way to hound desires. The convention and heritage of India have been mapped out in particular to crave for the things and experiences that the people do not have so far. It actually motivates people in more than a way to accomplish the desire and thereby attain pleasure. There are many types of desires, for instance physical, intellectual, sexual, economical etc. By and large, many philosophers have asserted desire as an elemental to human life. One among them is the famed 15th century Indian mystic poet, saint and philosopher Kabir Das reinforced that desire comprises the real wealth of humanity. It is perfectly normal for human beings to have desires of what they do not have.

Eknath Easwaran, a spiritual teacher of the 20th century explained that Das perceived desire as having four stages. Firstly, the majority of the people “are born with countless desires – too many desires to pursue any one of them with conviction or dedication” (Guengerich). People who fall under this category are mostly showing concern for the peripheral aspects of life like possession of things and external appearance of their self. Das considered these people as the poorest ones because they seldom achieve success in life. Through the characterization of Ram Bharosa Bond portrays the first category of Das who is relentlessly after the blue umbrella. Secondly, he says that people “who are born with some desires and these are usually people who lead what are considered successful lives” (Guengerich). People with a few desires can manage to accomplish the modest goals, irrespective of their field.

Thirdly, a minimum ratio of persons “have only a few desires” (Guengerich). This category is very much capable of producing the most intellectual and geniuses like great scientists, musicians, poets, philosophers, humanitarians and political leaders. The protagonist of the story “A Rupee Goes A Long Way”, Ranji belongs to this group of having only a few desires. At the beginning of the story, he had a one rupee coin and he wanted to spend the coin as soon as possible because he made up his mind to buy all things that he wanted including eatables. “Ranji had made a list in his head of all the things he wanted to buy and all the things he wanted to eat” (CI 47). The shopkeeper declined the coin because it was an outdated one. This one rupee has been exchanged for many things like fishing rod, flute, necklace and finally a real unusable one rupee coin. “Ranji stared at the fishing rod. ‘Will you lend it to me?’ he asked.” (CI 48). Ranji’s desire for things can be expounded through these lines. “The boy had his eye on Ranji’s fishing rod; Ranji had his eye on the flute” (CI 50). Whatever could be the route taken by Ranji to gain jalebis to suffice

his hunger, he does not involve in committing any mistakes or injuring people, instead he shared his happiness with his friend. "A necklace. It's pretty, isn't it? Would you like to have it?" "Oh, thank you," said Koki, clapping her hands with pleasure" (CI 51). Ranchi has only a few desires at the outset when looking at the different objects but still, he can achieve his first goal of having eaten jalebis showcased his success. "These individuals have very few desires, and thus they will make their mark in whatever fields they commit themselves to" (Guengerich).

The fourth category states that "a few rare individuals have only one desire" (Guengerich). The great sages and spiritual leaders comprise this category that practices meditation a lot to reduce the number of desires after attaining perfect discipline. Das stated that meditation helps in reducing one's desire so that a person can actually change his position from one category to the other through constant practice. The protagonist Binya from *The Blue Umbrella* represents this sort whose desire is only to protect the blue umbrella on an explicit level but she spreads positivity and kindness which earns her a name and fame and most importantly as a good human being in the society. "...this was the first time Binya had seen such a small, dainty, colourful umbrella and she fell in love with it." (BU 8).

The Freudian Conception of Id, Ego and Super-ego

Freud's metapsychology is tripartite; are Id, Ego and Super-ego. The level of consciousness is also divided into three; they are conscious, pre-conscious and un-conscious. The first possession of any person is Id, mostly children under this phase would be untrained, unorganised and very much concerned about gratifying their needs. In the Id, the pleasure principle would be given superiority and basically, it would be an embodiment of fundamental urges and impulses that has to be satiated. "...the id is the personality component made up of unconscious psychic energy that works to satisfy basic urges, needs, and desires. The id operates based on the pleasure principle, which demands immediate gratification of needs." (Cherry). Freud stated that a subliminal urge like hunger is an imperative one that is not getting influenced by the external forces. "Let us take the case in which an instinctual stimulus such as hunger remains unsatisfied. It then becomes imperative..." (Kirsch and Mertens)many scientists believe that affects rather than drives are of utmost importance for the emotional life and the theoretical framework of affective neuroscience, developed by Panksepp, strongly underpinned this view. Panksepp evaluated seven so-called command systems and the SEEKING system is therein of central importance. Panksepp used Pankseppian drives as inputs for

the SEEKING system but noted the missing explanation of drive-specific generation of SEEKING activities in his description. Drive specificity requires dual action of the drive: the activation of a drive-specific brain area and the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine. Noticeably, as Freud claimed drive specificity too, it was here analyzed whether a Freudian drive can evoke the generation of drive-specific SEEKING activities. Special importance was addressed to the imperative motor factor in Freud's drive theory because Panksepp's formulations focused on neural pathways without specifying underlying neurotransmitter/endocrine factors impelling motor activity. As Panksepp claimed sleep as a Pankseppian drive, we firstly had to classified sleep as a Freudian drive by using three evaluated criteria for a Freudian drive. After that it was possible to identify the imperative motor factors of hunger, thirst, sex, and sleep. Most importantly, all of these imperative motor factors can both activate a drive-specific brain area and release dopamine from dopaminergic neurons, i.e., they can achieve the so-called drive specificity. Surprisingly, an impaired Freudian drive can alter via endocrinological pathways the concentration of the imperative motor factor of a second Freudian drive, obviously in some independence to the level of the metabolic deficit, thereby offering the possibility to modulate the generation of SEEKING activities of this second Freudian drive.

This novel possibility might help to refine the general understanding of the action of Freudian drives. As only imperative motor factors of Freudian drives can guarantee drive specificity for the generation of SEEKING activities, the impact of Freud's construct Eros (with its constituents hunger, thirst, sex, and sleep. The story "A Rupee Goes A Long Way" portrays Id, Ego and Super-ego where the character Ranji feels hunger which is a biological aspect of Id. "His tummy, he decided should be given the first choice. So he made his way to the Jumna Sweet Shop..." (CI 47). Whenever an individual sees any eatable, unconsciously they anticipate pleasure and after attainment, the principle of pleasure is confirmed. "Ranji looked from the coin to the shopkeeper to the chains of hot jalebis sizzling in a pan" (CI 48). Ranji's old one rupee coin gets exchanged for a few other things and finally, he gets a usable one rupee coin. Firstly, he exchanged the old coin for fishing rod with Mohinder Singh, then the rod to a flute with an unknown boy, flute to necklace with another boy who carried empty milk cans, and finally the necklace to a one rupee coin with a girl named Koki who is a neighbour of Ranji. Throughout, the process of exchanging things one after the other with many individuals showed the life instincts - Eros of Ranji and all of these characters feel pleased and contented and no one seemed to suffer. Seeking pleasure and avoiding pain

is said to be the purpose of Id. These characters' immediate gratification also reinforces the characteristics of Id. "She made a face, but Ranji was looking the other way and humming. Koki kept staring at the necklace. Slowly she opened a little purse, took out a shining new rupee, and held it out to Ranji. Ranji handed her the necklace...So they sat side by side on the low wall, and Koki helped Ranji finish the jalebis" (CI 51-52).

Whenever the child's Id comes into contact with the reality, it turns into Ego. It is in between the Id and the real environment that represents reason and awareness of the external world in the mind. "The ego is 'that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world.'" (qtd. in McLeod) . The psychological aspect of Ranji is depicted by Ruskin Bond when the boy feels exhausted; his mind (Ego) asks him to adapt something else. "Ranji was tempted. He knew the stones had little value, but they were pretty. And he was tired of the flute." (CI 51). The three levels of consciousness seem to be active when Ranji encounters the reality and he can adapt to it by controlling the Id and the Super-ego. "The shopkeeper picked up the coin, looked at it carefully, and set it back on the counter. 'That coin's no good,' he said. 'Are you sure?' Ranji asked... So, you see, it isn't old enough to be valuable, and it isn't new enough to buy anything.' ...He shrugged, took the coin back and turned on to the road." (CI 47-48). The function of Super-ego is to control the impulses of Id, especially the ones forbidden by the society. It is very much keen on persuading the Ego thoughts into moralistic ideas not simply being realistic but also seeking for perfection. "The superego incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others...

The superego is seen as the purveyor or rewards (feelings of pride and satisfaction) and punishments (feelings of shame and guilt) depending on which part (the ego-deal or conscious) is activated." (McLeod). The shopkeeper of Jumna sweet shop represents the societal aspect of the society that he could not accept the coin for jalebis. "'Look,' said the shopkeeper, holding up the coin. 'It's got England's King George on one side. These coins went out of use long ago.'" (CI 47). The delineation of what is right and wrong is also exhibited through Ranji when he shares the jalebis with Koki, "So they sat side by side on the low wall, and Koki helped Ranji finish the jalebis." (CI 52). These characteristics stand for the Super-ego qualities in the storyline.

The story *The Blue Umbrella* depicts Ego and Super-ego through the characters of Binya and Ram Bharosa. Bond expounds on the psychological aspects of an adolescent and an adult along with the help of three levels of

consciousness, the reality of the world is presented without any concealment. "The ego considers social realities and norms, etiquette and rules in deciding how to behave." (McLeod). The materialistic desire of humans is to obtain any object irrespective of its usage in their lives. The Pretty little blue umbrella has been admired by all age groups whereas the admiration immediately turned into an ardent desire that makes them to possess it.

Ram Bharosa was astonished to see Binya's blue umbrella. (BU 20)

Today everyone on the road turned their heads to stare at the girl with the bright blue umbrella. (BU 23)

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. (BU 39)

In the practical world, beauty consciousness seems to be more important and gradually it would become a part of the normal. From children to adults, they are supposed to transform by controlling their Id and the Super-ego to be in the main realm of the world. The egoistic facet points out the quality of compromise and gratification which is not immediate but a delayed one. Binya seldom closed the umbrella; it is always with her wherever she goes during the daytime. Only during her sleeping time, she is parted away from it. She always wanted it to be open, she liked it that way.

Even when she had it in the house, she left it lying open in a corner of the room. Sometimes Bijju snapped it shut, complaining that it got in the way. She would open it again a little later. It wasn't beautiful when it was closed.

Whenever Binya went out – whether it was to graze the cows, or fetch water from the spring, or carry milk to the little tea-shop on the Tehri road – she took the umbrella with her. (BU 17-19)

The shopkeeper Bharosa initially tried to get the umbrella from Binya for sale. "It's no use to you, that umbrella. Why not sell it to me? I'll give you five rupees for it." (BU 21). Later, Bharosa through his employee Rajaram, tried to steal the umbrella but that was not a success. "You mean to steal it, don't you, you wretch? What a delightful child you are!" (BU 55). "Like the id, the ego seeks pleasure (i.e., tension reduction) and avoids pain, but unlike the id, the ego is concerned with devising a realistic strategy to obtain pleasure." (McLeod) . Both Binya and Bharosa are keen on procuring pleasure; this is a manifestation of the Ego. Binya and Bharosa are both

more intensely after the umbrella but all of a sudden there is a change in their behaviour. Binya is very much ready to compromise the umbrella to Bharosa. "But Binya didn't take the umbrella. She shook her head and said, 'You keep it. I don't need it anymore.'" (BU 75). Bharosa in turn is ready to sacrifice the umbrella yet when he thought of compromising the umbrella; he got the umbrella as a gift from Binya. He presented her with a bear claw pendant in a silver chain which is totally an unexpected gift for Binya. "That doesn't matter. You gave me the umbrella, I give you the claw! Come, let's see what it looks like on you.'" (BU 81). The satisfaction of both Binya and Bharosa was not an immediate one but a delayed one and it was worth the delay.

The threshold of Super-ego is between the Id and the Ego. It is otherwise known as the censor that includes the ideals of societal laws, moral rulings, religious teachings, conventional ideas and ethical traits of an individual. It highly stands for mortality, spirituality and intellectual life. "It reflects society's moral values to some degree, and a person is sometimes aware of their own morality and ethics, but the superego contains a vast number of codes, or prohibitions, that are issued mostly unconsciously in the form of commands or "don't" statements." (McLeod). On the other hand, Bharosa depicts the parental and societal outlook in the storyline. In the beginning, when he criticizes the blue umbrella, he is a typical illustration of the ordinary people in a society. "That's a lady's umbrella,' said Ram Bharosa...It's just a pretty thing for rich ladies to play with!" (BU 20-21).

At the end of the narrative, he is an exemplar of a parent while he presents the bear claw pendant, he was so kind-hearted and affectionate. "Ram Bharosa says he will never forget the smile she gave him when she left the cows behind." (BU 81). At the Super-ego level, conscious, pre-conscious and un-conscious mind is working as per the situational demands. This story highlights the importance of kindness towards others in everyday life and also reinforces the benefits of friendship and generosity through these two characters. The story is moralistic and didactic in tone by pointing out what is right and wrong. Bond's *The Blue Umbrella* is said to be a perfect story that stresses the attributes of Super-ego. The Id, Ego and Super-ego entities signify the un-conscious, conscious and pre-conscious part of a person, which is an embodiment of not only the moral and intellectual life but also one's instincts, body urges, drives and impulses.

Life Instincts

The libido is the vitality generated by life instincts. The characteristics of

life instinct are pleasure, reproduction, thirst, hunger and avoidance of pain. "The life instinct are those we rely on for survival, pleasure and reproduction. The life instincts are a necessity for sustaining both individual and global human existence. While often called sexual instincts basic drives such as thirst, hunger and pain avoidance are also taken care of." (*Life and Death Instincts Theory*). The two stories of Bond taken up for the study depict the features of nurturance, hunger, thirst, pleasure and a slight touch of pain. "A Rupee Goes A Long Way" starts when Ranji feels hungry and he decided to spend one rupee on jalebis. "So he made his way to the Jumna Sweet Shop, tossed the coin on the counter, and asked for a rupee's worth of jalebis" (CI 47). In *The Blue Umbrella* Binya's brother Bijju sufficed his hunger by eating the wild berries. "He was on his way home from school. It was two o'clock and he hadn't eaten since six in the morning. Fortunately, the kingora bushes – the bilberries – were in fruit, and already Bijju's lips were stained purple with the juice of the wild, sour fruit." (BU 34-36). Both the stories of Bond provide a pleasurable journey for all the characters like Ranji, Mohinder Singh, unknown boys, Koki, Binya, Ram Bharosa, Bijju and the local people of Garhwal village and to the readers as well. Therefore, life instincts highlight basic survival, pleasure and reproduction. This instinct is inevitable for the growth and prolongation of life on Earth.

Super-ego subserves Utilitarianism

On morality grounds, the actions committed by humans have been assessed through the accounts of Utilitarianism which propounds "An action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable to everyone" (Fieser). Hedonistic Utilitarianism tallies only the pleasure and pain which results after the action has been done. Bentham proposes that the pleasure should be maximized from the results of the actions. Collectively all characters in Bond's works are eventually feeling pleased about their actions of exchanging things. Thus, the act done by the protagonists and others is morally right because it gives pleasure and happiness to everybody.

In Act – Utilitarianism, each and every action would be tallied based on its consequences performed by a person to assess his action and whether it is morally right or wrong. At this juncture, Bond tries to project Ranji and Binya as morally right by only looking at their situation specified and not at all considering the values of the materials which got exchanged during the storyline. Act – utilitarianism has its own limitation that, it is only possible to evaluate the morality on specific grounds rather than on a larger

scale. It applies to a particular action done by individuals on a specific and limited environment.

The modernized 21st century has become more self centered one where people are not much bothered about others. The conceptualization of human life has been shrunk into a small sphere of a nuclear family. The competitive world is not providing enough space for humans to think and act on the grounds of charity and compassion. Even though, many socio welfare organizations are doing immense service to the society, it would not meet up the amount of service contributed by every individual in the society. Every person should think at least once in his/her lifetime that they will be rendering service to the environment in which they have grown up. And so, the reading of Utilitarianism is necessary in the contemporary time which regulates human actions that would be progressive and morally right.

The perception of pleasure and pain in a balanced way would obviously create a positive wave in the society wherein people will no more be affected by depression and the number of violent acts will be reduced. The elements like stress, tension, anxiety, depression, fights, violence and loss will be lessened on a larger scale and more stability and clarity towards life results in positivity among people. A lot of chaos can be avoided which would save the time and energy of people and that can be utilized in a proper way.

Limitation

The world functions based on the concept of dualism, for instance, Day and Night, Good and Bad, Happy and Sad, Subject and Object, First and Last etc. The paper focuses on the life instincts through the select works of Ruskin Bond but it is also equally important to be aware of the death instincts. The Chinese philosophical concept of yin-yang portrays "how seemingly opposite or contrary forces tend to balance each other in the natural world." (Barman) and upholds the dualistic aspect of lives. Life after death is a belief in India and many philosophers have reinforced it through their works. For instance, Swami Vivekananda says that "The day, man will find that he never really dies; that his Soul persists beyond death; he will have no more fear of death." (*Profound*). The comprehension and experience of both Eros and Thanatos will help people to lead better life after death. They have to take up pleasure and pain in a balanced way which would obviously make one's life as a happy one on the Earth.

Conclusion

A coin has both sides; similarly many substances are naturally dualistic in the world like pleasure and pain. But people are only concerned about pleasure and they fear death so much so that, they try to avoid it to the fullest possible extent. As Dan Brown correctly stated, "Men go to far greater lengths to avoid what they fear than to obtain what they desire" ("Desire Quotes"). No one could escape the other side of life as Freud articulated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that "the aim of all life is a quest to return to the inanimate state which existed before living things" (Devi 100). Life originates from the inorganic substances and eventually, it would aim to reach the origin again through the possible means. Though, life instinct prolongs a lifetime, it could not prevent death. Thus, Freud states that certain inherent biological makeup is gradually marching towards death that is the inorganic matter where life is said to be emanated, because they were created in such a way. "...everything living dies from causes within itself, and returns to the inorganic, we can only say 'The goal of all life is death', and, casting back, 'The inanimate was there before the animate'." (Freud). If there is life, then there is death – it is absolutely normal that's how the natural cycle is functioning and people should be aware and understand this principle that there is something beyond pleasure. The apprehension of this notion leads to a balanced life on earth which would be fruitful and contented.

Bond through his works spreads happiness and positivity and at the same time allows space for the readers to think critically and come up to their own conclusions. He simply achieved this because readers would feel as if the story is happening in their neighbourhood and they could easily connect themselves with the storyline. The paper outlines Bond as a person who balances both pleasure and pain and his characters too take up these experiences equally and continuing their life without worrying about the future but concentrating on the present by acting positively. As a researcher, the habit of reading facilitates me to distinguish between the pleasant and painful experiences in life and that in turn helped me to become a balanced person. The acquisition of knowledge equips me to become a perfect human being in the society by balancing both life and death instincts which is rightly stated by Francis Bacon in his essay *On Studies*

"Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man and writing an exact man" ("Francis").

Note on Abbreviations

In this paper, the following books of Ruskin Bond are referred to as follows:

CI : *Children of India*

BU : *The Blue Umbrella*

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