
REFLECTION OF CULTURAL STALEMATE IN U.R. ANANTHAMURTHY'S SAMSKARA: A RITE FOR A DEAD MAN

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Abstract

U.R. Ananthamurthy's novel Samskara adapts amazing richness and density of collapse in his novel where he represents the community of Brahmins. Samskara explains the compound relation of the protagonist to himself. Samskara evaluates the social system in the community of Brahmin, which represents the critically declined and unexamined the basis of cultural and religious values. It explains the concept of tradition and how it creates its impact on society. Cultural deadlock or stalemate is an important aspect and through this concept we will find out the true meaning of 'culture' and the importance of culture in the life of a person.

Keywords: *Culture, social system, tradition, psychology.*

The protagonist, Praneshacharya, of the *Samskara* experiences a great inconsistency with his traditional value system of his community when he sees that his close friend and classmate, Mahabala, unexpectedly became an escapee and he lives in the company of a prostitute. The novel *Samskara* represents the reality and true face of the particular society and it explains about selfish calculation by a variety of male Brahmins and their wives. For the protagonist, it is too difficult to find out the answer related to the death rituals of Naranappa because he finds only vague guidance from scriptural books. Ananthamurthy represents the difficulty and anxiety of an extremely traditional village's community in modern India. Ananthamurthy explores this diversity in the direction where social and psychological struggle is expressed in different strokes and speech in the characters that have different attitudes like the surprised Praneshacharya, the nearly speechless prostitute, the aggressive and boisterous Naranappa and the selfish characters of Brahmin male and female. Then, the Muslim friend who helps to cremate the body of Naranappa and the character of Putta who is half- caste young man who tries to entice Praneshacharya to a prostitute. Although the novel is concerned mostly with representing the experiences in a small Brahmin community and all these characters intermingled experiences of their lives all together and it constitutes a microcosm of the Brahmin communities in South India. *Samskara* represents a social outlook of a particular community in particular place.

In *Samskara* through the character of Praneshacharya the orthodoxy of Brahmanism is clearly shown when he does not find the answer to his question of Naranappa's cremation in the scriptures. Ironically speaking, he is himself speechless when he faces the questions related to death rituals of Naranappa. His own Vedic knowledge and understanding, that is clear that he is a learned man, does not solve his dilemma. On the other side Naranappa was an irresponsible and lively Brahmin but in his life he only enjoys his life and does not care about any rituals and customs of his community. Praneshacharya exemplifies stability, moderation, thinking, and thus universality anticipated in one grounded in Vedantic notion. These entire good qualities do not help him in his confusion rather confused him when he is struggling to find out a solution to the problem of cremating Naranappa's body.

Praneshacharya's struggle turns into a twist when he goes to the temple for his solution, but he indulges a relation with Chandri, who is the concubine of Naranappa, when he was returning from the temple.

Ananthamurthy in this novel represents both characters in a different way the protagonist Praneshacharya, and the prostitute Chandri. He represents both the characters in the context of psychological effects and capacity to act where the protagonist is in opposition where he wants to refuse the rules and members of his community. Praneshacharya's situation of dilemma or personal crisis starts after making a relation with Chandri when he examines himself. Before this incident, he knows the problem of his community, but after that when he finds himself in the crisis, he does not understand that what he should do related to the cremation of Naranappa. For example, in his puzzlement, he could not untie himself and walks in and out, out and in, snapping his fingers:

What shall I do? What shall I do? When he gave his wife her usual medicine as she lay groaning in the dining room, his hands trembled and spilled the medicine. As he held it to her lips, as he looked into his broken wife's pitted eyes, those helpless visionless symbols of his self-sacrifice and duty as a household- he felt his legs twitch and double-up, as if in troubled sleep, as if in a dream he fell dizzily into bottomless nether-worlds. (66)

Ananthamurthy dramatizes the problems in the manner that represents the protagonist's crisis because of his faith in tradition but he never coddles in any kind of self-blame or not judges himself lost and fallen. His agonies and condition of dilemma motivates him to find out the answer to his question. He solicits himself that how can one be wholly free of such craving? Thus, ideals of tradition have a direct influence over his mind. In portraying his state of mind Ananthamurthy has made-up an example or image of the conflict between tradition and modernity through the context of Hinduism in modern India. In the novel Praneshacharya does not surrender his old Brahmanical ego and does not follow the values perfectly or fully. The concept of tradition and modernity intermingled with each other and one character is related to another character. For example on one side where Praneshacharya represents the concept of tradition and on the other side Naranappa represents the concept of modernity and it shows that one's mental state reflects the other ones.

In *Samskara* resolution has important value as well as it shows not only about the decision of a one person rather decision of one individual that affects the society or community. Resolution in such moments should come into exist in the society or community unhurriedly and clearly in the way of history. Such changes do not come to light in a particular moment, on a particular date. Praneshacharya struggles to overcome from the thought of Mahabala's apostasy through his efforts to bring Naranappa back to the fold; Naranappa himself becomes the cause of confusion of an unparalleled nature for this community and for the protagonist. Neither Mahabala nor Naranappa is famous for all their extraordinary implications for everybody in this community. The novel does not wholly criticize tradition nor does it cuddle modernity in a tactless method. Praneshacharya symbolizes a state of indecisiveness and rethinking and it also shows about no longer fully committed to the unconditional that marked his life before the crisis.

Ananthamurthy has maintained his focus on Praneshacharya's Hindu cultural context and the suggestions that he experiences in the novel the particular circumstance. His experience

does not lead him to quarrel and reflect in conceptual terms. The ending of the novel does not represent the perfect state of mind of the protagonist and of his community. It dramatizes the radical perplexity and even analysis about the tradition which exists in the mind of the protagonist. It also shows that how the seed of self-criticism and self-realization comes in the personality of Praneshacharya. His experiences are so powerful that one cannot expect him to remain unchanged, since it calls into question of the structure of his unquestioned form of life and it also raises the question of that life in which he suffers insufficient and problematic nature and this nature is dramatized in several remarkable episodes like dead Brahmin's corpse is still not cremated by anyone and his relation with Chandri both are the example of his insufficient and problematic nature. His religious understanding is not transfigured in some absolute way that would necessitate a complete rejection of tradition and he is not so spiritually broken and the very concept of religion now would seem unfilled to him. The religious, inflexible rituals and laws explain and establish the tradition and its practices and it explains about the concept that how the community has remained blind towards those elements. It also represents that within the traditions that completely and openly challenge the calcifying elements and thus help to reconceptualize it. The decadent, dishonesty and corrupt nature of the community throw the light on the leader's spiritual veracity and almost separating him from his community whose religious welfare he guides. The ending is totally in accordance with the diplomatic practicality that gives the narrative with its energy and structuring elements. It avoids any easy parable in terms of drastic transformation from the old to the new and at the same time hinting the life of the protagonist.

Ananthamurthy explains the critical situation in which people of the whole community remain repressed because of the values of tradition and its burden on them only because of the fact that their leader follows these values. The novel explains that all the members of the community follow the values because they bring up in that particular atmosphere and they have to believe in and appreciate it. But the fact is that this tradition does not give any kind of answer to their problems from which they suffers and does not support them to bring out from that particular problem or situation and does not give any solution related to the problem. The protagonist becomes a spectator and gives evidence of demonstration and deconstruction of that tradition and achieves the level a capacity where he examines for self reflection and then gives the possibility of a new commencement of self and even of community. The novel ends without a specific and definite conclusion because Praneshacharya has inwards at an altered although he does not fully understood the concept of self and moral liability.

The novel represents about its moral and psychological pressure and disclosing a capacity for honesty and a pledge to the values that involve a struggle to represent a relation between tradition and modernity. The novel explains that a regular member cannot be found the deep self consciousness in their selves and in the beliefs and practices of the tradition. Because the people who follow the rule of their religion in an unconscious manner they cannot begin a start or look at cultural values in a different aspect and they cannot confront that what is fundamental and continue and what is paralyzing and negative in their beliefs and practices of tradition.

Ananthamurthy does not idealize his protagonist who experiences this shocking disaster through the idea that Praneshacharya has one way or another emerged as a royal hero who



conquers and shakes off the burden of his tradition of culture. The protagonist exists on a level which is above and beyond the capability of his tradition and its values. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* explains about all the fundamentals of certain existential emergencies explodes into and discouragement the protagonist's expected mode of being in the world and shows him relatively concerned with the cultural and historical foundation of his life. And accordingly this implies a complex relation with his culture and with his community.

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