



## Superiority and Caste System in U. R. Ananthmurthy's Samskara (The Rite For Dead Man)

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### Abstract:

Samskara is a story of orthodox society where Praneshcharya is a very learned, orthodox Brahmin in Durvaspur Agrahar colony. He is Madhawa Brahmin. He has completed his vedic education in Kashi and was awarded Shiromani in vedic education. He works as judge for all religious matters in Agrahar colony. Chandri, the concubine of Naranappa comes and tells that Naranappa died due to Plague. Naranappa revolted against rituals, customs and beliefs of religion. Naranappa lives his life as his will. Naranappa violated tradition and religion. Praneshacharaya was feeling uneasy as he has relation with Chandri. His wife Bhagirathi dies of Plague. He cremates his wife and left home and Agrahar colony. Praneshacharaya left his relations in village in search of peace. He thought to go to see Chandri. The writer has shown that to show their superiority and dominance they have made several rules and those rules they have maintained for the lower caste of people.

*Key words: caste, religion, rituals, Brahmin. Sexuality, woman, gender, cremation*

Religion and caste are two important aspects of Indian social and cultural life and we Indians are practicing same from years and years. Number of social reformer and critique attempted to aware society about evils of it. Novelist tries to sketch society with caste system and gender discrimination where Brahmins are only superior in society. A class misinterprets Dharma for their own profit and status in society. This novel is set in pre independence period where caste plays very important role in society.

Samskara is a story of orthodox society where Praneshcharya is a very learned, orthodox Brahmin in Durvaspur Agrahar colony. He is Madhawa Brahmin. He has completed his vedic education in Kashi and was awarded Shiromani in vedic education. He works as judge for all religious matters in Agrahar colony. He has married with Bhagirathi. Samskara opens with scene in Midsummer Day when Praneshacharaya is about to sit for



lunch, Chandri, the concubine of Naranappa comes and tells that Naranappa died due to Plague. Naranappa revolted against rituals, customs and beliefs of religion. Naranappa lives his life as his will. Naranappa violated tradition and religion. Praneshacharaya is close relative of Naranappa lives home without lunch, as it was custom in Brahmins not to dine till funeral of Brahmin in Agrahar colony. Other Brahmin who came to know the news of death of Naranappa does not dine and gathers near home of Praneshacharaya, chief Brahmin of Agrahar. A question arises that who will perform rituals of funeral of Naranappa because he was almost in company of outcaste society and has no relation with Brahmins. Garudacharaya and Laxmanacharaya were his close relative of Naranappa, they were waiting for decision of Praneshacharaya, head of all Brahmins in Agrahar colony. Chandri offers her Ornaments to Garudacharaya and Laxmanacharaya for funeral of Naranappa, There wives asked to take ornaments and do rituals of Naranappa, but they waited for decision of Praneshacharaya. Praneshacharaya was busy in seeing solution of case of Naranappa but didn't get any answer.

Praneshacharaya went through many volumes of religious books and on finding nothing decides to take advice from Brahmin from neighborhood village. When Brahmins of Agrahar didn't got solution of funeral of Naranappa. They went to Parijatpura where Manjaya, friend of Naranappa was there and asks him to do funeral of Naranappa but he denies doing so. Chandri waited at Maruti temple for Praneshacharaya for cremation of Naranappa. When Acharaya came without decision Chandri goes closer to him and while touching his feet, her breasts touches his knees and a sudden spark was in Acharaya. He was tired and not able to stand as he was hungry since morning. Chandri removes her sari and offers him her body.

Praneshacharaya asked Chandri that she should announce to Agrahar Brahmins about incidence near temple. He tells Brahmins that he is not able to give solution and decision about funeral of Naranappa. He thought that he has no right to give decision due to last meeting with Chandri. Chandri approaches to Ahmed Bari whom Naranappa had helped number of times.

Friends of Naranappa from Parijatpura went to Naranappa's home to take ody for cremation but no body found as it as taken by Ahmed Bari for funeral. They feared and thought about ghost.



Praneshacharaya married his wife when he was sixteen and his wife was twelve but never enjoyed married life as he felt for Banaras to learn Vedic knowledge. His wife was serious and was struggling for life. He was performing his duty to serve her. He declares that Brahmins may decide what they want about funeral of Naranappa. He was continuously thinking about meeting with Chandri.

Vishnu Kumar noted in his paper about symbolism and allegory as the most striking element in the novel is the use of erotic imagery. The writer has shown that to show their superiority and dominance they have made several rules and those rules they have maintained for the lower caste of people but in the matter of a girl they forget all the rules and they try to have sex even with a woman who belong to lower caste society. He has used some erotic images of banana to arouse sexual feelings, the meeting of Praneshacharya and Chandri in the forest, the author has used phallic symbol of banana in the following words: Chandri leaned him against her breasts, took the plantains out of her lap, peeled them and fed them to him. Then she took of her Sari, spread it on the ground, and lay on it hugging. Parneshacharya closed to her weeping flowing in the helpless tears. (Samskara: 55)

The Brahmins of Durvaspur were not satisfied with Praneshacharaya. They decided to take advice from Subbanacharaya but he answered same as Praneshacharaya. He had not knowledge what to guide in such exceptional case. Then Brahmins decided to go to monastery for advice. The chief Preceptor advised them to burn the body without delay and property of Naranappa should be given to Mutt because he has no spouse. Brahmins left Mutt after meal one Brahmin among them fell ill and he was left there. Other Brahmins returned to Durvaspur. Here at the same time Praneshacharaya was feeling uneasy as he has relation with Chandri, near temple. Praneshacharaya went to swim and he remembered his childhood days. After swimming he went to the spot where he met Chandri. His wife Bhagirathi dies of Plague. He cremates his wife and left home and Agrahar colony. Praneshacharaya left his relations in village in search of peace.

He thought to go to see Chandri but on the way villagers recognized him as a great saint and asked him to stay there and offered him ration to cook but Praneshacharaya refused to do so then villagers offered him fruits to eat. When Acharaya went on, he met a young man Putta. Putta was very talkative. In discussion Acharaya avoided to disclose his identity. Putta takes Acharaya to the temple where fair was there. Everyone was in festive



mood a cock fight, a girl walking on rope, tightened by Bamboos attracted Acharaya and reminds him about Chandri and his union with her. The acrobatic girl performed a very natural walk on tightened rope. Then they went to a restaurant and had a cup of coffee. Putta takes him to the house of Padmavati, young and charming woman and asks Acharaya to stay with Padmawati for a night and on next morning they will leave for Kundapur. Putta takes Acharaya for dinner at temple. Putta waits for Acharaya outside temple. The cook serving meal recognized Acharaya as Praneshacharaya and went to inform in charge of free meal board about Prneshacharaya. When Acharaya came to know that cook went to inform about Acharaya to board then he left meal and rushed out to Putta. Putta asks him to go to Padmavati for a night but refuses to go with Padmavati and decides to go for Durvaspur tells the truth to Brahmins and complete the Samskara of Naranappa. Acharaya tells Putta that his relatives are serious and avoided to tell about death of Naranappa and his cremation. He tells he had to return Durvaspur. Putta offered him company and says he wanted to meet his friend Naranappa at Durvaspur. Acharaya kept secret of death of Naranappa from Putta. On the way to Durvaspur one bullock cart asks them one can sit in cart and Putta asks Acharaya to go by bullock cart to Durvaspur and he will follow him shortly. Putta went to his wife and parents, they were in nearby village.

In this way novelist has sketched unresolved dilemma. Novel intends to attack on social system, caste system, social hierarchy where superiority is by birth. As religion and caste are two important aspects of Indian society are very neatly sketched by novelist. As novelist Ananthmurthy was a social reformer, he tries to attack on caste system where religious rights are given to particular class only and no one has right to interfere in it. In this novel religion, caste system, social relations, lust, sex and extra marital relations are discussed by novelist. Thus novel is a strong critique on caste system by a person who belongs to that society, who are practicing the same from years and years in India.

Muneer Ahmed Wani has rightly remarked in his paper that In the Indian History hierarchy of caste has been an important issue related with hegemony, and power dynamics. Over the years social hierarchy have manoeuvred to gain and retain the supremacy of social domain by using and appropriating, theories, discourses, sources of knowledge, and ideologies, which have been the effectively and primarily responsible for the marginalization of the people especially belonging to category of powerless and low caste. But it has been well said “every dog has a day” from past few decades on the one



hand, there has been rise in the discourse of marginalized people be it Dalits, women or downtrodden tribes, on the other hand these groups like Dalits and marginalised women not only contesting the domination and supremacy of higher class but also giving and offering the counter discourse and canon. We are claiming to reign the whole world in this 21st century but Caste systems a disease, blight, hindrance and what not which mars all our claims. By so called establishments: religious or socio-cultural, this system is exploiting women and low castes in numerous ways from not only decades but from centuries. Murthy is much successful in portraying the voice of abused and downtrodden people by using his literary apparatus is it satire, humour or irony.

The most striking element in the novel is the use of erotic imagery. The writer has shown that to show their superiority and dominance they have made several rules and those rules they have maintained for the lower caste of people but in the matter of a girl they forget all the rules and they try to have sex even with a woman who belong to lower caste society. He has used some erotic images of banana to arouse sexual feelings, the meeting of Praneshacharya and Chandri in the forest, the author has used phallic symbol of banana in the following words: Chandri leaned him against her breasts, took the plantains out of her lap, peeled them and fed them to him. Then she took of her Sari, spread it on the ground, and lay on it hugging. Parneshacharya closed to her weeping flowing in the helpless tears. (Samskara: 55)

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