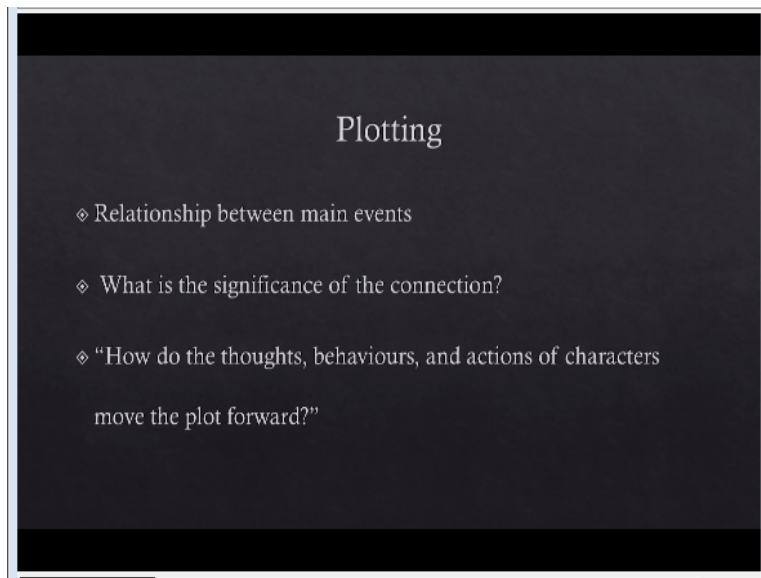


Working Capital Management
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Lecture-5A
Reading the Plot for themes in Sundara Ramaswamy's "Reflowering"

Hello and welcome to this lecture on Sundara Ramaswamy's Reflowering I have title this session reading the plot for themes in this particular story. So, the objective of this session is to work out how we understand some of the major concerns of this story through a closed reading of the plot elements.

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Now let us work out what are the significances in the relationship between the various events in this story. So, we need to find out what exactly is the significance or the implication or the importance of the connection between the events. And I would also like to find out about the rationale behind the thoughts behaviors and actions of the characters and how they impact on the plot.

In other words how do characters push the plot forward or how do the characters complicate or initiate the plot and bring it to resolutions. So a close reading of these aspects of plotting will tell us something deeper about the philosophy behind this entire story.

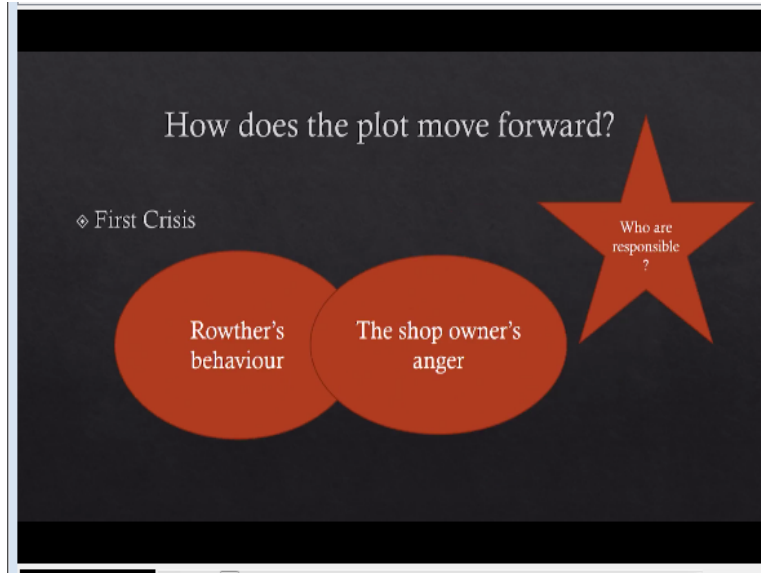
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Now in the previous session we had look at some of the kinds of conflicts and we realize that financial conflicts have an impact on the emotions, the sentiments there are expressed among the characters in the story. So, there is a relationship between financial and the emotional conflicts and consequently there is also an impact or an effect on the moral conflicts in the minds of the characters.

So, moral responsibilities, decisions that impinge on once morality or connected to all these aspects which have they source in financial problems or financial issues for a particular character in the story. And we know who that person is since we have look at the story since we have read the story and that character protagonist or antagonist is Rowther.

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So, I want to take a closer look at the first crisis in this story and see who are all the figures who are really responsible in moving the plot forward in initiating the plot. How does the story began so, it begins with a crisis as I mentioned earlier and that crisis has 2 characters connecting to it. And one is obviously Rowther and the other is the shop owner. So, Rowther's behavior provokes the anger of the shop owner and certain things happened because of that provocation and at the plot begins, the story begins to unrivaled.

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Rowther's Financial Flaws

- ◆ 'Look here, Rowther, what are you going to do if you let your debts keep mounting like this?' Appa had asked . Appa's question had been provoked because Rowther had chosen clothes for his entire family, and piled them up by his side before thinking of asking Appa for credit. It was quite clear that Appa did not like this'

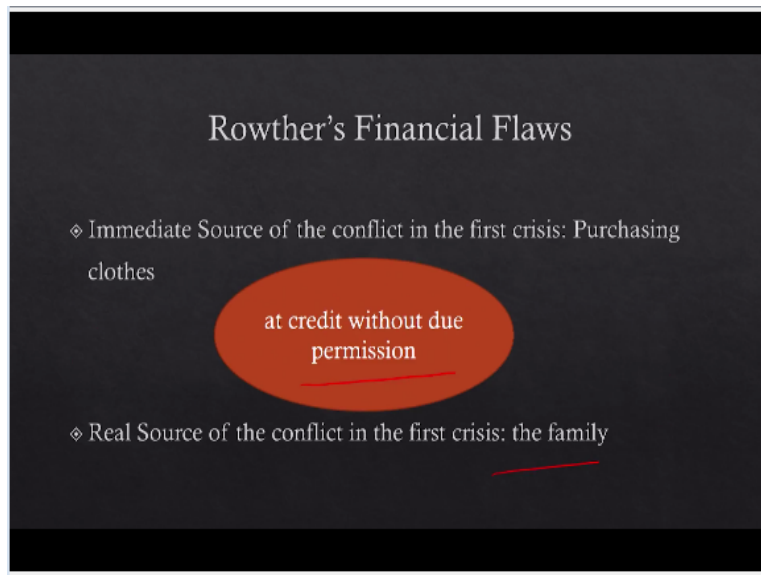
Now this is precisely the reason behind the first crisis, so this event or incident is the one that annoys the shop keeper. The shop on a who is the boss of Rowther and this anger provoke by a particular behavior, particular kind of behavior is something that needs close attention. Because

we can see that there are various connections to this incident and those connections and the sources need to be thoroughly examined to understand the under pining that are there in the character motivations and the character actions in the story.

So, let me read this extract from this story look here Rowther what are you going to do if you let your debts keep mounting like this? Appa had asked. Appa's question had been provoked because Rowther had chosen clothes for his entire family and plied them up by his side before thinking of asking Appa credit. It was quite clear that Appa did not like this.

We need to remember that we have child narrator a boy narrator the son of this figure. Appa, the son of the shop owner is the one who is narrating this incident for the benefit of the readers and this is the very significant moment in this story. And it gives as a window into the thought process of not only Rowther, but also the figure of the owner.

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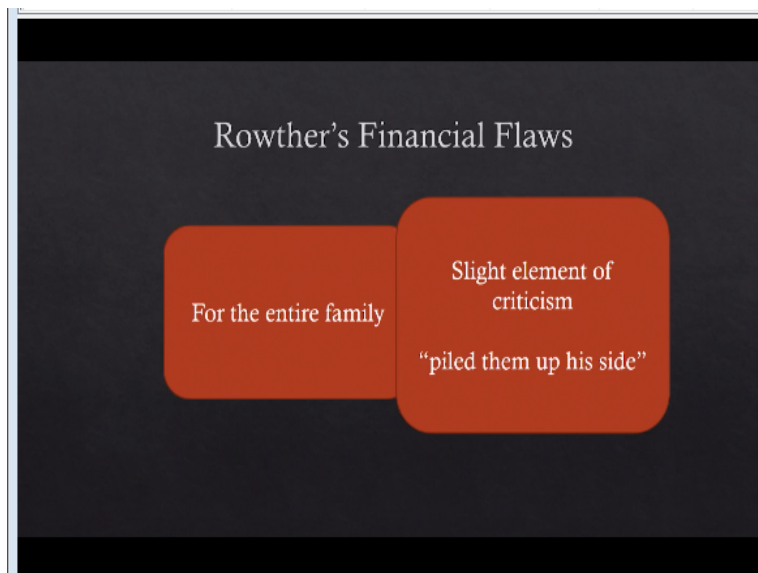


So, what is the immediate source of the conflict in the first crisis, the immediate conflict is of course the fact that Rowther had chosen clothes for his entire family on credit. And he asks one of the shop assistance Kolappan to pack the clothes up and give him the bill and the boy narrator points out that Rowther does not think of asking Appa for permission to take these clothes on credit.

And this is displeasing this is annoying the father figure/owner of the shop the clothes shop. So, the immediate source of conflict is the purchase that is happening and more importantly the purchase that is happening on credit and without due permission from the shop owner. So, we can say that the ego of the owner is getting hurt and Rowther is unaware or he is probably conscious of it.

But still decides to ignore that hurt that he is causing the ego of his boss. So, let us go come back to the source of the crisis, so Rowther is purchasing clothes for his family. So, the family is also implicated in the crisis that is developing in the shops, so let us look at the family in question briefly.

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So, and if you go back to that extract that boy narrator says that Rowther had chosen clothes for the entire family and there seems to be a certain hint of criticism in that particular phrase even though that is not spelt out clearly. And again the phrase if you notice piled them up like a mountain and there is a reference again a metaphorical reference to the idea of clothes being piled up like a mountain.

And that is being compare to the debts that is mounting up like a mountain or a hill. So, there are a lot of play metaphorical play of ideas and emerges here and they all go back to the financial debts and that Rowther ahs kind of piled up you know in his family. So, this is a very interesting

extract in that regard, so there is a as I said there is a slight element of criticism here on the part of the narrator. And as I mention the metaphors of piling up of clothes as was the mountain is beside Rowther financial mountain of debts and market is hinted there too.

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And another thing that is hinted at here is that just as the pile of clothes in the kids the family too is a big one. And the entire family is dependent on the finances of Rowther and aged blind man who works as a accountant in a particular clothes shop. And Rowther himself states that my house is full of women and he says that all his sons are useless. So, we again get a sense of the imbalance within the family of Rowther.

The sons was supposed to be very very protective was supposed to bring in money who was supposed to support the household and not doing their job. Hence Rowther is force to take upon himself the responsibility of taking care of his large family. So, there are several things that are coming up into our attention when we do a close reading of that particular extract.

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Rowther's financial flaws

◆ 'Four sons, four daughters-in-law, eight granddaughters, eight grandsons. How many is that? If I gave them just one item of clothing apiece, even then the cost is high.'

Irony: Seeks assistance in calculation

General comment about expense

The slide features a dark background with white text. The title 'Rowther's financial flaws' is centered at the top. Below it is a quote starting with a diamond symbol. At the bottom, two overlapping red ovals contain the text 'Irony: Seeks assistance in calculation' and 'General comment about expense'.

And he spells out the precise number of members in his family for the benefit of his audience in the cloth shop and for the readers. He says I have 4 sons, 4 daughters-in-law, 8 granddaughters, 8 grandsons, how many is that? If I gave them just one item of clothing a piece each even then the cost is high. So, it is a large household and the entire household his sold by this old man Rowther.

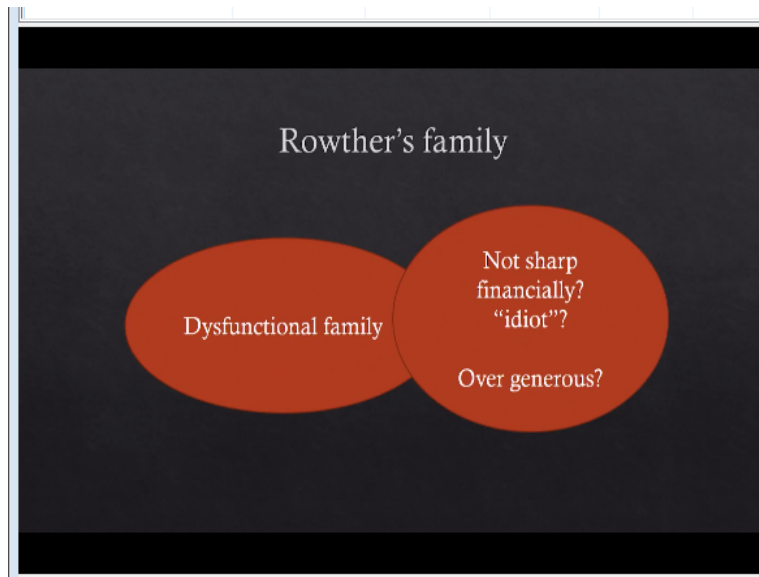
And he says that even if I want to give them 1 piece of clothing per member even then the expense would be very high, it will be difficult for him to meet it out. So, we do get a sense that that there is a reason rationale for the financial problems that Rowther has mounted up and I want to point out the Irony that is there in this speech of Rowther.

It is very interesting when he asks this question how many is that it is a very very simple math for a maths wizard like Rowther. But he does not give us the total the sum of the members in the family, he just ask that question perhaps erratically how many is that and that is a very precious question especially coming from the mouth of Rowther. And again he does not give the exact cost of the clothes that he has purchased on credit from this particular cloth shops.

So, he just makes a general comment about the high expense that is being realized because of this purchase. So, it is very interesting and significant to see that Rowther is not giving a definite number either which regard to the family members or with regard to the amount he has borrowed

from the clothes shop owner and that is perhaps deliberate and that perhaps gives an indication of the crafty nature of Rowther, that is something which is not highlighted by the author, it is what we do get a sense when we interrupt the story.

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We have somehow established that this is a dysfunctional family when an old man is running the entire households full of too many members. And we realize that the sons are not contributing to the running of the household. So, in such a context we can see that the finances can run arid when there is only one member contributing to the family.

On the other side we also need to ask if Rowther is not being very smart in running the household in keeping an eye on the finances of the household is he being over generous that is the question that (()) (12:27) being asked that question does come up because we see there is a slight hint that he is bought clothes for the entire family is that necessary that is the big question.

And we do not know what exactly is the occasion for that purchase is he purchasing those many number of clothes the entire family, because it is a specific family occasion or he is just doing it annually we do not know . So, we do get a sense that perhaps he is not being very smart with his money. And the other incident that keeps cropping up when we think about this incident is the one that Kolappan refers to when he sees Rowther working in the Chettiyar shop.

And he says that he maybe a genius at calculating but he is an idiot, so there is a contrast that is being brought about in terms of this Rowther character which is this, he is smart when it comes to mathematics. But he is perhaps not so smart when it comes to general affairs of life the household affairs of life. So, and we also need to remember that he has allowed debts to mount of so much, so that his house is also getting auctioned. So, all these events suggest that he is probably not a very very practically minded head of the family.

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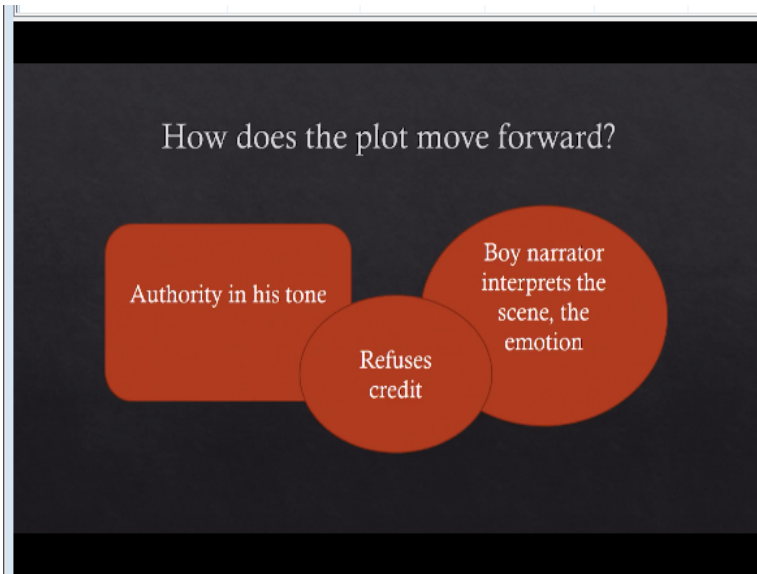
How does the plot move forward?

- ◆ 'Kolappan, wrap up the clothes and give me the bill,' said Rowther
- ◆ How dare he take the things before permission had been granted? Appa's face reddened. 'It is not possible for me to give you credit this time,' he said.
- ◆ 'So you're saying you don't want our relationship to continue, no, ayya? All right. Girl, take me home'

Now I want to go back to the continuation of that extract because that also gives us the crisis, the first crisis info in the story. So, as I mention Kolappan, he asks Kolappan to wrap up the clothes and give him the bill. How dare he take things before permission had been granted? Appa's face reddened it is not possible for me to give you credit this time he said. And immediately Rowther asks, so you are saying you do not want a relationship to continue no Ayya all right, girl take me home.

So, it is very clear the shop keeper refuses to give clothes on credit this time and Rowther immediately wild up, he says that do you mean to say that you want to our relation to end okay fine I am going to go home. And he asks this girl Gomathi who is a person in the store who does all the errands and who does all the cleaning of the shops. So, this is the state of affair is when he is displeased.

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And I want to go back to this particular response when he says that I am going to go home. Because you are refusing credit to me and that suggest that he has a lot of authority, an authority that he derives from his massive ego. And that ego has it is source in his genius mathematics skills. So, there is a nice connection there which we can easily spot because he is aware of his value he can play the diva, so to speak.

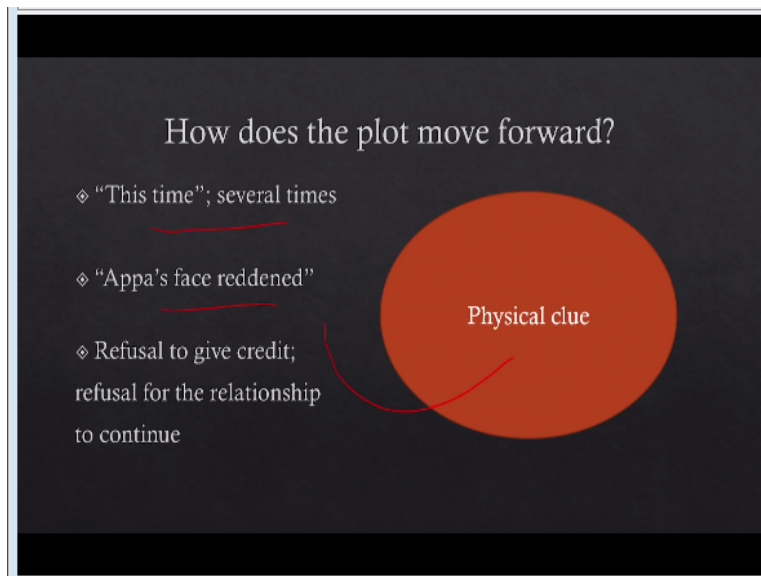
He can say okay I am going to go home because you have refused me, refused my request which in fact was not a request at all. Because he does not asks the owner in, so many words and I want also to go back to the boys interpretation of the scene here. He says that how dare he take the things before permission had been granted to him and again we can see that there is free indirect discourse happening here in narration.

We do not know whether this thought is the thought of Appa or the thought of the boy narrator that ambiguity is clearly there. So, is he interpreting the father's thoughts for us or is he commenting on the fact that Rowther is abrasion enough to take things on credit without even asking for it. So, that confusion tells us this is free indirect discourse for us here in this particular first person narration.

So, that briefly happens here and Appa's face reddened he becomes red in anger and his interesting to realize that Rowther who is blind cannot see this displeasure very visible mark of

displeasure. So, and the other things that is very interesting is that he says I am not going to give you credit this time which again tells us that Rowther has got clothes for his family on credit on several times before that is very very likely. So, again this connects to the perhaps over to generosity of Rowther and that could be one of the reasons for financial downfall of this particular character.

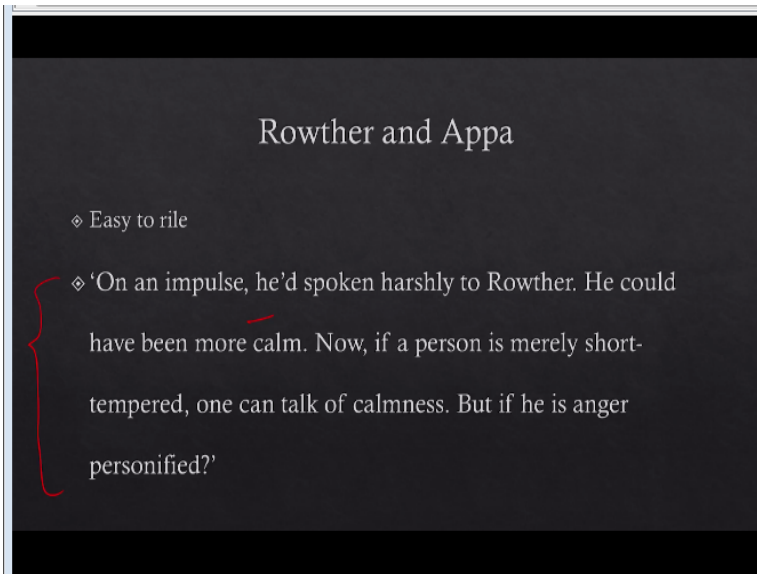
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Now I have cover this point about this time and several times in relation to credit and again the displeasure of the father there is not notice. Because it is a physical clue something which Rowther who is blind is unable to notice. So, all these factors are contributing to that particular crisis, it is a combination of emotional factors and physical factors here if he had been able to see the things around him the people around him.

He would have gotten certain clues about the people’s reactions to his behavior and that does not happen in this case. And immediate anger the immediate anger is also very interesting on the part of Rowther because he knows that he can effort to get angry. Because when push comes to show the shopkeeper has to come back to him because he cannot run the shop without the assistance of Rowther very very efficiently.

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Two people are easy to get riled up and there are Appa and Rowther and we can see a nice parallel between these 2 male characters. They seem to be somehow mirrors of one another which very big egos and they want to kind of retain the authority and dignity in the shop. And maintain a (()) (19:18) before the other characters other assistance in the shop. Now I want to look at how the boy narrator analyzes the situation later on and he says that on impulse.

He had spoken harshly to Rowther he being his father, he could have been more calm that is the assessment of the boy again. Now if a person is merely short-tempered one can talk of calmness but if he is anger personified. Then what would happens, so that is the implied question there. And we can see here that the boy clearly points the finger of blame here at his own father.

Because his father is not in a position to show anger to Rowther and again he says that. If somebody short-tempered then one can talk up but calmness which one can exhibit occasionally but he is if he is angry all the time. Then there is nothing that can be done if he is a personification embodiment of anger, then nothing can be done. This is he could have been more calm is a more strategic position to take on the part of the father which he does not adopt.

And that the boy notices and thinks about it later on. So, we can also get a sense that the father is a person who behaves impulsively from this assessment of the boy.

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Appa's Character

- ◇ Assessed by his son
- ◇ On an impulse; not a measured reaction
- ◇ Offending Rowther is costly

And the reaction of the father when he refuses credit to Rowther is not a measured reaction according to the boy and even the small boy realizes that offending Rowther is costly for their family's business in the cloth shops. So, we can see clearly who is the most powerful person in the first crisis, the most powerful person is Rowther because he leaves the shop without even saying goodbye or without even taking his leave from the owner of the shop.

He leaves in a half and both of them perhaps no both Rowther and the shop owner perhaps they know that you know they will have to matters eventually and that is what happens.

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Rowther's character

- ◇ 'So you're saying you don't want our relationship to continue, no, ayya? All right. Girl, take me home'

Instant Blackmail

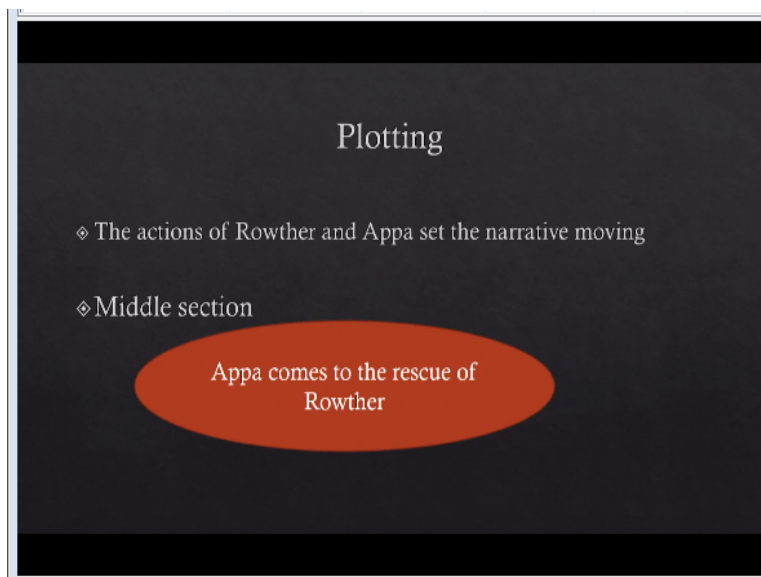
Sarcastic/Rhetorical question

So, again the question that do not want a relation to continue the question that is as per Rowther's interesting. Because he is clearly blackmail in there is an emotional blackmail tagged onto that particular question. And there is also a sarcasm the are you serious, are you saying that you do not want me to be here because that is going to costive that is seems to be the implied question there.

And since there is no response to that statement on the part of the father we can also assume that it is a Sarcastic and Rhetorical question one that does not need any answer. Because at that moment when he ask that question the shop owner's perhaps so angry that he probably things that it is better to snap tight with Rowther but as the story progresses we know that, that is not what happens.

And then the father sends his boy to bring back this old man and the mother at the wife of the shop keeper's knows that this is a habitual ritual between these 2. So, we can see that there is a nice an complex ego clash going on between these two male figures.

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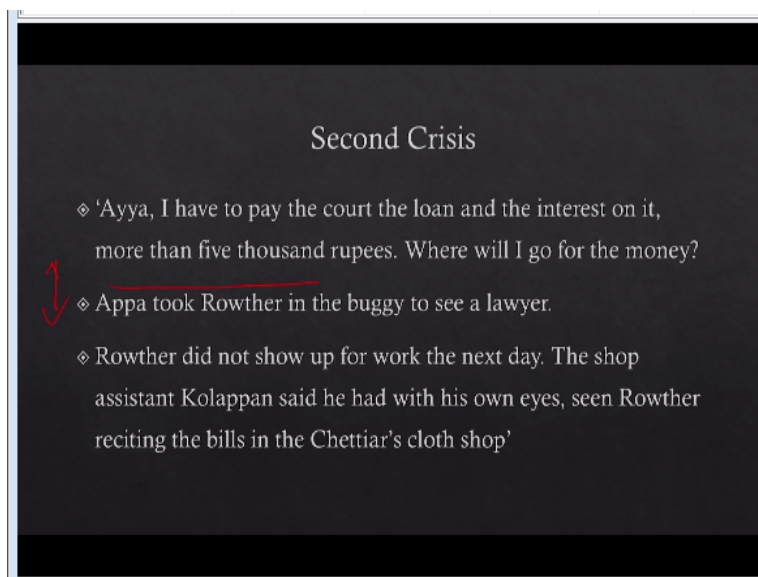
And such a behavior such a clash between the 2 male figures sets the plot rolling in reflowering and it this clash that happens between the 2 sets the tone of the book. Because that again kind of comes up later on when Appa tries to kind of cut him down to size by bringing in another factor

which will probably dethrone Rowther. So, even though there is a ego clash and battle of wits battle of sorts happening between these two men.

There is also a certain kind of warmth some kind of bond between the shop owner and the employee and that is evident in the middle section of the story. When Rowther is in deep trouble and Appa the shop keeper comes to the rescue of Rowther, he action such a way that Rowther is saved from becoming homeless. So, how exactly he does the rescue we know that he pays for the debt that is there on the house.

And he prevents the auctions from happening auction of the house from happening and this is the set of conversation that happens before that is that happens just after the event with the house auction.

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And once the father has paid the loan on the house and the very next day. He expects Rowther to come back to work and he does not, so this is why he has in done so. I have to pay the court the loan and the interest on a more than five thousand rupees. Where will I go for the money, and this is the question that Rowther asks the shop owner. And immediately let us immediately Appa took Rowther in the buggy to see a lawyer there is hardly any conversation here between this request.

And this reaction of Appa, so the narrative really shows the fast face reaction of the owner of the house. So, is really moved by the state of Rowther who has his entire women who has his family of women just outside the shop in a card wailing and crying and realizing the dad situation, he reacts first. And it is very interesting to see that the Rowther figure does not show enough gratitude on the surface.

He does not show for work the next day the shop assistant Kolappan said he had with his own eyes seen Rowther reciting the bills in the Chettiyar's cloth shop. So, father has rescued him financially, he pays quite lot of money to rescue him. But then instead of showing lot of gratitude in words, in action we see him reciting the bills in the Chettiyar's shop.

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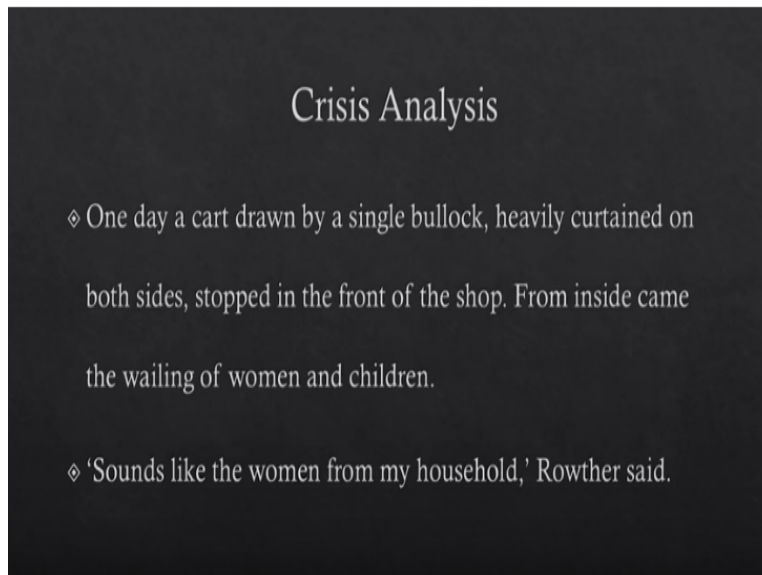
So, that is the account that Kolappan the shop assistance gives the own there. So, it is really interesting structure in this particular story. There are lots of ups and downs. So, if you see the first crisis we see the in the first crisis we see that probably you know the shop owner should not have been so harsh on this particular blind character. And then in the second crisis we see him really be very nice to it help him out financially.

And then we see how Rowther you know turning his back on him and going to work in a rival shop. So, there are lots of ups and downs if you plot the movement of the characters journey in this story. And the fact that he has gone through the Chettiyar shop is very anti-climatic again.

Because and there is also an element of humor there too in that action of seeing him work in the Chettiyar shop instead of coming back to the usual shop whose owner had been so generous to him.

And there are also pathos in that particular reaction of Rowther, because even though that particular debt has been paid off there are several other debts of his which might again bring him to his knees and since he is been promised by the Chettiyar that he would take care of all his debts. He goes back to that particular shop. So, this is man Rowther is a man who is like trapped in a corner.

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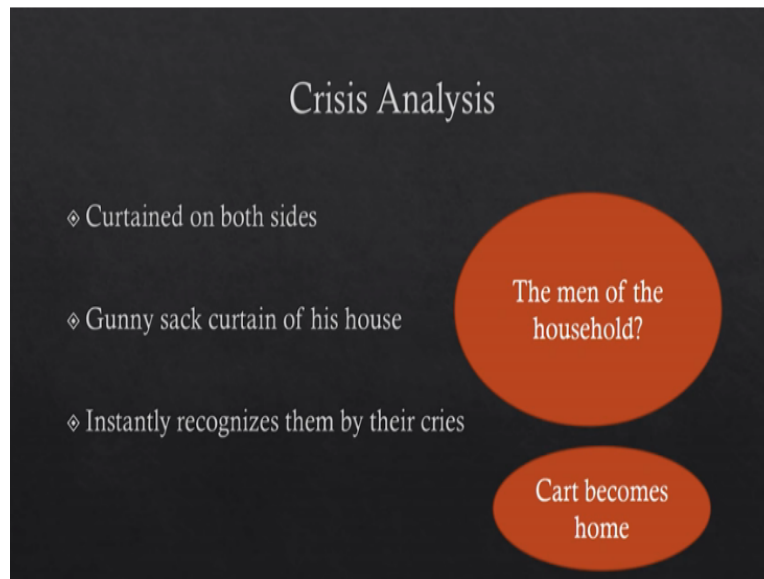


And he no matter what he does he would be seen as someone who does not do his job properly. So, I I want to go back again to the connection to the family there just as we show the connection to the family in the first crisis. So, the entire family comes to the cloth shop and that is when the second crisis happens, this is the extract in question.

One day a cart drawn by single bullock heavily curtain on both sides stopped in the front of the shop from inside came the wailing of women and children, sounds like the women from my household Rowther said. And this is the moment when we realize that the finances of Rowther are very in a very dire situation. So, we have a cart here that has been curtained heavily curtained on both sides.

Because it contains the women of his household in all of them are they in the cart and all of them are crying and they have come to the cloth shop. Because they have nowhere else to go because that is where the head of the household is there and they have come because the houses also getting auctioned. And the gunning sack the curtains in the bullock cart remains us of the other curtain there in the house that the boy visits for the first time to bring back Rowther.

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So, again there is a evocation to the house there through the curtains on the bullock cart. And Rowther immediately recognizes his women from there cries my question here is this one where are the men of the household the head of the household is there in the cloth shop. But what about the songs where are they, they have packed the women in the cart and send them off to this particular cloth shop is that.

So, where exactly is all these male figures in his family there are missing and the other interesting parallel is the cart becomes the home for these women. So, it becomes a mobile home and the curtain is the one the privacy that the curtains give makes that's space home for these women.

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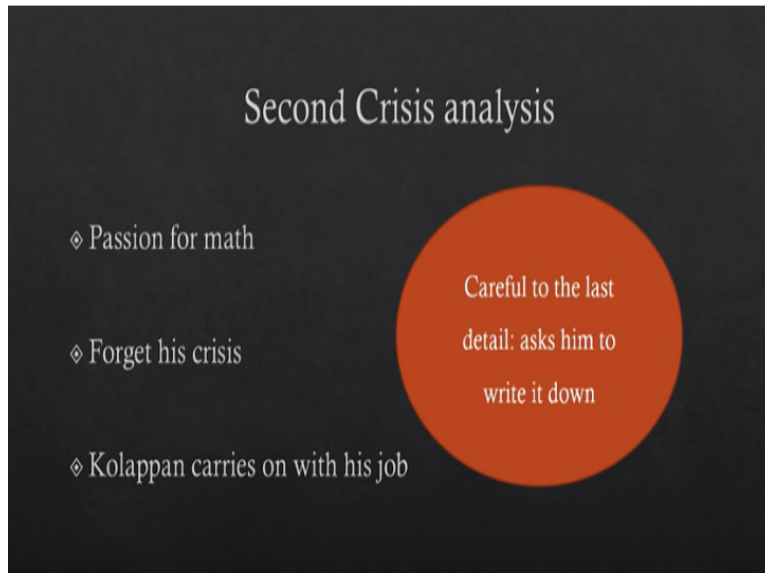
Pathos, Humour and Self-Interest

◇ Rowther started crying like a child and called on God to help him out. Even as he wept, Kolappan came with a bill saying, 'Forty-five metres and seventy centimetres at thirteen rupees and forty-five paise.' Rowther stopped his keening for a moment and said to him, 'Write this down, six hundred fourteen rupees and sixty-six paise.' He turned to my father who was at the cash counter and sobbed.

And as soon as Rowther notices that his women are there she starts crying like a child and called on god to help him out even as he wet Kolappan came with a bill saying 45 meters and 70 centimeters at 13 rupees and 45 paise. Rowther stop his cleaning for a moment and said to him write this down 614 rupees and 66 paise, he turned to my father who was at the cash counter in shop. So, there is a lot of pathers and humor in this particular situation when the women arrive at the doorstep to the cloth shop.

So, when Rowther starts to cry like a child on listening to his women Kolappan interims with the bill. And please notice that Rowther stopped his keening for a moment his crying for a moment and said to him he does not say the words the exact amount. He just says write this down . So, he is very careful there write this down and then once he has given him the number he starts to cry again, and he turned to his father who was at the cash counter and shocked.

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So, the passion for mathematics the passion for calculation the instinctive attitude of calculating the numbers as soon as he is given some of them is evident there. He even forgets the crisis. The crisis which brings the women of the household to the doorstep of the cloth shop and he does the math for Kolappan. That is very humorous as well as sad and as I said he is very careful with the numbers.

He says write it down, he does not simply say the numbers for the benefit of Kolappan because he has worried that perhaps Kolappan will get it wrong and give the wrong or get the wrong money from the customers. So, the other thing that is very interesting is that Kolappan carries on with his job. He can see that the women of Rowther are there outside the cloth shop.

And their crying the house is being auctioned and the old man is (()) (32:44) there but despite that he comes to the old man with a bill in say and says can you do the sums, can you do the math for this. So, lots of things happening here and each of which tells us motivations of different characters there.

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Rowther

- ◇ Child-like crying; helpless
- ◇ Generosity/spendthrift?
- ◇ Idiot/not very smart
- ◇ Egoistic/lord

So, the helplessness of Rowther is again made evident there and the narrator says the boy who narrates these incidents says that he cries like a child. The old man crying like a child is very very interesting that shows him to be very very vulnerable in that particular moment. He could be a lot when it comes to mathematics but when you comes to the financial state of affairs he is like a child.

And the again the fact that his (()) (33:37) of nature his over generosity has brought him to such a situation is also kind of is the sub text for this crisis and the fact that he is not very smart in dealing with his household affairs is also employ. So, he could be very egoistic in terms of his self awareness of his skills and but he is not the lord of all the things in his life.

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So, this session tells us that you know paying very close attention to the various elements of the plot especially the moments of crisis in this story brings out lot of interesting information, important information and symbolic information about the central characters and this has something to tell us such a you know process of understanding the story has something interesting to tell us about the various themes in the short story.

Usually when readers read the story. They see Rowther as a completely 1 dimensional figure who is wizard and with mathematics but who is financially in trouble. But a close reading will tell us that what are the possible reasons for his financial instability who are all the factors, who are contributing to it and his own personality could be one of the reasons for the state of affairs of his family.

So, all these interesting information significant information about the central characters and his universe becomes evident through a good analysis of the central events in the story. Thank you for listening, I will catch up with you in the next session.