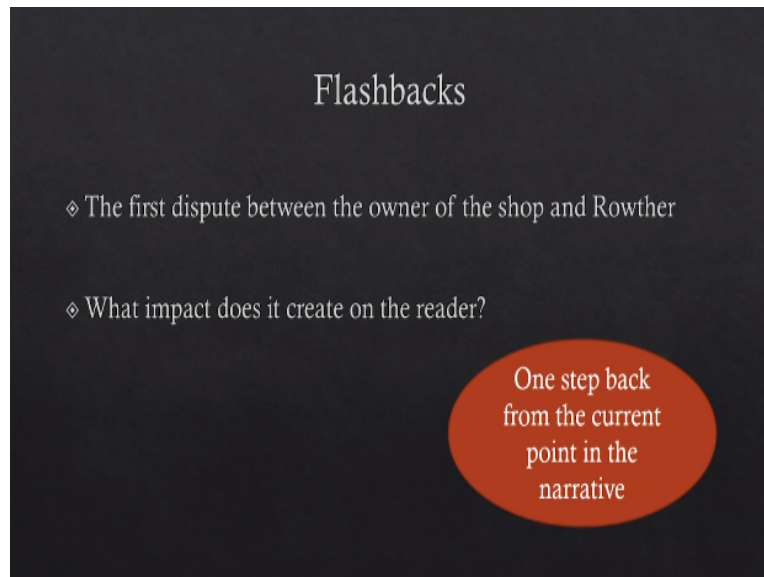


**Short Fiction in Indian Literature**  
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**Department of Humanities & Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology-Madras**

**Lecture-5C**  
**Narrative Devices in Sundara Ramaswamy's Reflowering**

Welcome to this lecture, I have titled this lecture narrative devices in Sundara Ramaswamy's reflowering. So, let us take a good look at some of the narrative devices at play in this particular narrator.

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Now I want to pick up on this idea of the flashbacks we have a sizable extended flashback at the beginning of this story. So, let us unpack this a particular flashback because this is very important as it captures the first crisis between the owner of the shop and the central character Rowther. So, the very first crisis is itself presented to the readers as the flashback by the narrator of this story.

And I want to explore the kind of impact it creates on the reader and at an immediate first level what it does, it takes the readers 1 step back from the current point in the narrator. So, the time line shifts through this flashback narrator.

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## Flashback

◇ As I climbed the waiting buggy I thought that we could not manage the Onam festival sales without Rowther.

As he travels, he goes back in time to a narrative about Rowther

Now this is how the flashback is introduced the narrator the boy claimed into the waiting buggy and he thinks these thoughts as I claim the waiting buggy I thought that we could not manage the Onam festival sales without Rowther. And as he travels in the buggy, in the horse cart in the horse carriage he goes back in time to that particular evening when there was this clause between Rowther and his father.

And he captures the entire battle of egos, so to speak with the dialogues and all the comments precisely in his narrator.

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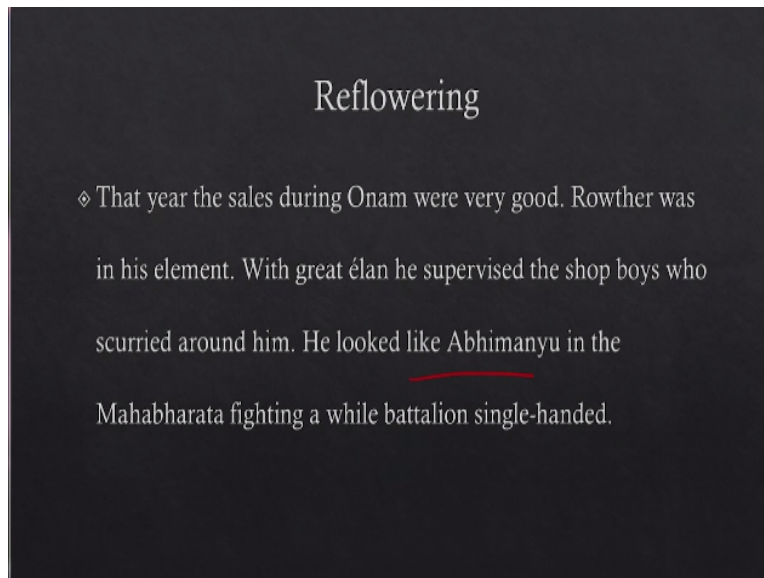
## Narrator

- ◇ Young
- ◇ Responsible
- ◇ Mature

Lucid thinking

And a word about the narrator again because we need to remember that this narrator is a young child the boy, the son of the shop keeper he is young yet his highly responsible and he is mature in his perspectives. And if you notice the kind of thinking the thought process that he has it shows us that they are very very lucid logical and rationale.

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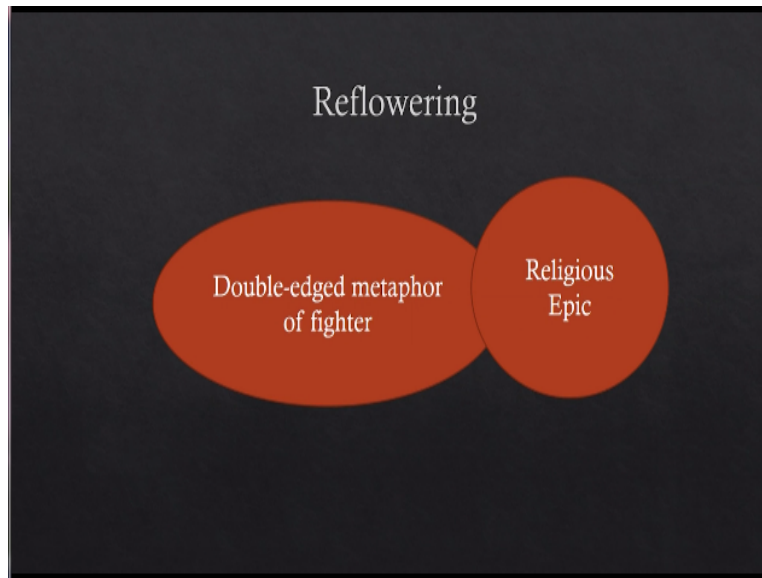


Now this is the extract that I want to look briefly before I go into an analysis of the narrative time in flashbacks. That the other sales during Onam were very good, Rowther was in his element with great elan he supervise the shop boys who is scurried around him. He looked like Abimanyu in the Mahabharata fighting a while battalion single-handed. So, this is the extract which follows the flashback.

And this extract captures in brief the behaviour of Rowther as soon as the problem was sorted and his behaviour during the Onam sales and he interested in the figurative language we can see that Rowther is compared to Abimanyu. We have a simile which has taken from the Mahabharata and it is very very interesting simile because Abimanyu is a character who is courageous yet he is also innocent in Naive nor even in certain respects.

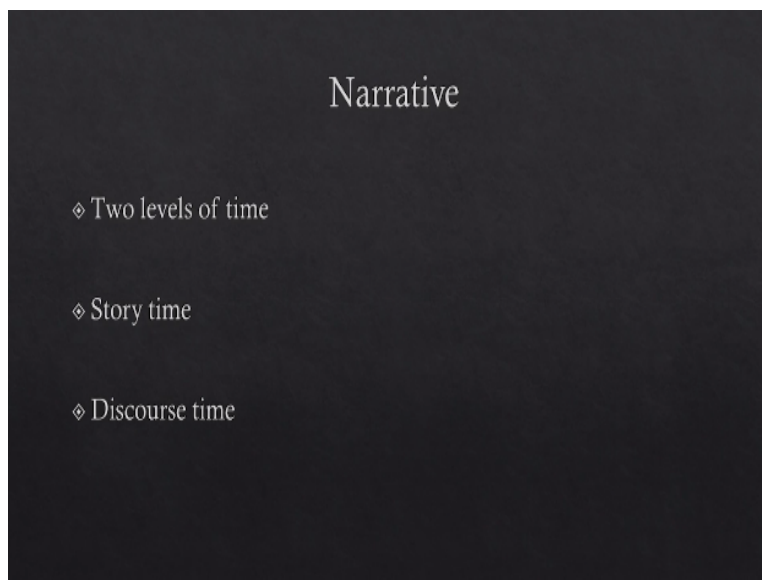
And he ultimately loses the battle and he loses his life as well and it is interesting to see that Rowther is compared to this particular character in Abimanyu.

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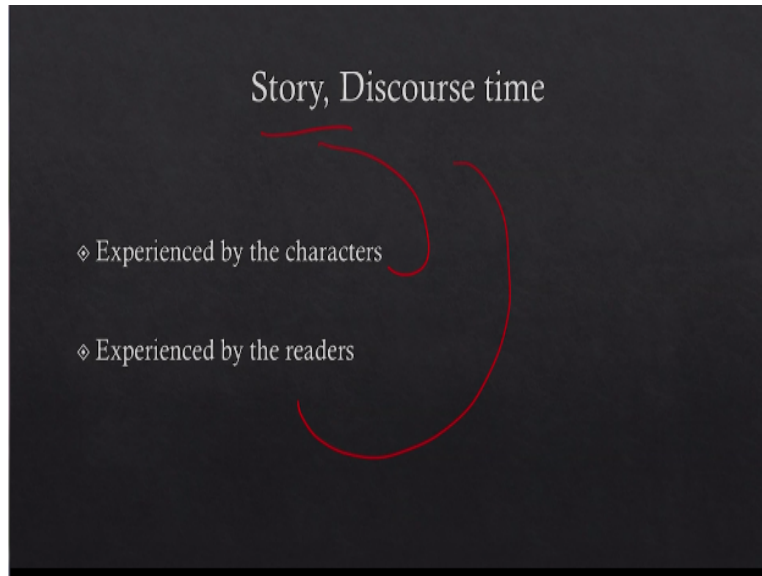
And I would suggest that this particular figurative language is a double edged comparison and we have a source in the religious epic, the Hindu religious epic okay.

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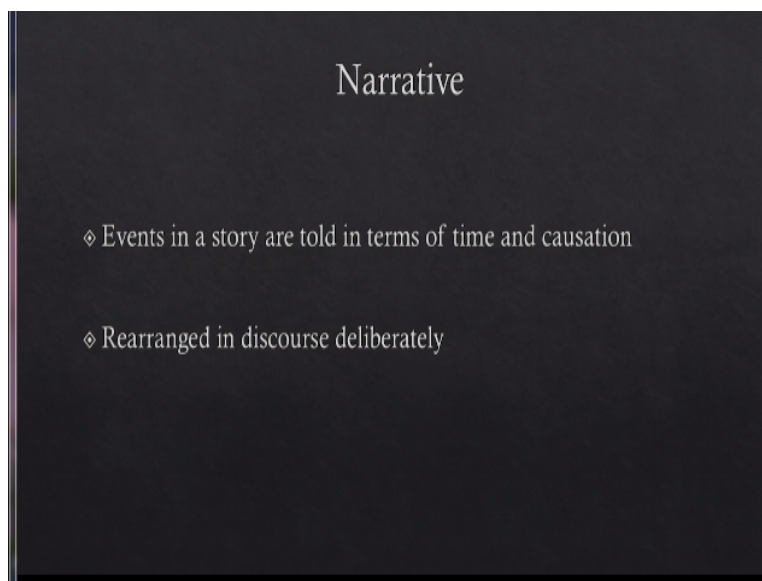
Now I want to get back to narrative time. So, we have 2 levels of time in a particular narrative or fiction. The first is the story time, the first point that I have could on the slide is the story time and the other is the discourse time and we need to clearly understand what is the difference between these 2 times to get a good grasp on flashbacks and foreshadowing's okay. So, there is a connection between these times and the concepts of foreshadowing and flashbacks okay.

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So, what is story time and what is discourse time, story time is the time experienced by the characters okay. The characters experience time one by one by 1 event after and other event logically in relation to time and discourse time is the time experience by the readers and please note that there is a difference between these 2 time references. And let us look at these concepts more closely okay.

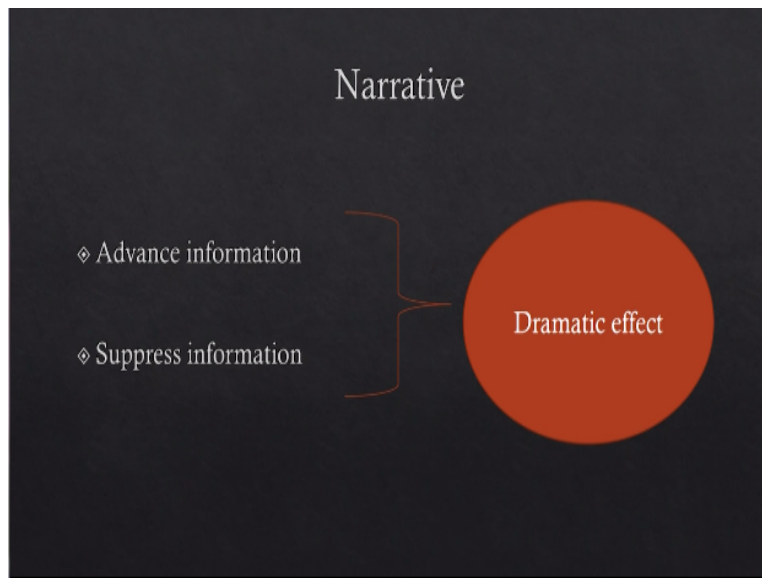
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Generally when we understand a story we understand then in terms of the events and events happen according to the logic of time and causation, one thing causes in other and things happen in time. But an author can deliberately rearrange the events disregarding the time in which they

have happened for particular purposes. So, the events can be rearranged in a narrative according to the wishes of the author and they need not follow the time of the story time okay.

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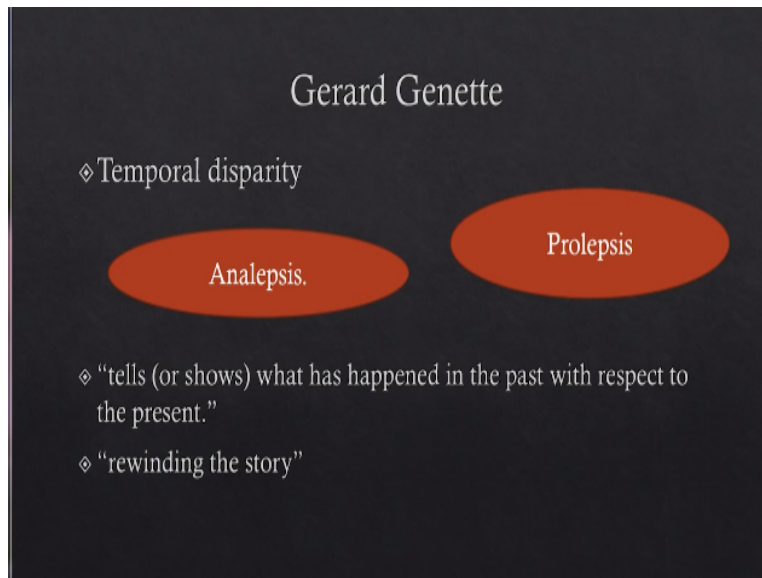


So, in an narrative an author can give information, advance information about certain events that are going to happen in a narrative for dramatic effect and also the author can suppress information, information about what is going to happen in the story deliberately for dramatic effect. So, this is the choice of the author who is creating the story world and he or she does that in order to create a particular effect on the readers.

So, this story time and the discourse time or all factors which are involved in the authorial decision of the writer who ranges events in a particular way to create the maximum impact, he can give you the events as they happen one after the other. First this happen, second this happen, third this happen this was the final thing to happen that tells the story time and sometimes he can meddle with the arrangement of events, he can put things you know really (( )) (07:00).

According to his own or her own logic in order to create the maximum dramatic impact on the reader, so that they get the maximum pleasure out of it okay.

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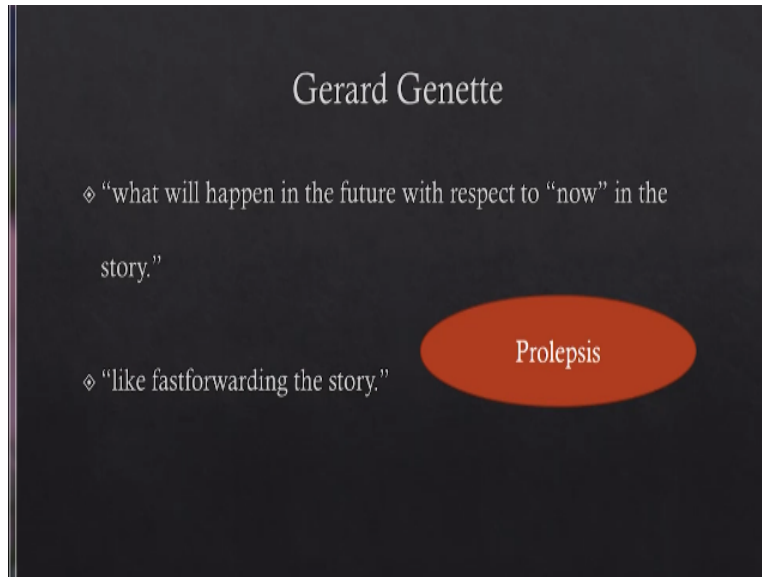
So, I am going to go back to this critical narrative, critical Gerard Genette which will talk about this temporal disparity, temporal differences in narrative. So, he calls these temporal disparities by these terms analepsis and prolepsis. Now first let us take a look at Analepsis, what is the meaning of analepsis. Analepsis tells or shows what has happened in the past with respect to the present.

So, what does happen in the past with respect to the present is a sort of a flashback is as if the story is going back in time, the story is rewinding is going back it is tracing the tracks it is somebody is going back backwards in the root to a particular point in the story to tell the readers about something important that has happen. So, that is Analepsis, I hope that is in that point is clear.

So, the past in relation to the present if analepsis and that is like a rewinding of the narrative and this is what happens in the first crisis in reflowering. If you remember the story it begins in the house of Ambi when you know the family gets up the father is getting ready to leave for work and then father says go get Rowther from his home and the boy gets onto the buggy, he travels towards the house.

And then he goes back in time to that particular clause between his father and Rowther and he captures the entire episode almost we are backed up with some commentary by him as well, so, that analepsis is there in reflowering.

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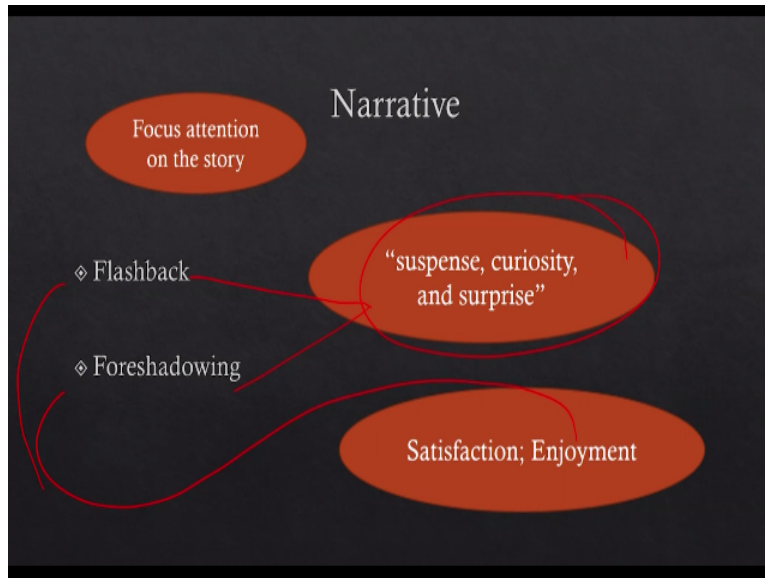


Let us look at prolepsis, so what exactly is prolepsis, prolepsis is what happens in the future with respect to now in this story. So, the now is the present and in the present you will get a hint of what is going to happen in the past, I am sorry in the future. So, you get a sense of what is going to happen in the future now that is prolepsis, it is like fast forwarding the story, you are going to get a sense of the future monitoring of the future now, that is fast forwarding of the story.

And that is foreshadowing that concept is related to this idea of foreshadowing that happens in the story, why do the author’s employed these narrative devices in relation to time.

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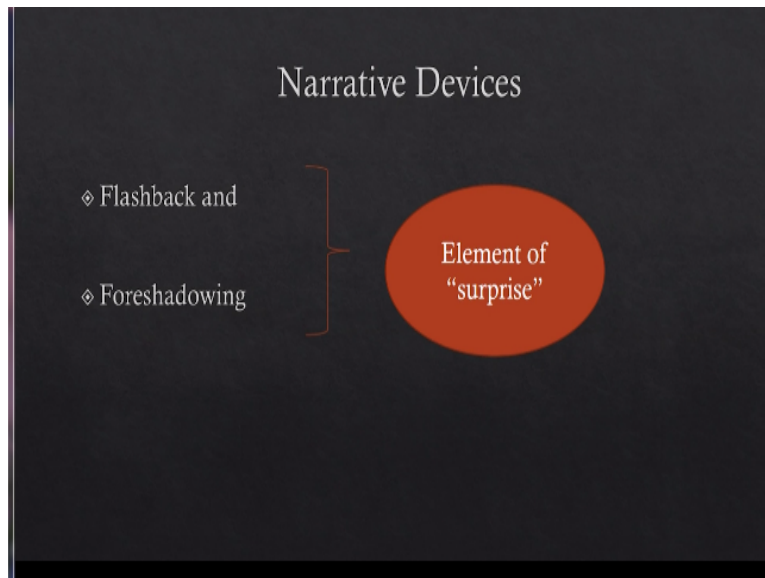




Such as the flashback or the foreshadowing what is the point of the usage of such devices in the story. Firstly it gets the attention of the readers, we kind of tend to take a moment out and see oh my god this is going back in the narrative point of time, oh this is kind of a hint of things to come. So, such decision such authorial decisions gets the attention of the readers who pay greater attention to the structure of this story, structure of the plot trajectory, plot pathway.

And again suspense, curiosity and surprise are involved in all these narrative devices and ultimately what is the point of all these elements, why do we enjoy the suspense, why do we enjoy the curiosity, why do we like surprises. Because that is the reading pleasure that is the satisfaction that we get out of reading fiction, ultimately it is about enjoyment and that enjoyment comes from the way the story is structured and these interesting narrative devices help the authors achieve such an effect.

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So, again we need to get this point reinforced that there is an element of surprise involved in flashback and fresher foreshadowing and that element of surprise is crucial to the success of a story . Sometimes this story and the story does not make the greatest impact on a reader but how the story is narrated makes the greatest impact on a reader.

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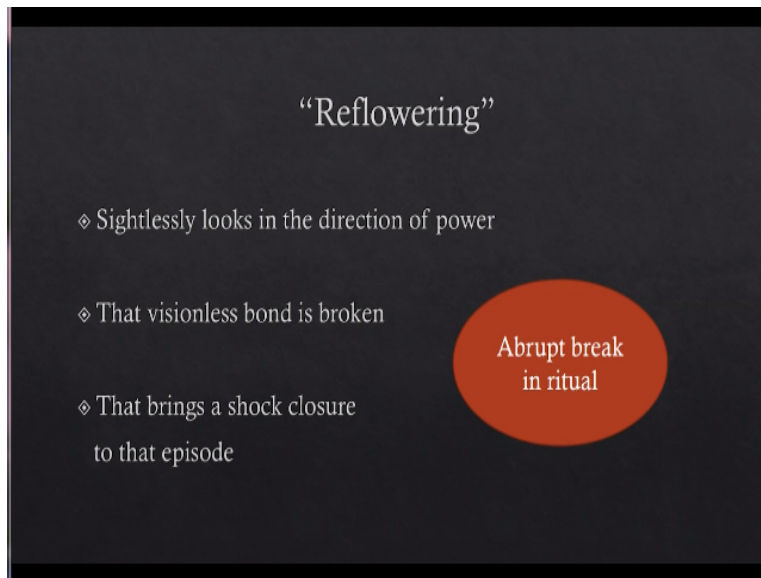
"Reflowering"

- ◊ When the shop closed in the evening, Rowther would usually look in the direction of my father and take permission to leave. This particular evening he did not take permission.

So, let us go back to reflowering this is the extract that I want to look closely and because this particular extract finishes of that episode. That episode bought the crisis between the shop owner and Rowther when the shop closed in the evening Rowther would usually look into direction of my father and take permission to leave. So, that is the usual ritual look into direction of my father and he would take opportunity to leave.

This particular evening he did not take permission, in this particular evening he does not do that and this particular extract is part of the flashback episode in the past embedded in the present time .

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There is some elements which have interesting in terms of the content of that particular extract the first one is Rowther sightlessly looking in the direction of power . we got remember that Rowther is blind he is just symbolically looking at his boss his employer, his owner. And that looking without really seeing is his subjection his subservient to the authority in the shop.

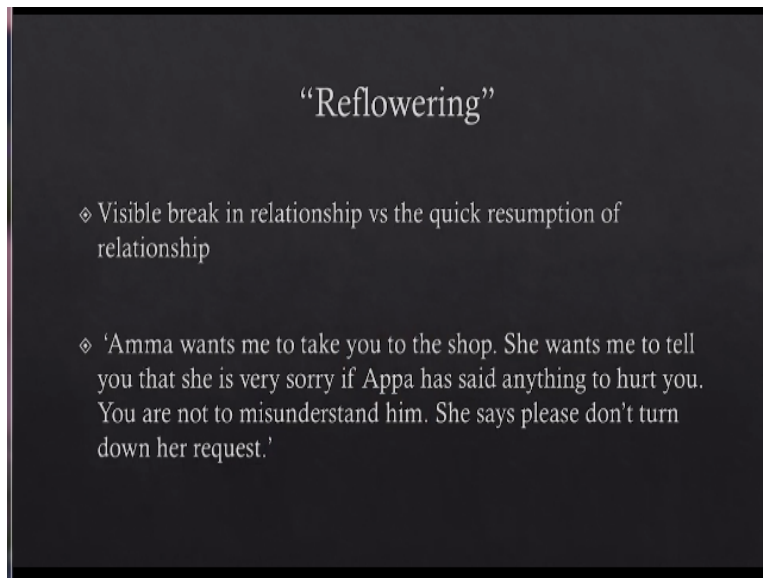
And that particular evening if you go back that extract that particular evening that bond that employer-employee bond is a visionless broken in some respects he does not look that way to get that a symbolic permission to leave the shop in order to come back again the next day. So, that bond is broken between Rowther and the shop owner and this particular episode or this particular paragraph brings a shock closure to that crisis in the story in the first third of it.

So, he does not take permission which means he has nothing more to say to this owner and he is going to go away as if permanently. So, that is the shock closure to that particular crisis in the story, so the flashback performs a lot of functions in this story and that abrupt break in ritual

creates an impact on the reader it just gives that first jarring motion to the story in terms of the readers effect or the impact on the readers.

Once we have this abrupt break we have that in our mind as readers and we now see Ambi the boy go into the house of Rowther and we are slightly apprehensive as to what would happen because that has been abrupt break the other day everybody has witness that clause between the owner and Rowther and we are slightly apprehensive has to how Rowther would behave.

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So, we might think that he might behave slightly roughly to the boy who is the son of the shop owner. But that does not happened at all, it is the total opposite that is what happens to Ambi. He is warmly welcomed by Rowther who sits is the lord in the house she is not affected by the crisis, she is affected by the battle that he had with the owner he sits in the centre of his home like a lord and he welcomes Ambi.

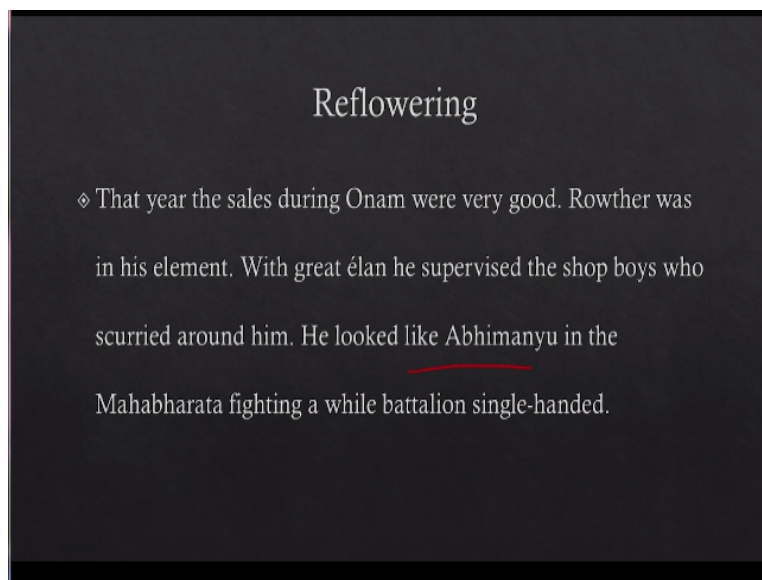
He wants to know the kind of vesti the kind of waste cloth that he is wearing and he kind of touches his face to get sense of his person and things like that and he enquires about the boy's mother. So, he is totally at ease there is equanimity in Rowther and that shift in emotion is very very interesting in terms of the effect of the story on the readers and as soon as he makes the comment about the health a warm Amma and the medicine that she is suppose to take and things like that.

The boy says Amma wants me to take you to the shop, she wants me to tell you that she is very sorry if Appa has said anything to hurt you, you are not to misunderstand him. She says please do not turn down her request, so the boy as I said he is very strategic he knows when to make this request at what particular moment in the conversation between Rowther and Ambi. So, he asks at the opportune moment and says can you please come.

Because Amma wants you to come in, she is apologising to you on the behalf of Appa. And immediately Rowther accepts and says okay let us get back to the shop and say it s again another kind of shock or surprise there. Because we have been through that episode dialogue by dialogue in the words of Ambi and after that particular harsh exchange when he says you do not want to continue our relationship he says that to the father Appa.

And he says that sarcastically you need to also keep in mind the tone in which Rowther asks that question. So, after that harsh exchange almost brutal exchange between the owner and Rowther he sudden of mind is another pleasant surprise and then things become normal and that is when we have this particular extract which are read before in terms of the metaphor of Abimanyu.

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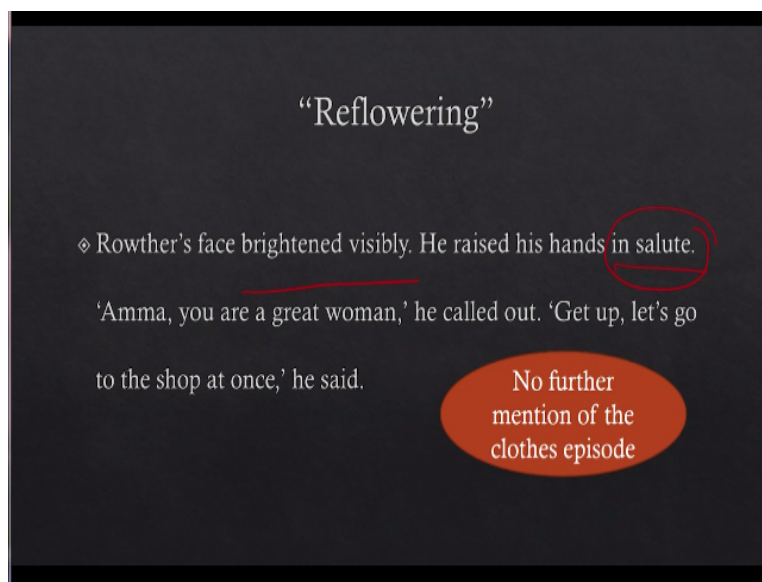


So, this is what happens even some kind of bridge there and he works really well there is no hard feeling whatsoever on the part of Rowther. And there is no mention of the clothes episode which

brought that crisis into the shop and he work with great learn he is really happy pleased and he supervises the entire shop and he you know fights the battle with the customers in order to meet their demands and make the girls as quickly as possible .

So, everything is all you know hunky dowry in this particular context. So, there is a upward and the downward there is a high and a low in terms of the mood swings of Rowther as well as in terms of the narrative itself it seems to go to a particular high and then come down or plunch deeply in terms of it is emotional journey okay.

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So, this is the impact on Rowther as soon as Ambi makes that request please come back to the shop ane because Amma wants you to. So, Rowther's face brightened visibly the face brightens. He raised his hands in salute Amma you are great woman he called that get up, let us go the shop at once he is very brisk he wants to get into action right away and as I said there is no further mention of the clothes episode at all in the narrative.

So, this salute reminds us of the you know that visionless look in the direction of the shop owner and he seems to kind of salute the woman who has become the mediator between the 2 men. So, she is thank there symbolically and things are back in place.

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## Foreshadowing

- ◊ 'A time will come when you will be cut down to size,' said Appa
- ◊ 'Please don't say such things, ayya,' pleaded Rowther, "Come work for me and I'll pay your debts," the Chettiar said. And I lost my head.'
- ◊ Appa only repeated, 'A time will come when you will be cut down to size.'


Now let us look at this particular concept of foreshadowing, he look flashbacks and now we are going to look at prolepsis foreshadowing. There is a minor foreshadowing minor part intensive foreshadowing of things that are going to happen in this story. And this is the foreshadowing that is refer to in this story. Appa says a time will come when you will be cut down 2 size, when he make this remarks he is terribly displeased he is hurt by the behaviour of Rowther who goes and works briefly for arrival cloth shop run by the chettiyar.

And he does this right after Appa has helped him financially, massively he pays the debts o his house and he saves the house. But despite that he goes back to work for the Chettiyar who is a rival cloth merchant and affected by that he makes that remarket. The time will come and you will cut down to saws and Rowther says please do not say such things Ayya come work for me and I will you the debts.

The chettiyar said and I lost my head, he said I will clear all your debts and I had to going work for him. Appa only repeated a time will come and you will be cut down to size and this foreshadowing is realise almost immediately in the story because right after this particular exchange where there is a hint of the thread that is go into come to Rowther it is real as quiet soon after if you look at this story.

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## “Reflowering”

- ◇ An implicit threat
- ◇ Hidden tragedy
- ◇ “cut down to size” 
- ◇ “to show someone that they are not as clever or important as they think”

So, there is an implicit threat as I said and a hidden tragedy is also there in that foreshadowing of events to come and he is going to cut down and he is going to be cut down to size and what is the meaning of that phrase, it literally means to show someone that they are not as clever or **or** as important as they think. So, that is the meaning of that phrase cut down to size and in the context of Rowther is not just about destroying his ego, it is about destroying his livelihood as well.

So, it is more vital in relation to Rowther’s context. So, into everyone’s surprise as I said this happens quite quickly the thread is realised very very soon to everyone surprise events began to unfold that made it look as if Appa was going to be right after all. That he return from Bombay that year after seeing his wholesalers.

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## Reflowering

- ◇ 'To everyone's surprise, events began to unfold that made it look as if Appa was going to be right after all. When he returned from Bombay that year after seeing his wholesalers, he brought back a small machine and showed it to Amma. 'This can do calculations,' he said.
- ◇ 'A machine'
- ◇ 'It can.'

He brought back a small machine and showed it to Amma, this can do calculations, he said. A machine, it can, so Appa who makes the thread, he make sure that thread is realised because when he goes to Bombay he gets this machine that can do the calculation. Look at the way he says simply the facts he just takes the facts and he makes no comment whatsoever about the impact of the machine on Rowther's mind and Rowther's livelihood.

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## Foreshadowing

"Everyone's surprise"

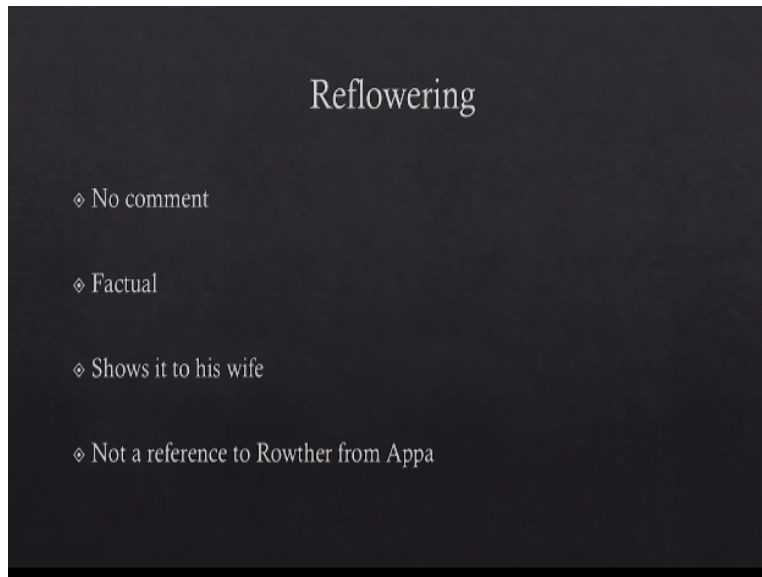
Readers have been anticipating such a surprise

Surprise; Reversal

So, he says the narrator says to everyone's surprise, he says to everyone surprise because readers have been also anticipating such a surprise. Because they have been given that hint, that cue, something is going to happen and it is not a pleasant surprise for many of them who might sympathise with Rowther. In fact the surprise is really reversal of fortune because Rowther is at

the height of his fortunes and with the arrival of the machine, his fortune is reversed. The wheel does come another circle when he reaches the lowest of the low in terms of the lucky has been having.

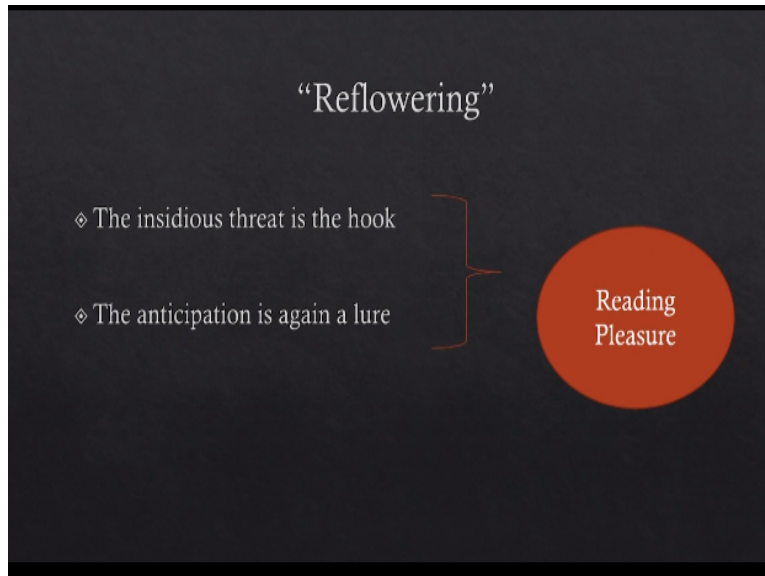
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So, as I said the father makes no comment in relation to Rowther about the impact of the machine and he just is very very factorial. He states the fact, the machine can do calculations and he shows this to his wife because if you remember the beginning one of the beginning exchanges with his wife and the wife asks is Rowther the only person this entire world who can do the sums by quickly.

So, is as if the he is kind of responding to the comment by bringing her this particular gadget which can do the work of Rowther as sufficiently and as quickly as the old man will do and again there is as I said no not reference, single reference to the impact on Rowther because of this machine. What is the function of the foreshadowing.

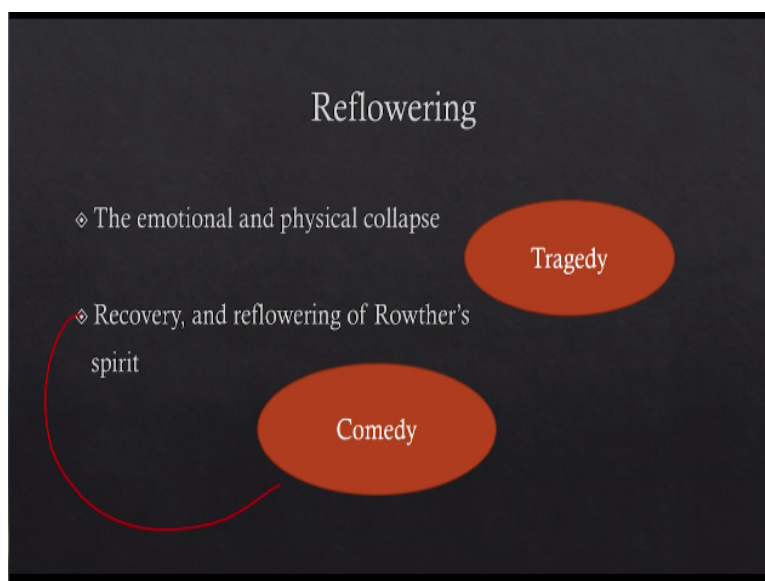
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In terms of the narrative structure of reflowering that in serious threat that is there in the foreshadow is like the hook is like the phasing hook that will capture the attention of the readers they will be more anxious as they read the text of the story very closely and see what is going to happen to this old man just blind old man and as I said the anticipation of the readers is kind of intensified through that foreshadowing.

And it becomes a lure and attraction for the readers and reading pleasure is heighten through such a narrative device okay.

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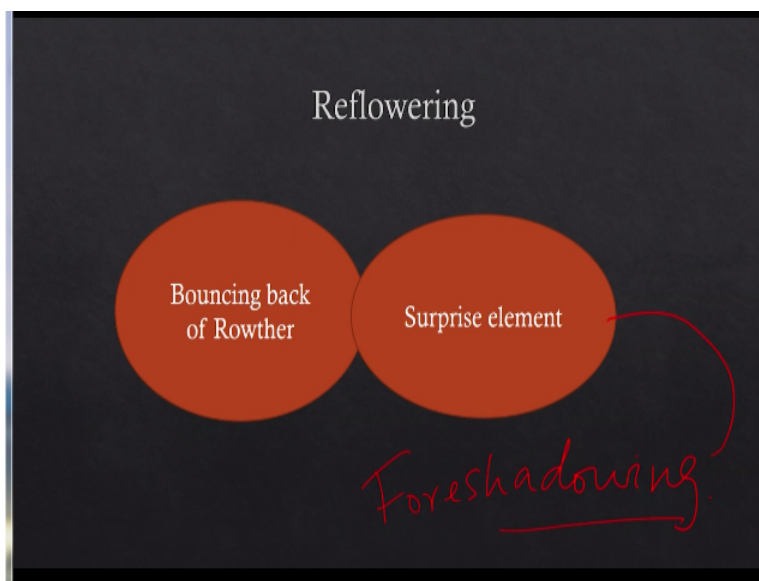


So, what is the tragedy the tragedy that is realised in foreshadowing is the emotional and the physical collapse of Rowther's old man is blind old man who cannot take the on slot of the machine which can work wonders and anybodies hands and that is the tragedy and what is the comedy because we do not end with the tragedy in this story. We end with the comedy everything is back to normal things are resolved.

And how does that happen it happens through the recovery of Rowther we it happens to the reflowering of Rowther's spirit who realises the potential of his memory and the value of that memory for the benefit of running of the shop, the cloth shop. So, it is a tragic it is tragedy followed by comedy, so we have the crisis the big crisis, the ultimate crisis which is revolved in order to reach a comic effect at a end of the story.

Comedy in the sense that the things are back to normal it ends on a positive note not comedy as in ha it is funny that is not the comedy that I am talking and I am talking about the happy state that is achieved by the members of the universe of this particular story.

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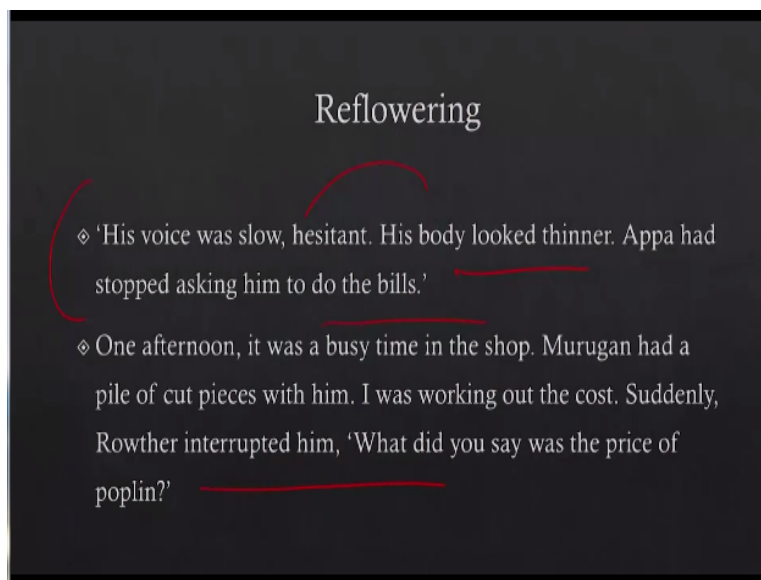
Now as I said the bouncing back of Rowther, the bouncing back from the tragic level has again a surprise element because we do not anticipate that as readers we do not anticipate that the foreshadowing that is there. That hints only at the tragedy that is going to before Rowther he

does not mention the happy ending that he is going to get in which he is promoted in which he raises himself to a higher level that is not referred to in the foreshadowing.

The foreshadowing only talks about the cutting down to size of Rowther's ego. In fact when we see the end of the story his ego is doubly trebly increased and because he becomes the manager the supervisor of the entire store. And even the owner of the store is like a child in his hands in the hands of Rowther because he just follows all the orders, all these suggestions all the directions of Rowther at the end of the story.

So, even the owner is managed by this particular old man, so there is a big rise for him at the end of the story and that is again a surprise element brought about by the narrative structure of this particular story okay.

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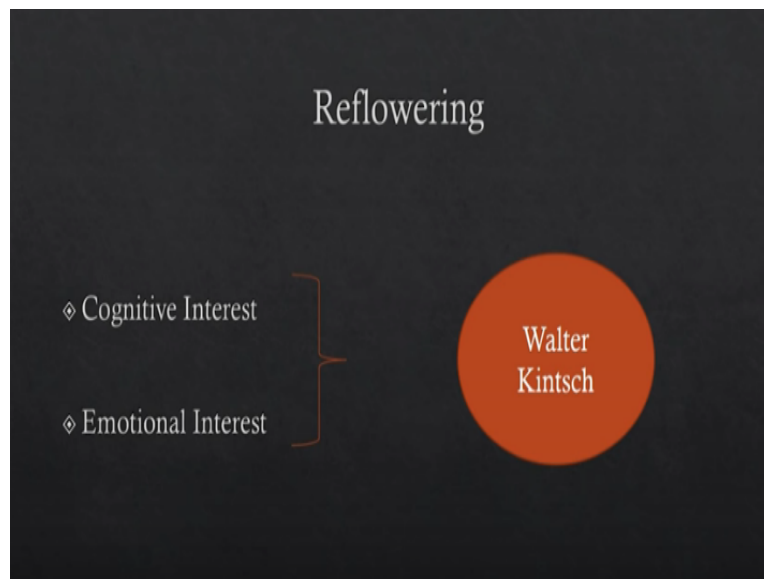
Let us see how that happens in this story. So, his voice was slow, hesitant, his body look thinner, Appa had stopped asking him to do the bills. So, this is the tragic part this is the part that shows us the collapse. But right after this we can see that narrative rise again you know thus the upward movement of this particular story. One afternoon it was a busy time in the shop Murugan had a pile of cut pieces with him, I was working of the cost.

Suddenly Rowther interrupted him, what did you say was the price of poplin? And that is the moment in this story when Rowther gets back on his horse, he when Rowther gets back on track to the recovery of his spirit. That is when Rowther starts to reflower his spirit starts to bloom again because that in that question on the part of Rowther already has told him the answer.

Because he knows that Murugan is wrong in terms of the price of that particular fabric and he knows what is the right price for that. And he knows that with that answer he can decimate the entire set of odds against him in that particular store. So, we can see the you know the fall of Rowther and again we can see the point in which he starts to rise again in the estimation of not only the shop assistance.

But also the entire shop which includes the shop owner, the boy, Gomathi and everybody, how do we see all this? How do we see all these narrative devices prolepsis, analepsis you know and metaphor, figurative language and all these, how do we access this in terms of the impact of a story okay. There are 2 interest in terms of narrative structure for a reader.

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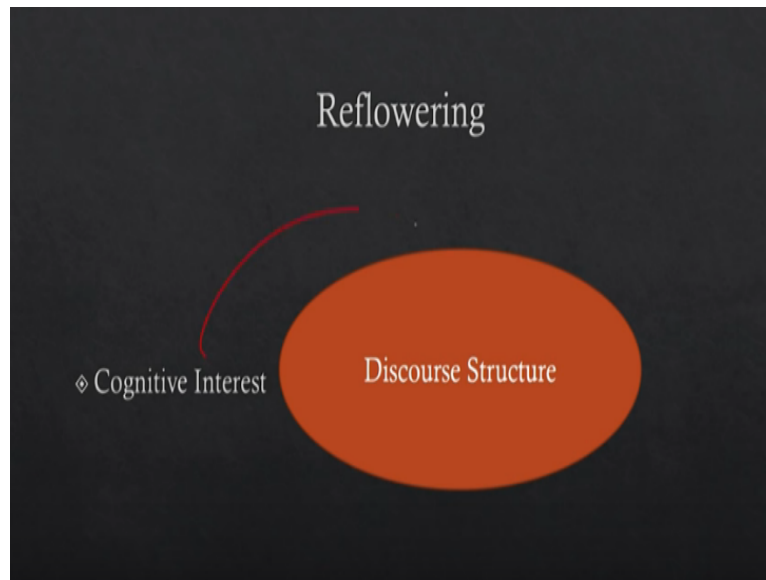


The first one is the cognitive interest and the second was the emotional interest, the cognitive interest is 1 whereby the cognition the intellectual. The thinking side of the human brain is engage okay. So, the narrative structure with it is ups and downs with it is flashbacks and flash

forwards with it is foreshadowing and flashbacks. So, this captures the cognitive interest of readers.

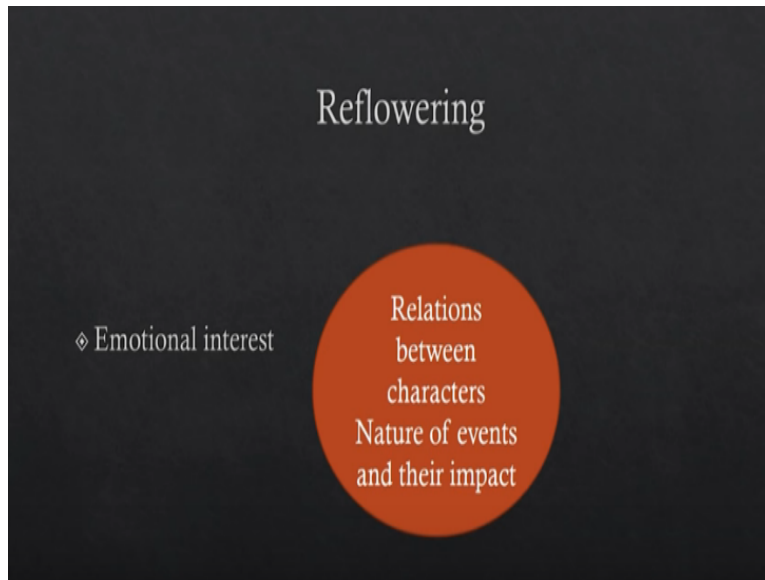
And the emotional interest is the interest that we derive out of the sentiments and the bonds that are forged and broken between the characters. So, the emotional interest and the cognitive interest kind of keep the ball rolling, keep the reader interested in a particular story. And I am drawing on the ideas of Walter (()) (29:33) in terms of this cognitive and emotional interest.

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So, the cognitive interest as I said is depended on the disco structure, the structure of the narrator okay, how the author has arranged events and things in a particular narrative what is the choice he has made in terms of the figurative language, does he decide has some flashbacks does he or she decide to have some flash forwards of foreshadowing. So, that is the disco structure and her cognitive interest depends on this particular disco structure.

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And the emotional interest as I said is dependent on or is associated in relation with the emotions or sentiments of the characters. The nature of events and the impact on the lives of the character. So in some these 2 the emotional interest and the cognitive interest are responsible for the success of a particular short story. And credit suggest that only if the cognitive interest is high the emotional impact will also be proportionately high on the minds of the readers.

So, the structure decides, effective structure divides the decides the attention level as well as the emotional deviance on the part of the readers, thank you very much for listening, I will catch up with you in the next session.