

Samskara: Transition from Traditionalism to Modernism

Kuldeep Singh

Ph.D Scholar

Department of English
Lovely Professional University, Phagwara

HHH

Abstract

In India people follow certain social values and beliefs which are mainly associated with their respective religions which they learn through religious texts, myths and from their religious gurus and gradually these values and beliefs become sedimentary. During the colonial period the picture changed drastically. People started embracing new ideas, thoughts, philosophies, and European ways of living because of its flexibility and freedom to choose. People started challenging the old values and beliefs. So here the wave of modernism took place. It was the transition from traditionalism to modernism. Same way the transition has been depicted in the novel Samskara with the help of various characters mainly Pranesacharya and Naranappa. It was originally written in Kannada by Anantha Murthy in 1965 and translated into English by A. K Ramanujan in 1976 with the subtitle Samskara; A Rite for a Dead Man.

Keywords: *sedimentary, traditionalism, modernism, beliefs, transition*

India is the country which is multi religion, multi cultural, multi lingual and multi ethnic means diversity is its mean feature. The people who have great reverence for their long held culture and religious values and beliefs are traditionalists. It is quite difficult to shake their faith and beliefs, because of their deep blind faith on those values and beliefs until some external forces do work in systematic way to mould them to follow new ideas and beliefs. Before coming of the foreign invaders in India, India had long religious and cultural history of its own. But foreign invaders worked to kill the culture of India to rule over its people and people started following them. Samskara is the story of Madhva Brahmin colony in which two types of Brahmins live, the one who are very devoted to their duties and rules which religious texts instructed them to follow. This types of Brahmins are represented by Pranesacharya, who set an example for others with his daily routines like early bath then offers prayers, even he cooks for himself and his ailing wife whom he takes care and reciting sacred legends and he thinks as duty given by God to him to get salvation. But on the other hands there are some people in the colony who do not follow the

scriptures and Shastras; such kinds of people are represented by the heretic Naranappa who has concubine of low cast. He has all the bad habits and doesn't follow the philosophy of Brahminism. He eats meat, does hunting, according to other Brahmins that the most sinuous act he does that he guides and manipulates other young people of the colony to follow his path. There is the great difference in the philosophy of Naranappa and other Brahmins of Durvasapura. The other Brahmins grow flowers in their homes for worship but in Naranappa's yard flowers are grown up for Chandri's hair. Naranappa and his followers live more independently and with flexibility as compare to the other Brahmins. He lives in more modern and practical ways that's why other Brahmins do not like him. He like others more secular and love other casts people which Pranesacharya and his followers consider the people of low cast as subhuman beings. So there is the battle between Brahminism and anti- Brahminism, or between the traditional, ancient ways and the modern ways of Naranappa.

The real controversy creates in the novel when he dies and the question comes who will do the death rites for him. Because he doesn't have any son and other people who are very close to him don't want to do that in fear of excommunicating. His concubine Chandri finally ready to give her ornaments to anyone who cremates Naranappa. This act of Chandri tempted other Brahmins of Madhva colony. Pranesacharya being the chief of the colony tries to find solution. He consulted all the scared books, though he doesn't like the ways of Naranappa but still he considers his cremations as responsibility. Later when Pranesacharya disappeared from the colony, at the monastery all Brahmins gather around the chief, who gives some instructions to follow to the whole community. Chief also declares that Naranappa didn't follow Brahminism but still he was a Brahmin and it's their responsibility to cremate him. When from his books he fails to find solution about who will do the cremation for Naranappa he goes to the Maruti Temple for divine guidance. Chandri waits for his words outside the temple in the dark forest. But it is of no use he returns with disappointment, because God doesn't give him any sign as Pranesacharya expected. When he leaves the temple

he meets Chandri who feels very grateful to him for taking so much pain for her lover. In reverence Chandri bends down to touch his feet and cries.

Pranesacharya gets emotional too and holds her and hugs her tightly. At the moment her breasts touch him and he gets faint and then they make love in the forest. After some time before Pranesacharya realized the truth, he just think that it was the dream because he knows that he can't do it in reality, so he cannot believe it, at the moment he argues "I clean forget where I came from and where should go from here" (Ramanujan 65). He regrets over his deed with Chandri and thinks that he has lost his battle with Naranappa; it is Naranappa's victory in this battle. He also realized that it is not Naranappa who has turned the people's life topsy turvy but he himself has done that. Next morning Chandri goes to Naranappa and finds that his dead body is rotting. She makes some unsuccessful attempts in convincing people for the cremation of Naranappa's dead body. Finally breaking all the traditional values and beliefs she goes to Naranappa's Muslim friend Abdul Bari, who agrees to cremate Naranappa. Leaving behind the traditional values and beliefs Chandri argues that the dead body is "neither Brahmin nor Shudra, a carcass, a stinking rotting carcass" (Ramanujan 68). After cremation Chandri leaves Kundapura with her essential things without meeting Pranesacharya. Chandri who considers herself as sinless character, writer describes her as "born to prostitutes, she was an exception to all rules. She was ever-auspicious, daily-wedded, the one without widowhood, how can sin define a running river" (Ramanujan 43).

Other side life of Pranesacharya has changed completely after that night got confused which way to choose and decided to stay away from people. All his beliefs have shaken completely. Because at the age of sixteen he decided to take the path of salvation but he thinks after the night with Chandri he has lost everything so he gets more confused. He is the only hope for all Brahmins for taking decisions and finding solution for any problem which the community. He wants to cut off all his ties with the past and he leaves the area. People now consult Pt Subbannacharya at the Kaimar agrahara to take any advice or to take any help. But Pranesacharya is still in dilemma about which world to choose because neither he can go to his traditional life for which he is familiar among the people nor he can completely choose the life of Naranappa. He thinks that he has lost all the rights of Brahminism after having first time sex in his life with Chandri. So here the second stage of his life begins. His old beliefs shaken away, he leaves Durvasapura after the death of his wife. He decides to wander aimlessly

"meaning to walk wherever his legs took him, he walked towards the east" (Ramanujan 85). Now in other areas people do not recognize him, they just consider him a mendicant Brahmin. He always regrets about his act of love making with Chandri which not only affects his life but the entire Brahmin community, "that was the root of the difficulty, the anxiety, the double-bind of dharma, that decision gouged [him] out [his] past world, the world of Brahmins ... [his] very truth" (Ramanujan 106). On his journey unwillingly he gets familiar with a man named Putta who always tries to make him happy through stories riddles etc but still his mind is in his own situation which has changed his life. While living with Putta he also recalls his past events when he was finding the solution of Naranappa's cremation and said "when the question of Naranappa's death rites came up, I didn't try to solve it for myself, I depended on God, on the old law books" (Ramanujan 106). So the remark shows Pranesacharya's inclination towards modern values leaving behind his unfruitful and old ideas, which shows his little angeriness for impractical and illogical traditional values and beliefs. Gradually he makes his decision to make things better by accepting what he has done and gets ready to take the responsibility of his act, he argues "I've become a mere thing, by an act of will I'll become human again. I'll responsible for myself. That is...that is...I'll give up this decision to go where my legs take me, catch a bus to Kundapura and live with Chandri. I'll end all my troubles. I'll remake myself in full wakefulness..." (Ramanujan 107). So now he doesn't go wherever his legs take him but he wants to do what he actually wants. He wants to go Kundapura and will live with Chandri to begin his new life.

Religion and caste are two main aspects of Indian social and culture life. All actions of the novel revolve around these two aspects. The novel is mainly based on the Brahmin community of India and at the same time the writer very boldly shows the hypocrisy and the class consciousness of the community which is deeply injected. The writer with the help of characters tries to present the clash between the traditional and modern values. The writer also depicts that orthodox and ancient ways of living can't help us to live a logical and satisfied life. For an instance as compare to Pranesacharya, Naranappa lives happier, satisfied and tension free life because he follows more modern and flexible ideas.

Works cited

- 1 Mandal, Viplav Kumar. "U R Ananthamurthy's Samskara: Analysing His Art of Characterisation." *IJRAR*, vol. 2, April 2015.

- 2 Pal, Virender. "Religion, Caste and Modernity: A Study of U. R. Ananthamurthy's Samskara." *IJELR*, vol. 3, Jan. 201, pp. 95-101.
- 3 Ramanujan, A.K., translator. *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*. By Anantha Murthy, New Delhi: Oxford, 1976.
- 4 Sreelakshmi, A N. "Samskara as a Window of Brahmin Orthodoxy." *Quest Journals*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2021, pp. 41-44.
-