

Working Capital Management
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Lecture-5
Plotting Sundara Ramaswamy's "Reflowering"

Hello and welcome to this lecture on Sundara Ramaswamy's "Reflowering". So, in this lecture I am going to you see how exactly this story is plotted to began with and then let us see the importance of this idea of reflowering as well.

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Sundara Ramaswamy

- ◆ 1931-2005
- ◆ Affectionately known in literary Circles as "Su.Ra".
- ◆ Edited and published a magazine "Kalachuvadu"
- ◆ Wrote in many genres in Tamil

Sundara Ramaswamy is a very very important figure Tamil literary tradition he was born in 1931 and he died in 2005. He is affectionately known in literary circles as Su.Ra, he edited and published a very famous magazine called "Kalachuvadu". And he also wrote in many journals in the Tamil language.

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Sundara Ramaswamy



◆ “One of the most versatile and innovative of Tamil writers, a great modernist and a dazzling stylist”

<https://penguin.co.in/author/sundara-ramaswamy/>

And according to many critics he is one of the most versatile on innovative of Tamil writers and the great modernist and a dazzling stylist. And we can see examples of his uh writing style his innovation in even this story in question for this week reflowering.

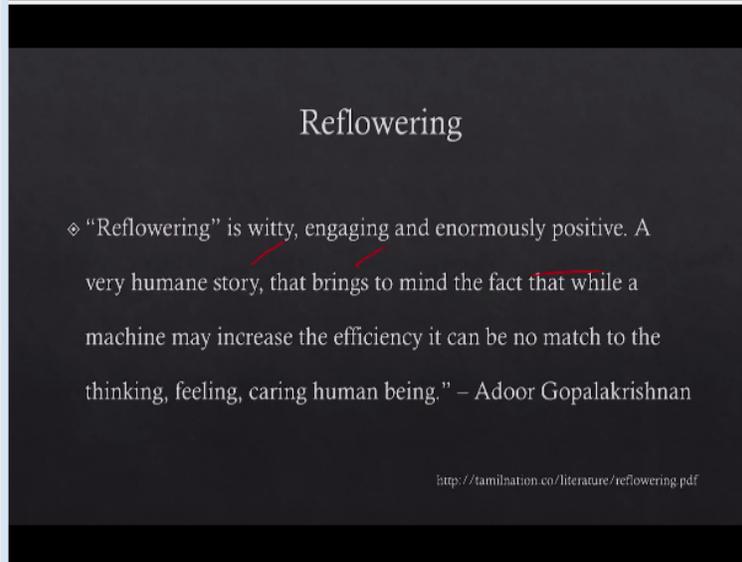
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Sundara Ramaswamy

- ◆ His novels translated into English are *Oru Puliya Marathin Kathai* (Tamarind History; Penguin 2013), translated by Blake Wentworth
- ◆ *J.J Silakuripukal* (J.J: Some Jottings; Katha, 2004), translated by A.R Venkatachalapathy,
- ◆ *Kuzhanthaigal, Pengal, Aangal*(Children, Women, Men; Penguin 2013), translated by Lakshmi Holmström

Some of his novels that have been translated in English and have received much claim are these Oru Puliya Marathin Kathai it has been translated by Blake Wen2rth in 2013. J.J Sila Kuripukal this was translated by A.R Venkatachalapathy in 2004 and Kuzhanthaigal, Pengal, Aangal (children, Women, Men) this was translated by Lakshmi Holmstorm, so all these translations have received lot of critical claim by the reading public.

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Now other Gopalakrishnan has this criticism to offer about Reflowering he says that “Reflowering” is a witty, engaging and enormously positive story, a very humane story that brings to mind the fact that while a machine may increase the efficiency, it can be no match to the thinking, feeling, caring human being. So, this critic Gopalakrishnan brings out the 2 contrasts that are played out in the story which is between human being and a machine how the machine tries to replace the human being.

And that does not happen ultimately in the story and he is also quite write to state that the stories witty engaging and it is enormously positive. Because despite, so many ego clashes people do come to the rescue of one another at times of need. So, this is a very firming story heartwarming story one that readers who want to go back to again and again.

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Significance of the Title

- ◆ Reflowering
- ◆ “That flowers or flourishes again.”
- ◆ What is the importance of the title?
- ◆ What is hinted at by the title?
- ◆ Reflowering of the spirit of Rowther, the central character.



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Now I want to begin with the title and look at the implications or the significances of the title for the story. So, what exactly is reflowering, reflowering is something to do with flowers blooming again, one that flowers or flourishes again something that is rejuvenated brought back to life once the spirit something that has it is spirit restored .

So, these are some of the associated meanings that this word reflowering has blooming again you know coming back to life, coming back into once own once more. So, what is the importance of this title, what is hinted at through this title, so if we look at the central character then this concepts seems to say that the reflowering of the spirit of Rowther is what this story all about, so Rowther is the central character in this story.

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Reflowering

- ◇ What is the story?
- ◇ Set of events
- ◇ Rowther, a blind man who makes bills at a clothes shop

Financial troubles

The slide features a dark background with white text. A red oval callout on the right contains the text 'Financial troubles'. A red circle highlights the words 'blind man' in the third bullet point.

So, what is the story the story is a set of events and this set of events in reflowering happens around Rowther a blind man who makes bills at a clothes shop and this characters very very interesting. Because he is blind that is the most visible marker of that identity for some of the years back, what is even more interesting about Rowther is the fact that he is with mathematics.

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Reflowering

- ◇ Math genius
- ◇ The shop dependent on his calculation skills
- ◇ Rowther is conscious of his value.

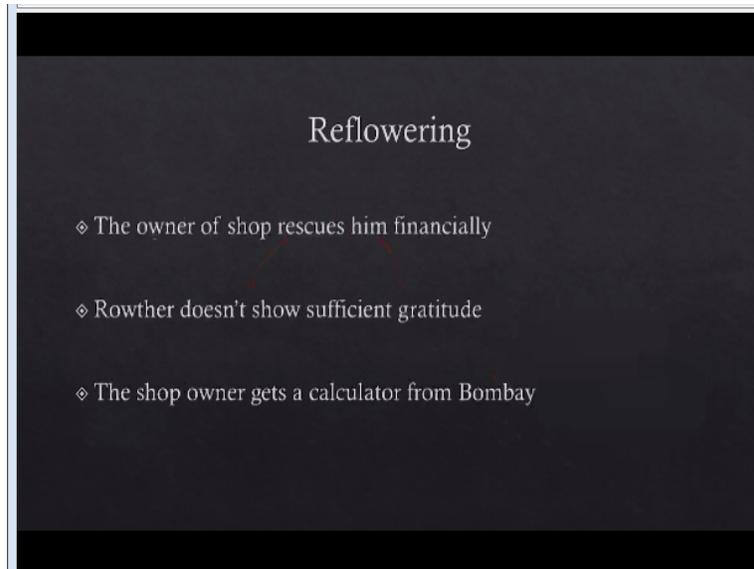
Displeasure means no-show at work

The slide features a dark background with white text. A red oval callout on the right contains the text 'Displeasure means no-show at work'. A red arc connects the text 'Math genius' to 'The shop dependent on his calculation skills'.

In fact he is the genius and entire clothes shop is dependent on his extremely fast calculation skills. So, he can add up, so many different items and make the bill quickly within a back of an eyelid, so which is why he is much sort after by the owner of the shop . So, in the other interesting marker of identity about Rowther is this that he is in deep trouble financially.

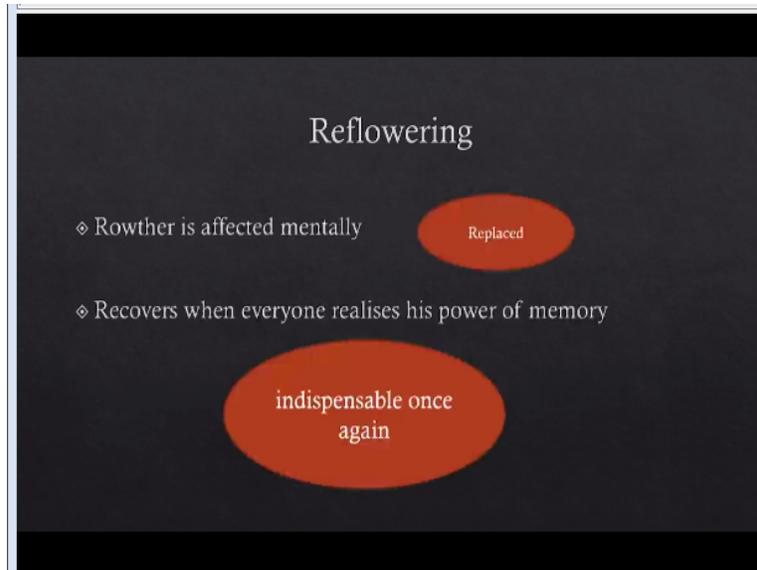
So, he is a blind man, he is a maths wiz and he is a man who is perpetually in financial troubles. And the other thing that we need to notice that Rowther is conscious of his value to the shop, he knows how much wanted and decided important he is because he is the one who does the bills at the till. So, because he is conscious of the fact that he is very important, when he is displeased, he will not show up it works. So, displeasure means no-show at work and that is very interesting.

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So, the owner of the shop because he is dependent on Rowther rescues him financially when there is trouble at home. But he feels that Rowther does not show enough gratitude even though he is saved by the owner of the shop who pays his debts, saves his house from being auctioned. So, and the owner of the shop ultimately what he does is he gets a calculator from Bombay for the first time.

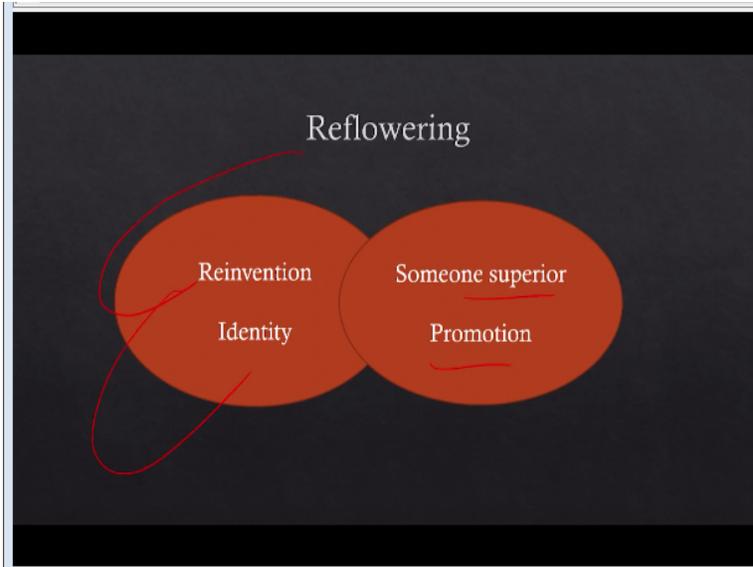
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And this introduction of the calculator affects Rowther mentally, he just collapses and then he is unable to work. And because he thinks he has been replaced by this particular machine and but what happens is that he recovers when everybody realizes that he is not only great at mathematics he is also powerful in remembering things and he knows where things are, he knows the prices of each and everything in the shop.

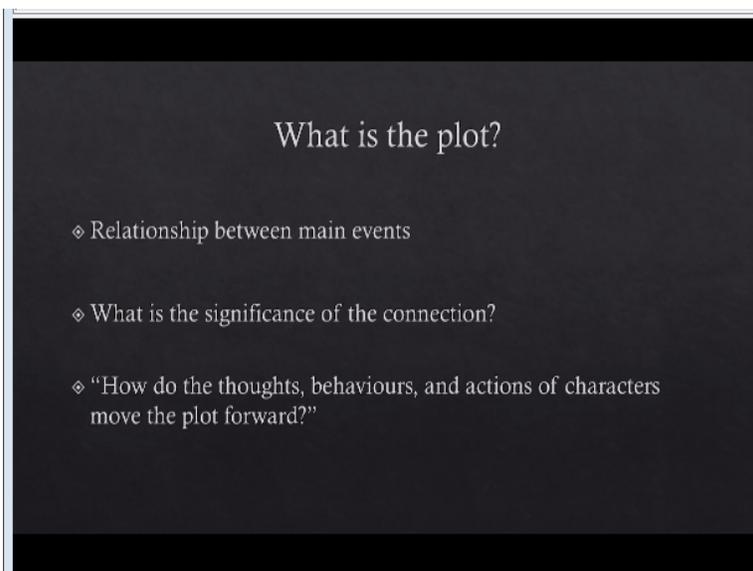
He can even sense the presence of the absence of particular person he remembers dates, he remembers particular anniversaries and, so many other things. And everybody realizes that he is indispensable once again and he becomes promoted or he promotes himself as the manager of the cloth shop.

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So, this reflowering this idea of reflowering of Rowther is about reinvention when one of his identity is fail to perform when one of his identities is replaced by a machine. He just reinforce his identity as man who is supreme at remembering things. So, he becomes very superior, he continues to be superior in the shop because of his cognitive skills and he gets his promotion at the end of the day.

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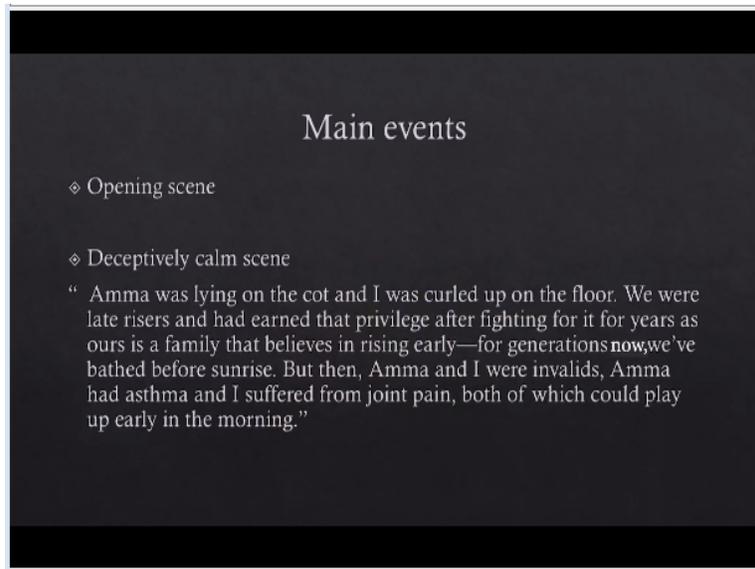


So, we have seen the story we have seen the story as a set of events, so now let us look at the plot of the story. Now what exactly is plot is about relationship between the events between the sequence of events. And we need to look at the significance of the connection between events

and we also need to consider the thoughts behaviors and actions of character that kind of move the plot along that move the plot forward complicated and resolve it.

So, we need to see the connection between events and about the characters who do the navigation of the plot. Let us look at the events and how they are interconnected and I want to begin by examining the opening scene, the scene with which the story begins.

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And I would call this particular scene is a very very deceptively calm scene we have 2 characters Amma and the narrator being introduced in the opening scene. Amma was lying on the cot and I was curled up on the floor, we were late risers and had earned that privilege after fighting for it for years as ours is a family that believes in rising early for generations now.

We have bathed before sunrise but then Amma and I were invalids Amma had asthma and I suffered from joint pain, both of which could play up early in the morning. So, this scene is about mother and a boy who are late risers they get a very late in the morning and they have perfect cost for that they are invalids , one has asthma, the other has joint pain and therefore they are excused for from getting up early in the morning.

Even though there family has this tradition of getting a very early before sunrise and bathing before them, so, this is a domestic situation description about a particular domestic family and this is very very calm scene as I just mentioned.

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Opening Scene

- ◆ The head of the household, Appa, about to leave for work.
- ◆ A young boy is the narrator

◆ "I see him in profile—one eye, spectacles, half a forehead streaked with vibhuti and a dot of chandanam paste, golden-yellow, topped by a vivid spot of red kumkumam."

- Bills jingling
 - Keys
- Noise of the slippers
 - "daily umbrella-health-test"

Religious and social purposes

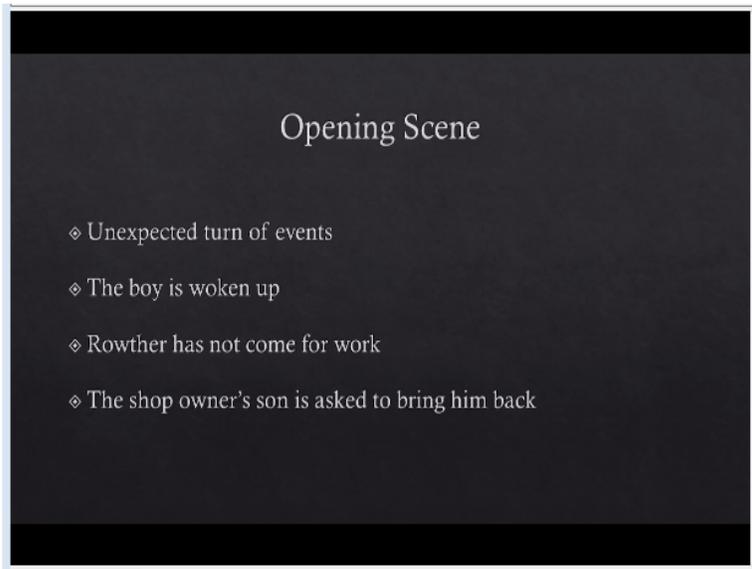
And the narrator, the boy through whose eyes we see this story describes his father Appa who is about to leave for work at his cloth shop. So, Appa the head of the household is getting his keys and he is getting ready to leave the house. And these are the set of things that happen when he is about to leave the house there is the jingling of the bills of the horse buggy that is waiting outside the house.

And then there is the noise of the slippers, the Creech, Creech sound when he puts the slippers on and then he opens and closes the umbrella in order to test it is quality that he calls it the daily umbrella health test make sure it is an perfect working order. So, these are the stereotypical set of things that happen before the father leaves the house. And this particular day to the boy expects the same set of things to happen but it does not.

And we can see a description of the father being given by the boy who kind of sleepily looks at him early in the morning and we get this description. I see him in profile one eyes spectacles, half a forehead streaked with vibhuti and a dot of chandanam paste, golden-yellow topped by a vivid spot of red kumkumam. So, the father is all ready in a he is in perfect order he has had his

pooja which is quite evident from the secret ash and this chandanam paste and the red kumkumam on his forehead. So, these are the details these are the stuff that I used for religious and social purposes in a Hindu household.

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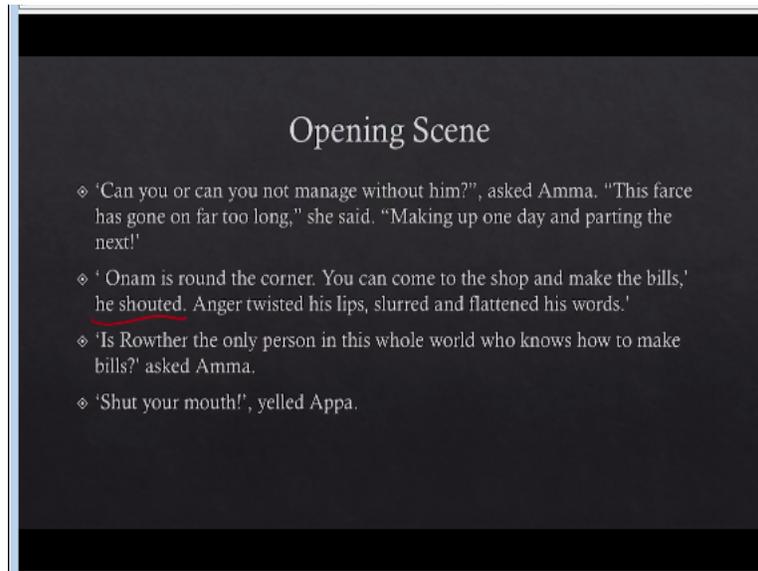


So, the father is all set to leave the home, but he does not because there is an unexpected turn of events. So, instead of leaving the house the father wakes up his son the boy who covertly look at his father in the previous scene. So, the what is the issue here and the issue for the first time becomes clear and that is that Rowther the man who the bill at the cloth shop has not turned up for work .

And he wants his son Ambi the boy to go to Rowther's house and bring him back. So, the calmness of the scenes slightly begins to correct. There are fishers in the scene and the boy does not get up readily enough and then the mother and the father they wake him up . And then Amma asks why do you keep on with this farce can you not manage without him. Why do you have to carry on this habitual fashion of insulting him.

And then begging him to come back and she says this farce as gone on far too long she said making up one day and parting the next. And the father is roiled, he says owner mess around the corner, you can come to the shop and make the bills. He shouted immediately I mean from calm to storm there is a quick turn of events. And the twisted his lips slurred and flattened his words.

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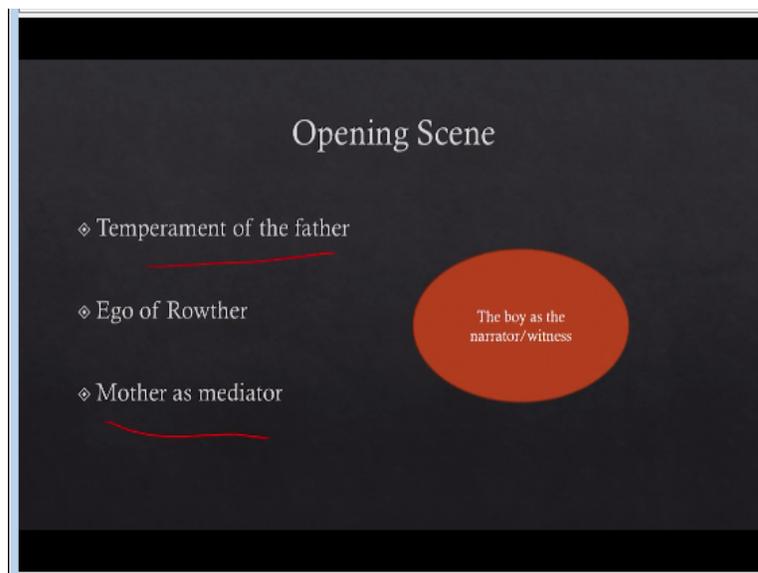


Opening Scene

- ◆ 'Can you or can you not manage without him?', asked Amma. "This farce has gone on far too long," she said. "Making up one day and parting the next!"
- ◆ 'Onam is round the corner. You can come to the shop and make the bills,' he shouted. Anger twisted his lips, slurred and flattened his words.'
- ◆ 'Is Rowther the only person in this whole world who knows how to make bills?' asked Amma.
- ◆ 'Shut your mouth!', yelled Appa.

And she asks is Rowther the only person this whole world who knows how to make bills asked Amma. So, she is quite insistent and then replies just shut your mouth. So, we get a lot of intonation, when we see this exchange happening between the husband and the wife and his witness by the boy let us see what these information are.

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Opening Scene

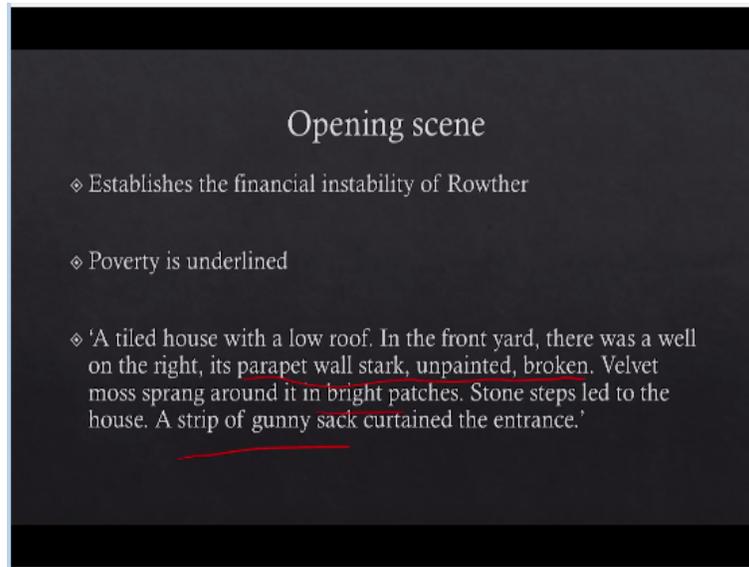
- ◆ Temperament of the father
- ◆ Ego of Rowther
- ◆ Mother as mediator

The boy as the narrator/witness

The first thing that we note is the Temperament of the father he can easily get roiled, he gets very very angry very very quickly. And we also understand that Rowther has a massive ego because if the father is displeased and shows his displeasure to the employee, he refuses to come to work and that is also evident there. And then we also see that the mother becomes the mediator when

something goes wrong between the owner and the man who makes the bill as we see the boy tells us the boy who is the narrator and witness to the events in the story. He tells us that the mother is the one who kind of you know gets the crisis in this particular case let us see how.

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So, the boy Rowther visits the home of the boy Ambi visits the home of Rowther and that particular scene has a particular agenda it establishes the financial instability the poverty of Rowther. And how does it do that through the description of the environment and the house of Rowther and what sort of a house is it. It is a tiled house with a low roof in the front yard there was a well on the right, it is parapet wall stark, unpainted, broken.

So, not in good order not well maintained, no money to maintain it, velvet moss sprang around it in bright patches there is a contrast between the nature that envelopes this well the parapet wall. And the actual state of condition of the wall, stone steps led to the house a spirit of a strip of gunny sack curtained the entrance. A sack is used to offer privacy to the members of the household.

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Opening Scene

- ◆ "Rowther was sitting cross-legged, like a lord."
- ◆ Wants to be called back to work
- ◆ "Amma, you are a great woman...
Get up, let's go to the shop at once"

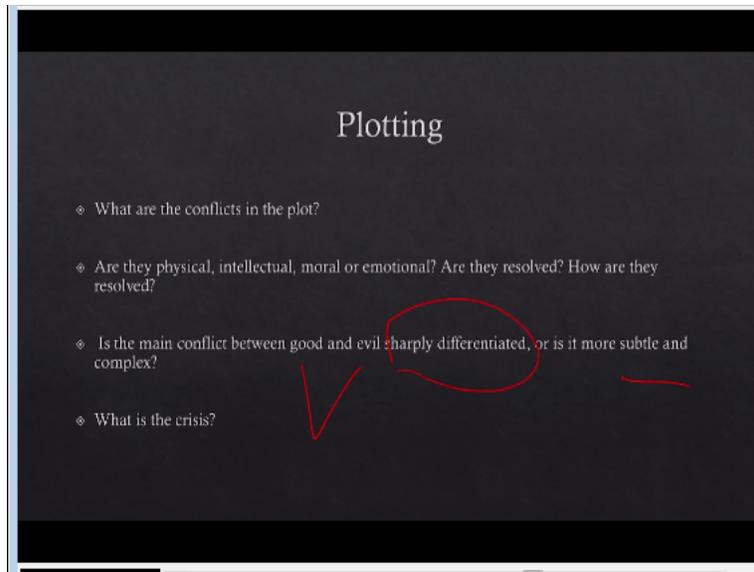
Metaphor
Lord of his household

And even though he is very very poor the manner in which Rowther sits in the middle of the house almost excepting company tells us that he can be the lord. He is the lord of his surroundings, so Rowther was sitting cross leg legged like a lord and he invites the boy. He is very welcoming he asks softer his mother and he also talks about natural remedies that he has which could solve problem and the Amma's asthma problem.

And he really wants to be called back to work that is also quite evident and when the boy tells that Amma is apologizing for the behavior of the shop owner, the husband in the Rowther immediately accepts the apology. And then he says Amma you are a great woman get up, let's go to the shop at once. So, this is directed to the boy who was come to pick him up, so what is very interesting about this particular scene is the idea of Rowther as a lord.

The metaphor of a very powerful person the lord of his household is underlined or highlighted in this particular scene despite his financial troubles.

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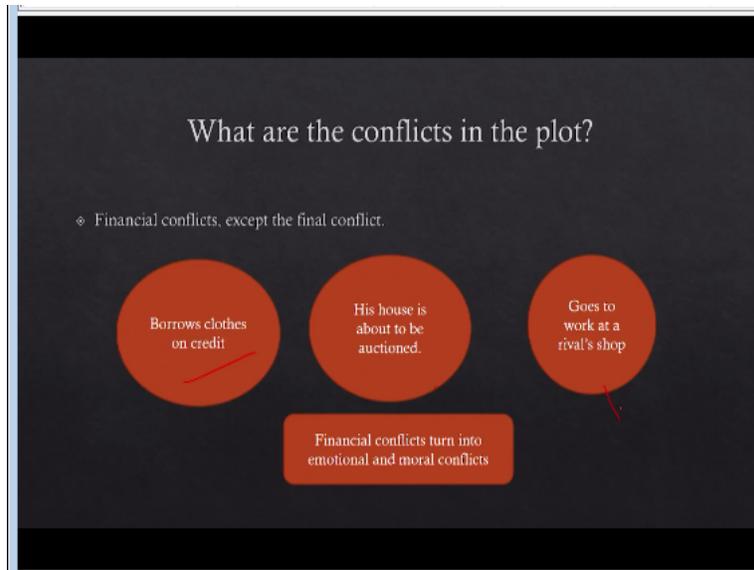


Now in terms of reading the plotting of a particular stories, in some of the questions that we need to ask are about the conflicts, what are the various kinds of conflicts in a particular story what is sort of conflict is it are the conflicts physical conflicts, intellectual, moral or emotional and if there are these sort of conflicts. How are they resolved, how are they solved or sorted and how are they resolved by whom.

So, these are the some of the questions that tell us about the nature of a particular society represented in a story. And the identity of the characters who cost troubles in the identity of the characters who help resolve or solve the troubles in this story world and the other general question that you can ask is this is the conflict between good and evil sharply differentiated or these easy to identify and compartmentalize or is the conflict more complex and subtle.

So, these are some of the question that you could ask and they are the question is what is the nature of the crisis, what sort of crisis it is, is it easily identifiable and who is it cost by. So, these are some of the questions you can ask in terms of reading the plotting.

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Now in terms of this particular story *Reflowering* by Sundara Ramaswamy what are the conflicts in this particular story. So, I would suggest that the conflicts are primarily financial conflicts and at the financial conflicts create other sets of conflicts in as if there is a domino effect in this story. So, let us look at the first crisis in this story, the first crisis which led to Rowther going back home in a huff is about borrowing clothes from the clothes shop on credit.

So, Rowther wants to get a set of clothes for his family on credit and he does not get due permission from the shop owner. So, he just asks the shop assistant to pack the clothes that he has selected and kept apart. So, that really riles the clothes shop owner and he says I cannot give you any further credit. So, this is the first crisis and the second crisis is that the house of Rowther is about to be auctioned.

He is unable to pay the debts on his house and his house is come to the auction, so all his family members in the women of the family they come to the cloth shop in a cart and they wailed in front of the cloth shops. So, that is the second crisis and the third crisis happens when after the cloth shop owner has paid off the debts on the house. And the very next day the Rowther instead of coming to work at the usual shop, he goes and works at a rival shop that is when the third crisis happens.

And that is because he says that the Chettiyar to whose workplace that he goes to make bills he has apparently promised him that he would pay off all his debts. So, there are a set of financial conflicts connecting all these important events in the story. And these financial conflicts turn into emotional and moral conflicts one thing turns into another.

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So, as I said financial conflicts have emotional impact because in the process of sorting and settling them egos are hurt. And in the first case we can see that the women becomes the mediator the mother of the boy becomes the mediator. And her apology is accepted by Rowther and he comes back to work and it is very interesting that he refuses to come until there is an apology from the family, where he has been insulted.

And in the case of the second or the third crisis the shop assistant Kolappan is the one who brings him back from the Chettiyar's house, where he works. So, it is there is also a pattern here, we see Rowther being collected brought back to the cloth shop and we also need to remember that he is a blind man who meets to be guided to the shop where he works. So, that is also something that we need to remember the physical inability to find his own way is also very interesting.

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Now when Rowther goes to the Chettiyar's house the Chettiyar's shop to work instead of coming to his own shop. He says what injustice I just come back after paying the court the entire amount for his debts, he has let me down the ungrateful wretch Appa shouted. So, he cannot believe that Rowther could betray him to this extent, he has sorted all the financial worries that are associated with the house.

He got the house back for this man and the next day instead of coming to work here, he has gone to a rival clothes, merchants shop . So, he cannot understand this betrayal, this tracery and we can see how financial troubles lead to emotional conflicts. So, he is hurt by the actions of Rowther and of the reason has to why he goes to the Chettiyar shop as I just mention is because he has more financial owes.

And Chettiyar understanding the financial troubles of Rowther exploits the situation and asks him to come in work at his shop instead. So, that he could use the calculation skills of this blind man and he also promises him that he would pay all his debts.

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Nature of Conflicts

- ◆ Kolappan also whipped himself into a fury. 'He knows how to calculate, but he's an idiot.'
- ◆ 'This is a wicked world,' he said. 'These days you can't even trust your own mother.'
- ◆ 'I lost my head, ayya', said Rowther as he stood before ^{owner} Rowther.
- ◆ 'A time will come when you will be cut down to size'

Now in that particular scene when Kolappan tells him that Rowther has gone to work in Chettiyar's shop the father is very very upset and angry. And that is the reference there in the story and Kolappan the shop assistant also whipped himself into a fury. He also gets angry on the shop owners behalf and he says he there is Rowther knows how to calculate but he is an idiot.

He can be superior in terms of his mathematical ability but in terms of leading a life in the real world. He is an idiot, he is a stupid person and this is the wicked world he said this is Appa the owner of the cloth shop. These days you cannot even trust your own mother he is so worry upset that he says even a the figure of the mother can never be trusted these days in these fallen days.

And then finally Kolappan brings him back and once he is back Rowther says I just lost my head, I lost my head Ayya said Rowther as he stood before the owner of the shop at a time will come when you will be cut down to size the owner of the cloth shop is very upset. And he warns that you will get your due when the time is right and Rowther says please do not make such comments it is very very upsetting.

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Conflicts

- ◆ Faith in humanity is questioned
- ◆ The figure of the mother is used for that notion
- ◆ Rowther's evocation of the mother

Kolappan increases the intensity of the situation

"wicked world"

So, this situation this crisis in this story tests the cloth shop merchants faith in humanity. So, he says even you cannot trust your own mother, so it is interesting to see that the figure of the mother is used as the touch stone for everything that is pure. And full of integrity and again Kolappan as I said increases the intensity of the situation by his own anger at Rowther was gone to work in a rival shop.

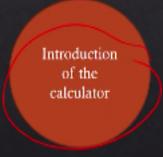
So, this seems to be wicked world that there is no sense of gratitude and again the invocation of the mother figure also remains us of Rowther's evocation of the mother. And it is her intervention there that brings him back to work in the first case. So, there are lots of connections here if you read a passage very closely it will lead you to other places and to other memories. And you can make certain thematic connections through these associations.

And again there is 4 boarding and 4 warning in the words of the owner of the shop when very upset he says that you will be cut down to size one day.

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Foreboding and Forewarning

- ◊ 'A time will come when you will be cut down to size'
- ◊ Warns that massive ego will be destroyed
- ◊ This foreboding is realised
- ◊ The shop owner causes his downfall



A red circular graphic with the text "Introduction of the calculator" inside it, positioned to the right of the list items.

And that warning does come true that foreboding is realized when the shop owner causes the down fall, so to speak briefly of Rowther when he introduces the calculator from Bombay. And the ego of Rowther is upset and destroyed when the calculator comes into the picture. Thank you for watching I will catch up with you in the next session.