

# U.R.ANANTHAMURTHY'S SAMSKARA- ANALYZING HIS ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

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**Abstract:** Religious dogmatism has been handled in a poetic vein by Ananthamurthy in Samskara. The fault lines have been shown through conflicts of and in human relationship. Religion is at fault when it becomes deductive. This deductivism has its advocates and critics in this novel. The present paper attempts to bring to fore both these aspects of Hinduism through its study of the protagonist in this novel. Praneshacharya dares tradition. He shatters formula. Through him, Ananthamurthy sets about diagnosing and treating the age-old beliefs that more damage than build. Via Praneshacharya's voice, Ananthamurthy calls for the much-needed change in the customs and beliefs that are to him and his mouthpiece protagonist nothing more than meaningless pageantry.

**Keywords:** Hindu, Brahmin, Rituals, Rites, Society, Customs, Orthodoxy

The Title of U.R.Ananthamurthy's novel Samskara and the Subtitle "A Dead Man" jointly invite our attention to the prejudices inherent in the ancient, irrational, and circumspect rituals of the Hindu society in general and the Brahminical society in particular. The religious and social context may be pointed out in connection with the title and the subtitle of the novel. In the subtitle, "A Dead Man" is quite meaningful. The dead man - Naranappa - a living protest against the orthodoxy, conservatism, the conventions and customs of the Brahminical society - defied all the traditional values of the community by his style of living. The Brahmins used to look upon him as a religious and socially marginal, namely on the moral ground. He used to live separately with a low caste woman, mixed freely with people of different communities. His favourite dishes consisted of the items prohibited by the community. As the novel opens, we are being reported of his death. It is conveyed to the central protagonist, Praneshacharya, by the mistress of Naranappa, Chandri.

**Characterization:** In the depiction of the characters, Ananthamurthy employs two techniques - that of (i) contrast, and (ii) filmic flashback (the narrative technique of retrospection).

The technique of filmic flashback has described Naranappa. Reasons?

(1). Naranappa is a figure (whether he is dead or alive), who helps in the removal of the temporal and spatial distances. The past of Naranappa is continuously referred to because it constantly trespasses in the present context of the novel. The Brahmins of the community debate with each other whether he shall be cremated according to the religious rules as Naranappa was potentially disinterested about the dull traditions of the Hindu community. That is why the past repeatedly trespasses in the present context - an amalgamation of the past and present; thus, the temporal and the spatial distances are overcome.

(2). The "dead man" Naranappa, like the dead Caesar, appears to be much more living than the living Naranappa. The dead man Naranappa shakes the very foundation /basis of the belief and the age-old trust and faith of the so-called Hindu society. Therefore, the phrase "The Dead Man" is meaningful to us.

Again, contrast is instituted between three characters - Naranappa, Praneshacharya, and Putta. Naranappa and Praneshacharya are contrasted in respect of Praneshacharya's complete devotion to the rules, regulations, customs, rites, and conventions of the Hindu religious texts. Therefore, his complete attachment to Hinduism should be contrasted with Naranappa's potential rejection of anything relating to Hinduism.

(b) Praneshacharya and Putta. Here the contrast is deep-rooted. It is not only at the physical level but also at the cerebral, intellectual level. Putta is a commonplace figure - represents the commonplaceness either hardly dissatisfied or commonly satisfied with the proceedings of life. Putta is a very pedestrian character. In stark contrast, Praneshacharya is intellectually much superior because of his sensitiveness and rational responses to life.

To Praneshacharya, self-realization is of prime importance personifying the Upanishad's teaching- "before you know the world, know thyself." To Putta this is alien. The intellectual search for self-realization on the part of Praneshacharya should be contrasted to the ordinariness of Putta. Praneshacharya transcends what is mundane.

Similarly, Ananthamurthy, in his depiction of women characters, once again, is exceptionally poetic-very frequently does he impose mythical touches on them. Women in this novel, save Bhagirathi, are classical and mythical beauties. The mythic associations are called up whenever he goes forward to introduce the women characters of the novel. Many of the women characters may be interpreted from the traditional Indian concept of womanhood as we find in the Puranas. There, women stand for elemental Nature (Prakriti). Any kind of union, therefore, either physical or emotional between man and woman is considered to be the union between Prakriti and Purush (archetypal masculinity). Hence, a union between a man and a woman is a union between the archetypal femininity and archetypal masculinity. Therefore, the union of Praneshacharya and Chandri in the forest can be viewed in that light. The setting is noteworthy-they get united against the backdrop of Nature and say goodbye to the established Canon of the civilized society. Thus, human instincts are glorified there because everything takes place under the blue expanse of the sky.

At the same time, this novel is a social document in the sense that it draws our attention to the ways and means, customs and conventions of the Hindu society. As usual, one notices the meanness, the professional jealousy, suppressed greed, the protestations among the Brahmins of the community.

In Samskara, Ananthamurthy has reinterpreted the meaning of 'realism' in his unique and inimitable style. The setting is realistic. Against this, he discovers the poetic, mythic explanation of the human relationship. Therefore, there is an interfusion of realism and fantasy (myth).

Praneshacharya's extraordinary amorous adventure in the heart of the jungle transcends the limits of reality. There is a touch of fantasy, a fairy-tale, mythical atmosphere in that scene. It brings alive the Forest scene of The Scarlet Letter, bringing alive the notion of freedom of the Garden of Eden, the pre-lapsarian society. The interfusion of myths and reality comes close to following the metaphysical technique of Raja Rao in his The Serpent and the Rope. One may find a semblance of Chandri and the 'Black Woman' in Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness. These semblance and similarities make the literary texture of Samskara thicker and more vibrant. Also, more intriguing.

Analyzing Ananthamurthy's art of characterization in Samskara further, we find that Praneshacharya is not static. Following Forster (Aspects of the Novel) we may safely call him a 'round' character. He retains dynamism through and through. Unlike Putta, who maintains a fixed attitude towards everything and everyone, Praneshacharya has a developing, evolving, and dynamic psyche. Praneshacharya at the beginning of the novel and Praneshacharya at the end of the novel are two entirely different sets of people. He is not the same person at the end of the story. In him, one notices the emotive development of the human psyche, similar to the development of Mattadeen in Premchand's Godan. His experiences, ordeals, trials and tribulations, conflicts and tensions over the question of the rites of 'the dead man' always affect his character by transforming him from a tranquil figure to an emotionally restless soul.

There are distinct stages of development in his character. Initially, he was calm and quiet; stoically accepted everything that came his way, but as the story progresses, he seems to be affected by the whirlpool of different feelings. It appears to us that he becomes a restless character on the theatre of his mind and this restlessness is expressed in two ways:

- (i) His departure from his native village, and
- (ii) In his momentary moral lapses; in his degeneration.

This restlessness continues till the end. 'He was expectant' for self-knowledge, for his redemption, as Praneshacharya knows that his self-knowledge will ultimately show him the light amid the pervading and encircling gloom.

The novel is left open-ended and inconclusive. One justification could be to show Praneshacharya as the eternal sojourner of the life-a pilgrim of life who continues to wait and perhaps there will be an end to his expectations, perhaps the journey itself is an end, just like Vladimir and Estragon waiting in an Indian context.

We may conclude by assuming that Praneshacharya is a unifying thread interweaving the different threads and clues of the story-giving us the impression of an organic whole just like the Sutradhar in a Classical Sanskrit play of yore.