

Casteism in U.R. Ananthamurthy Samskara

A POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION



Submitted by

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PG Roll No- PGENG408A22024

M.A. 4th Semester

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled, “**Casteism in U.R. Ananthamurthy Samskara**” is the outcome of an investigation carried out by Maidangshri Narzary, Roll No-PGENG408A22024, for the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of Masters of Arts in English offered by the Department of English, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam during 4th semester M.A course 2022-2023. The work has been done under my supervisor and guidance, and this work has not been submitted anywhere for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

With due concern, I Maidangshri Narzary, bearing Roll No- PGENG408A22024, and Registration No-013585 of 2022-2023 hereby solemnly and sincerely declare that the submitted Research work on the title, “**Casteism in U.R. Ananthamurthy Samskara**”, is to fulfill the curricular demand of PG (M.A. 4th Semester). I also declare that this dissertation does not contain any part of any work which has been submitted for the award of any degree either by this university or by any other University/Deemed University without a proper citation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to express my gratitude to respected, Dr Pratusha Bhowmick for her excellent guidance who enabled and encouraged me to carry out this dissertation.

In the end I would like to thank my fellow students for their valuable assistance and support in different possible ways to complete the preparation of the dissertation. I am also highly thankful to my parents for their moral as well as financial support to carry out this research work.

Maidangshri Narzary

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ABSTRACT

The debate around the caste system in Indian society is the main topic of this study. Indian modern writer *UR Ananthamurthy* is the author of "*Samskara: A Rite for Dead Man.*" The caste system's foundations are deeply ingrained in Indian culture. This paper investigates the appropriate attitude for Brahmins in the novel in light of their caste structure and Hindu religion. The narrative, which takes place in a fictitious community, examines the intricate social dynamics, customs, and biases related to caste. There are three sections to the book. It is a novel set in the caste system of two villages and explores issues of caste in Indian society.

Keywords: Caste, Brahmin, Hindu, Rituals, Castesim

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

One of the nation's earliest systems of social stratification is Casteism. It is described as the act of treating individuals unfairly on the basis of their caste. Historically, one of the primary ways that Indians are socially divided along racial, religious, regional, tribal, gender, and linguistic lines is through the caste system. All the human cultures differentiate in some way, but when one or more of these characteristics overlap and serve as the only foundation for a systematic ranking and uneven access to resources like wealth, income, power, and status, it becomes problematic.

In Indian culture, caste, rituals, and religion are deeply woven together within the Samskara framework, creating a complex web of social conventions and personal identities. Due to its roots in the caste system's hierarchical social structure, casteism has traditionally governed jobs, occupations, and social relationships within communities. Originating from ancient texts such as the Manusmriti, this system divided society into four varnas: Shudras (workers and service providers), Vaishyas (merchants and landowners), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), and Brahmins (priests and scholars). Dalits, or Scheduled Castes, were traditionally positioned outside this hierarchy as "untouchables." In addition to affecting socioeconomic standing, casteism infuses religious rites and beliefs.

The core of Hindu religious devotion is embodied in the Samskara rituals, which include rites of passage from conception to death. The fundamental sacraments, known as Samskaras, indicate important life events and lead people from conception to death.

Thus, Samskara symbolises the way that religion, rituals, and caste intersect to weave together individual identities, spiritual practices, and sociocultural norms in the fabric of

Indian society. Religion and rituals provide a means of fostering cultural continuity, social cohesion, and individual development, even in the face of casteism's persistent resistance to injustice and inequity. Samskara, which embodies perseverance, diversity, and spiritual knowledge, continues to be a dynamic manifestation of India's rich cultural legacy while negotiating the challenges of modernity and tradition.

Critical caste theory can be used to examine how caste systems impact the lives of the characters and society norms in U.R. Ananthamurthy's novel "Samskara." The book explores the complicated relationships between privilege, oppression, and caste identity in a rural Indian Brahmin society. Critical caste theory would examine how people's behaviour, relationships, and opportunities are determined by caste standards, as well as how characters deal with the limitations and expectations that the caste system places on them. In order to clarify the complex dynamics depicted in the story, it would also look at how caste interacts with various types of power and identity.

A major issue of "Samskara," a book by U.R. Ananthamurthy, is casteism, which sheds light on the inflexible social structure and ingrained discrimination that characterize traditional Indian society. The story, which is set in a traditional Brahmin community, uses the life of a scholarly and pious Brahmin named Praneshachary to examine the intricacies and paradoxes of caste. "Samskara" explores the moral quandaries and hypocrisies that are supported by caste-based prejudice as he struggles with a moral crisis brought on by the death of an out caste. Ananthamurthy's story challenges the moral underpinning of such a hierarchical structure by criticizing the conventional wisdoms that uphold caste differences as well as the social unrest and personal upheaval they produce.

"Samskara by U.R. Ananthamurthy offers a powerful examination of these Subjects in the context of a South Indian Brahmin community, illustrating the ethical and spiritual predicaments people face in the face of the deterioration of traditional Hindu Customs. Following the passing of Naranappa, a Brahmin who defies custom, the protagonist of the book, Praneshacharya, struggles with the strict adherence to caste standards and the shifting socio-cultural dynamics. Through the application of Critical Caste Theory (CCT) to "Samskara," this dissertation investigates Caste as a system of power, privilege, and oppression that is socially produced. Drawing on Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical Caste Theory (CCT) highlights the ways in which caste intersects with other social categories, how caste identities are socially constructed and institutionalized and how hegemony and resistance functions.

Using critical caste theory as a frame work, this dissertation explores the novel's complex portrayal of Caste dynamics and rituals. Through an examination of the chapters "Caste and Rituals in Samskara" and "Religion and Caste in Samskara," this Research endeavors to clarify the extensive impact of caste on personal identity and social interactions within the story.

Samskara written in Kannada in 1965 and Adapted into an award-winning film in 1970, is the work of U.R. Ananthamurthy. Later, 1976, it was translated into English by well-known Indian poet and translator A.K. Ramanujan. Ananthamurthy uses his story to reveal the religious hypocrisy and challenge the domination of Brahmanical Culture.

"Samskara" is a story about a renegade Brahmin named Naranappa who dies and causes a moral and religious crisis. The story takes place in a traditional South Indian Brahmin community. The Work tackles a variety of topics related to casteism, including reform, pollution, purity, and orthodoxy. Ananthamurthy offers a critical analysis of the caste

system from within by concentrating on the Brahmin community, questioning its moral underpinning's and exposing the hypocrisies of those who support it.

1.2 Review of literature

By reading a wide range of relevant books and academic papers that explain and analyse India's caste system, one can have a deeper understanding of the caste system in Samskara. The Brahmin agrahara, a microcosm of ancient Hindu society at the Centre of Samskara, is where a crisis is sparked by the death of Naranappa, a Brahmin who disobeyed caste rules. Ananthamurthy is able to analyse the moral rigidity and hypocrisy of the caste system through this story. The novel's critical position towards Brahminical orthodoxy has been emphasised by scholars like as N. Manu Chakravarthy. They have highlighted how the agrahara's reaction to Naranappa's death exposes the community's ingrained prejudices and resistance to change. Susie Tharu and K. Satyanarayana stress the novel's significance in Dalit writing even further, contending that Ananthamurthy successfully undermines the caste system.

In addition to the critique of Samskara, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* provides a horrifying look into the life of Bakha, an untouchable who faces systematic discrimination and everyday humiliation. Anand effectively illustrates the widespread effects of caste-based exclusion by drawing comparisons between Naranappa's rebellious efforts in Samskara and Bakha's struggles against societal marginalisation.

By offering a firsthand account of caste discrimination, Omprakash Valmiki's autobiography *Joothan* enhances the conversation even more.

Ananthamurthy's work offers a wider societal critique that is echoed in Valmiki's experiences as a Dalit struggling against the deeply ingrained caste system. *The God of Small Things* by

Arundhati Roy explores the persistent obstacles of caste via a sad love tale, highlighting the social and personal sacrifices associated with upholding caste purity. Roy's examination of caste is similar to the main issues in *Samskara*, in which customs impede personal aspirations and moral reflection.

Critical caste theory's theoretical foundations are essential for a complex comprehension of casteism in *Samskara*. Ananthamurthy's story well captures the structural and systemic aspects of caste oppression, which are emphasised by academics such as Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarukkai. Their research sheds light on the fundamental mechanisms that perpetuate caste hierarchies and shows how *Samskara* challenges these deeply ingrained systems.

The famous book *Annihilation of Caste* by B.R. Ambedkar offers a critical analysis of the caste structure and argues for its total abolition. The transforming arc of Praneshacharya in *Samskara*, who starts to doubt the legitimacy of strict caste standards, resonates with Ambedkar's theories. Lastly, Anand Teltumbde's *The Persistence of Caste* explores caste violence in the modern day, highlighting the continued significance of Ananthamurthy's criticism and providing a contemporary setting for the problems portrayed in *Samskara*. *Annihilation of Caste*, a foundational text by B.R. Ambedkar, advocates for the full destruction of the caste system and offers a critical critique of it. The transforming journey of Praneshacharya in *Samskara*, who starts to doubt the legitimacy of strict caste standards, is reflected in Ambedkar's ideas. Finally, Anand Teltumbde's *The Persistence of Caste* explores caste violence in the modern day, highlighting the continued significance of Ananthamurthy's criticism and providing a contemporary setting for the problems portrayed in *Samskara*.

These linked works and theoretical stances substantially enhance the investigation of casteism in Samskara. By stressing both historical continuities and the ongoing difficulties with caste discrimination in contemporary India, they jointly offer a thorough grasp of caste dynamics. With the help of this comprehensive analysis, Ananthamurthy's book becomes clear as a potent critique of caste oppression and provides important insights into the social and human costs associated with upholding such inflexible structures.

A thorough grasp of caste dynamics is provided by the review of the literature on casteism in Samskara, which is backed up by relevant works and critical caste theory. When taken as a whole, these sources show both historical continuity and the ongoing difficulties with caste discrimination in contemporary India, establishing Samskara as a potent critique of caste oppression and an in-depth investigation of the social and human costs of upholding strict hierarchies.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The dissertation will pursue four primary goals in order to accomplish this aim.

It will start by performing a thorough literary study of "Samskara," paying particular attention to theme components, narrative structure, and character development. This entails closely examining the text to determine how Ananthamurthy depicts social relationships, individual identities, and caste structures. We'll pay close attention to how the characters' caste positions affect their choices and behaviour, as well as how the narrative structure either supports or contradicts established caste norms.

The second goal is to tie the themes of casteism to current caste issues by placing them within the larger socio- historical framework of India, especially around the time when "Samskara" was written. A detailed analysis of historical writings, sociological research, and other literary works that discuss caste dynamics would be required for this.

The dissertation will demonstrate how "Samskara"'s themes are still relevant today and how they speak to caste- related issues by placing the book in its historical and cultural context.

Thirdly, to use critical caste theory as a framework to analyse "Samskara." This theoretical approach will provide insights into the power dynamics and social stratification that underlie the caste system, helping to deconstruct the systemic basis of casteism as it is portrayed in the novel. The dissertation use critical caste theory to demonstrate how caste shapes the lives and relationships of the characters in the story by acting as an ideological and structural force.

The fourth goal is to examine and assess the criticism of "Samskara" with reference to how casteism is portrayed, using reviews, reader comments, and scholarly critiques. This entails evaluating the various ways in which academics and critics have construed the novel's handling of casteism and the ways in which these construals have influenced the larger scholarly conversation on caste in literature. The dissertation will offer a thorough grasp of the influence and significance of the novel by analysing the critical reception.

In the end, this research seeks to advance knowledge of caste dynamics and add to the scholarly conversation on casteism in literature. The results will be shared via talks and articles in academic journals in an effort to stimulate more conversation and investigation into the subject.

1.4 Research Methodology

A thorough qualitative research approach will be used in this dissertation to investigate the research issue of casteism in U.R. Ananthamurthy's "Samskara." This strategy aims to provide a multifaceted understanding of the novel's depiction of caste through the use of numerous important techniques, such as literary analysis, historical contextualization, and theoretical examination.

This study's main component will be a thorough literary examination of "Samskara." In order to investigate how Ananthamurthy portrays caste dynamics, prejudice, and social hierarchies, a detailed reading of the text will be required. We'll pay close attention to how characters are portrayed, how they interact, and what social conventions influence their actions. Through an examination of the novel's narrative structure, dialogue, and descriptive sections, the study aims to reveal the subtle and overt instances of casteism.

The dissertation will use ideas from Critical Caste Theory in order to enhance the analysis even more. The novel's structural injustices and power dynamics will be easier to analyse thanks to this theoretical framework. Understanding Critical Caste Theory, which looks at caste as an omnipresent system of privilege and oppression, is crucial to understanding the novel's critique of caste-based societal stratification. Through the use of this theoretical framework, the study will investigate how 'Samskara' both reflects and subverts the deeply ingrained caste standards.

Thematic analysis will also be utilised to find and examine recurrent caste-related motifs and symbols. This approach will highlight the text's deeper meanings, such as the ways in which caste divisions are upheld and maintained through the employment of religious ceremonies, purity, and pollution. In order to comprehend how the themes of death, rebirth, and moral quandaries relate to caste issues, they will also be carefully examined. Finally, secondary

sources including as academic papers, critical essays, and earlier studies on "Samskara" and caste in literature will be consulted throughout the dissertation. These resources will give this research a more comprehensive scholarly context and assist in placing it within already-conducted scholarly conversations.

Through the integration of literary analysis, historical context, thematic analysis, and Critical Caste Theory, this technique endeavours to furnish an exhaustive and refined examination of casteism in 'Samskara,' so augmenting comprehension of the book and its socio-cultural ramifications.

Chapter2: Caste and Rituals in Samskara

U.R. Ananthamurthy's "Samskara" delves deeply into the customs and caste dynamics of a rural Karnataka Brahmin community. The book explores the complex social structure of the hamlet, where religious customs and caste-based hierarchies govern day-to-day interactions. The main character, Praneshacharya, is faced with moral and traditional dilemmas when deciding whether to perform death rituals for Naranappa, a community member who lived a non-traditional lifestyle in defiance of Brahminical standards.

The main topics of "Samskara" by U.R. Ananthamurthy are caste and rituals, which profoundly influence the lives and moral quandaries of the people in a Karnataka Brahminical village. The social hierarchy is defined by caste, which also sets expectations for society and influences people's identities and interactions. The highest level of this hierarchy is embodied by characters like the venerated Brahmin scholar Praneshacharya, who enjoys privilege and position by inheritance, while lower caste women like Chandri experience marginalisation and persecution.

Religious and social rituals play a major role in the story, marking cultural boundaries and enforcing caste divisions. Rituals shape the rhythm of village life and signify loyalty to tradition. They range from daily prayers and sacrifices to complex funeral ceremonies. But ritual performance also turns into a battlefield for existential crises and moral disputes, especially in light of Chandri's passing. Because of Chandri's death, Praneshacharya is forced to examine his own views and social mores in light of the tight borders between caste purity and defilement. The conflict over whether to carry out Chandri's final rites highlights the caste system's inconsistencies and duplicity as well as the difficulties of exercising personal autonomy within a rigidly established social order.

The novel "Samskara" explores the complex social systems and cultural customs that guide the lives of the Brahmin society through the theme of caste and rituals. The novel examines how deeply rooted social norms and religious conventions impact individual identities, relationships, and community dynamics through the perspective of caste and rituals. The strict caste system, which determines a person's social standing and functions within the community, is a major component of this theme. The highest caste, the Brahmins, enjoy social privileges and are supposed to preserve the purity and sanctity of their caste by closely following traditions and rituals. Social order is upheld and caste boundaries are reinforced by the conduct of rituals such as daily prayers, sacred offerings, and purification procedures. In addition to being religious observances, these rituals serve as social identity and status markers, indicating who is accepted into and rejected from the society.

In addition, the story highlights women's subservient status within the Brahmin community by examining the intersection of gender and caste norms and traditions. Women's tasks are primarily limited to household chores and reproductive activities, and they are required to uphold stringent norms of conduct and chastity. As she negotiates her own needs for autonomy and self-expression within the constraints of a strict patriarchal society, Chandri represents the problems encountered by women who are bound by patriarchal and casteist traditions. The novel's characters grapple with moral and existential questions against the backdrop of caste and rituals. Praneshacharya, the main character, struggles to balance his moral commitments as a caring human being with his religious responsibilities as a Brahmin. His meeting with Naranappa, the outcaste woman, and the moral conundrum that arose from it—namely, whether or not to carry out her burial rites—makes caste-based discrimination's hypocrisy and contradictions clear. The internal struggle of Praneshacharya is a reflection of the larger fight in caste-based cultures between duty and desire, modernity and tradition.

"Samskara" presents a multifaceted critique of Brahminical society and its repressive mechanisms through its examination of caste and rituals. It asks readers to consider the moral conundrums that people ensnared in the system face as well as the pervasive legacy of caste-based discrimination.

There are three segments to the plot line. The first section introduces the readers to the rigorous rituals of the static Brahmin agrahara, who are now disturbed by the death of a hedonist named Naranappa and his burial rites. The novel's second section is set in a forest outside of an agrahara, where Acharya went to seek a solution from Lord Maruti. However, he returned and was reborn after marrying Chandri, a member of the lower caste who was the deceased Naranappa's mistress. A recurrent theme in allegories, Acharya's journey into his own self and away from the agrahara's communal rules is explored in the novel's last section. Praneshacharya is heavily involved in the corrupt agrahara at the start of the book.

He learns in the second section that, as a result of his union with the pariah Chandri, he can no longer be accommodated inside the rigid framework of the agrahara. The novel's third section centres on his quest for a role. Praneshacharya always considered himself to be fundamentally a Brahmanic code.

The community's reaction to the death of Brahmin Naranappa, who broke caste rules, reveals the complex web of inflexible caste dynamics at play. Death rites are not just private matters in a caste-based culture; they are intricately linked to ideas of impurity and purity, which shape communal interactions and collective acts. Because of Naranappa's deviation from traditional Brahmin behaviour, the status quo is called into question, which has far-reaching consequences that are ingrained in caste hierarchies and beliefs that date back hundreds of years.

Cleanliness and pollution are the guiding concepts that control social interactions, and caste standards impose strict boundaries and hierarchies. The delicate balance of purity that is painstakingly maintained within the community is upset in the case of Naranappa by his transgression of caste values. As the highest caste in the hierarchy, brahmins are supposed to follow some very severe rules of behaviour in order to maintain their high respect. In addition to damaging one's image, breaking these rules jeopardises the Brahmin caste's reputation for collective purity. For this reason, people view Naranappa's conduct as a challenge to the fundamentals of caste-based society in addition to being a personal violation.

The way the community reacted to Naranappa's passing reflects the deep-rooted caste prejudices and the fear of contamination that accompanied his deviation from socially acceptable behaviour. According to ideas of purity and pollution based on caste, interacting with people who are considered impure could tarnish one's own caste standing, which could result in social exclusion and ostracism. Thus, the community's unwillingness to participate in Naranappa's funeral rites is motivated by a desire to preserve caste systems and protect their own purity. Taking part in his funeral rites runs the risk of being viewed as endorsing his behaviour, which could lead to societal disapproval and caste status loss.

Beyond the domain of burial customs, Naranappa's passing has far-reaching consequences that serve as a sobering reminder of the persistent power dynamics ingrained in caste-based society. Rigid caste rules are enforced, depriving people of agency and sustaining birth-based social inequalities, all of which contribute to structural inequity. The death of Naranappa illustrates how caste-based purity and pollution conceptions are oppressive since they are social control mechanisms that uphold norm compliance and keep marginalised populations in a state of subjection.

In addition, the community's reexamination of the intersections between gender and caste is prompted by Naranappa's passing. Brahmin women who violate caste conventions face worse consequences than Brahmin men, such as Naranappa, who are required to live by rigid codes of conduct. The stringent observance of purity standards puts additional pressure on women to maintain caste position and family honour, thus limiting their autonomy and sustaining gender inequality in caste-based society.

Naranappa's passing draws attention to the contradictory character of caste-based purity, which coexists with a variety of impurities that are supported by societal injustice and systematic discrimination. The marginalised caste communities face institutional discrimination and untouchability, which makes them perennially impure in the perspective of the dominant caste groups, while Brahmins like Naranappa are held to strict purity standards. Caste-based purity therefore functions as a social control mechanism, maintaining the privilege of dominant caste groups while sustaining the enslavement of other communities.

A powerful depiction of caste prejudice is shown in Mulk Raj Anand's "Untouchable" via the eyes of Bakha, an untouchable kid who is constantly marginalised and humiliated by a society that views him as inferior and impure. The book highlights the cruelty of caste-based discrimination and how it dehumanises people like Bakha. Additionally, Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" delves into the intricacies of caste relations in Kerala, India, by examining the forbidden love between lower-caste twins and the consequences their relationship faces in a community sharply divided by caste stereotypes. The book emphasises how caste affects people's relationships and lives despite what relationships and lives despite what they want out of life and what society expects.

These books illuminate the nuances of custom, identity, and social justice in many cultural contexts by providing rich and varied viewpoints on caste and rituals. They encourage readers to consider the prospects for resistance and change while critically analysing the oppressive and power systems present in caste-based communities.

The fundamental beliefs of the Brahmin community are called into question by Naranappa's life and death. Despite coming from a Brahmin family, Naranappa defies the strict rules of his caste by engaging in actions deemed sacrilegious, like eating meat, drinking alcohol, and hanging out with people from lower castes. His way of life questions the fundamentals of caste identification and the religious obligations that go along with it because it stands in sharp contrast to the austere and devout image that Brahmins have historically maintained. Thus, the community faces a serious dilemma after his death as they attempt to balance their religious obligations with the truth of Naranappa's disobedience.

An uprising in the agrahara is caused by the passing of Naranappa, who had rejected Brahminical customs. His eating habits, drinking, and sleeping with a woman from a lower caste, Chandri, had already made him a social outcast. Nonetheless, he is still eligible for some ceremonial respects upon his passing as a Brahmin. Brahmins in the agrahara are faced with a moral and religious conundrum: either carry out his final rites and incur the risk of ritual impurity, or decline and transgress their sacred obligations.

The idea of ceremonial purity and contamination lies at the heart of the dispute. Brahmins are considered to be the purest caste within the caste system and are in charge of upholding purity and religious rites. The community's sanctity is under jeopardy due to Naranappa's deeds, which are perceived as polluting. When the Brahmins refuse to touch his body or carry out the required ceremonies out of fear of contamination, it is clear that they are obsessed with cleanliness.

The erudite and pious head of the agrahara, Praneshacharya, personifies the conflict between the necessity for compassion and pragmatism and the rigid observance of religious rites. His first reaction, which emphasises his dependence on conventional authority, is to turn to religious literature for advice. But the books don't provide a definitive answer, which illustrates how religious orthodoxy can't effectively handle complicated issues in everyday life. Praneshacharya undergoes an inward metamorphosis that is sparked by his final meeting with Chandri, a figure who stands for both purity and devotion. He is forced by this encounter to face both the shortcomings of a dogmatic, ritualistic approach to spirituality as well as his own suppressed urges. His spiritual crisis raises the possibility that genuine spirituality exists somewhere outside of caste-based prejudice and ceremonial purity.

In analysing the intersection of gender and caste norms, Chandri's function is essential. Although she is devoted to Naranappa and is prepared to spend her fortune to pay for his funeral, her lower-caste background casts doubt on her offerings. This emphasises how religious practices are controlled by patriarchy and caste. The Brahmins' ideas of purity and their control over social and religious conventions are called into question by Chandri's presence and deeds.

The book criticises religious orthodoxy's inherent hypocrisy. The Brahmins' unwillingness to carry out Naranappa's final rites exposes their moral weakness and shows their fear of defilement above their religious obligation. Their arguments and defences reveal a society more preoccupied with preserving social order and ceremonial purity than it is with empathy or moral conduct.

The book shows how customs and rituals, such funeral rites and following rules, serve as social control tools that shape relationships and behaviour in the group. By defining roles and

responsibilities according to an individual's caste identity, these rituals serve to both safeguard traditional values and maintain the hierarchical caste structure.

Furthermore, the community's strong feeling of identity and belonging is fostered by the rigorous observance of rituals, which also serve to exclude outsiders and promote social cohesion. Thus, "Samskara" illustrates the intricate relationship between religion, tradition, and social order in Indian culture by using religious rites as a tool for upholding caste-based social systems as well as a method of conserving tradition.

As a Brahmin, Praneshacharya is indoctrinated from birth into a rigid caste hierarchy, where purity and adherence to caste rules are paramount. His identity is deeply intertwined with his caste, shaping his worldview and guiding his actions. Thus, when confronted with a situation that challenges these norms, he faces a profound internal conflict.

A lower-caste woman named Chandri approaches Praneshacharya for assistance with her late husband's burial customs, and this serves as the impetus for Praneshacharya's moral crisis. In spite of his first hesitation, Praneshacharya crosses the barriers imposed by caste segregation and enters into a romantic connection with Chandri. His passions and his social obligations collide as a result of this transgression, pushing him to face the complexities and hypocrisy of the caste system.

Praneshacharya is under tremendous pressure to maintain caste restrictions, both from outside social pressures and from his own internalised beliefs and fears of rejection. He struggles with his fear of being judged by society, losing his status, and having his sense of self disrupted. His status as a respected Brahmin leader further adds to the scrutiny he endures because people from both his community and the larger society watch what he does.

Furthermore, Praneshacharya is left adrift in a sea of moral uncertainty by the lack of definitive instruction from religious scriptures or traditional authority, which exacerbates his

ethical problem. His struggle to make sense of the world and find atonement while navigating the muddy waters of social expectations and personal conscience becomes a major subject.

In the end, Praneshacharya's journey in "Samskara" offers a moving examination of the ambiguities and conflicts present in caste society, stressing the ongoing conflict between custom and personal autonomy as well as the ability of moral agency in the face of repressive social structures.

Chapter3: Religion and Caste in Samskara

Of all the elements of Indian social and cultural life, religion and caste are arguably the most significant. Research has been done to support the repeated accusations that Hinduism is the source of casteism, despite the numerous attempts at religious and caste criticism.

Caste and religion are major factors in "Samskara," influencing the story and the identities of the characters. Religion: The story takes place in a Brahminical culture with strong Hindu religious ties. The characters' interactions and behaviours are determined by religious rites, customs, and beliefs. The main character, Praneshacharya, is a devoted Brahmin priest whose life is dedicated to carrying out religious rituals and maintaining the caste's purity. But Praneshacharya's meeting with a woman of a lower caste, Chandri, calls into question his religious beliefs and makes him consider the moral consequences of his conduct within the context of his faith.

"Samskara" is a powerful critique of casteism and a poignant study of the complexities of caste-based societies. Through its beautifully drawn characters and poignant narrative, the novel exposes the injustices and inequalities perpetuated by caste norms and rituals while also providing insights into the possibility of resistance and transformation. Readers are compelled to consider their own part in the perpetuation of caste prejudice as well as envision a more equitable and just future by the protagonists' moral dilemmas and existential crises. As a result, "Samskara" acts as a timeless reminder of the prevalence of casteism and the urgent need for collective effort to end caste-based discrimination and create a society based on the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity for all. Murthy explores this subject by using the persona of Praneshacharya, a Brahmin who is revered as the "crest jewel of Vedic learning" in South India and is well-known for his scriptural expertise.

Caste is a basic feature of Indian society that is portrayed in "Samskara."The caste associations of the characters have a significant impact on their identities, social standing, and interpersonal interactions. Because of his Brahmin caste, Praneshacharya enjoys privileges and influence in the community, but he also has to adhere to rigid rules and expectations. In particular, Praneshacharya's internal conflict over how to balance his caste responsibilities with his own aspirations and moral convictions serves as a lens through which the novel examines the intricacies and contradictions of the caste system. A large portion of the narrative conflict and thematic investigation in "Samskara" stems from the tensions originating from caste relations.

Caste is yet another significant topic that the book addresses.It looks into the impact of caste on individuals from various castes as well as whether it originated in religion.The first obvious distinction between Brahmins and those of lower castes is the complexity of their social lives.The untouchables lead extraordinarily basic lives, while Brahmins lead complex lives.this is obvious from the title of the story which also signifies the last rituals of a person, for Brahmins this is a highly complex affair since they are forbidden to eat anything while the uncremated body is lying there in the agrahara.

Furthermore, there are numerous ceremonies associated with the last cremation rites, and numerous things are at risk. Because Naranappa did not live a traditional Brahmin's life, the Brahmins fear that by cremating him, they may lose their status as Brahmins. The cremation procedures of the untouchables, who just leave the remains and "fire the huts" (Samskara, 40), are compared to this intricate ritualistic event.

The protagonist of "Samskara," Praneshacharya, is a Brahmin whose identity is fundamentally derived from his caste. Praneshacharya, being a Brahmin, holds a special place in the caste system and is bestowed with both social and religious power. Nevertheless, the

sacredness of caste boundaries is upset and the frailty of caste identities is revealed by his meeting with Chandri, a woman from a lower caste. The internal strife that Praneshacharya experienced is a reflection of the difficulty that exists between respecting caste customs and facing the ethical ramifications of discrimination based on caste.

The novel "Samskara" explains how caste operates as a system of social control, regulating behaviour and enforcing hierarchical divisions. Ananthamurthy exposes the subtle nature of caste oppression through Praneshacharya's struggle, showing how even those at the top of the caste hierarchy are subject to its limitations. Praneshacharya's existential crisis acts as a microcosm of the larger societal injustices sustained by caste, emphasising the ways in which caste norms restrict individual autonomy and maintain social stratification. Critical caste theory provides a lens through which to analyse the power dynamics inherent in caste society as represented in "Samskara."

A framework for examining the power relationships present in caste-based societies is provided by critical caste theory, which also highlights the connections between caste and other types of oppression including gender and class. In "Samskara," caste is seen as a tool of dominance and exclusion as well as a system of social stratification that is supported by cultural norms and religious doctrine.

The conflict between caste and religion in the book is personified by Praneshacharya. Praneshacharya strictly follows the customs and ideals of the Brahmin community as a scholar and moral leader. But when he meets Chandri, a lady from a lower caste, it upends his moral compass and pushes the limits of caste and religion. The psychological battle of Praneshacharya represents the tension between following tradition and yearning for personal autonomy and authenticity.

The paradoxes and hypocrisy present in Brahminical society are also explored in the novel. Even while Brahmins like Praneshacharya uphold high standards of morality and cleanliness, they are frequently consumed by their own wants and frailties. The non-Brahmin Naranappa, who disobeys social conventions and engages in pleasure-seeking pursuits, acts as a counterbalance to Praneshacharya's moral rectitude. The novel criticises the arbitrary nature of social hierarchy and the hypocrisy of caste-based morality through Naranappa's deeds.

In "Samskara," religion is a major factor in maintaining caste divisions. Lower castes are viewed as inferior and impure, and caste oppression is justified and sustained by brahminical rites and beliefs. But the book also questions how religion and social justice are related, casting doubt on the notion that moral goodness and religious piety are synonymous. Because of his existential crisis, Praneshacharya is forced to acknowledge the limitations of his religious convictions and the need for a more inclusive and loving worldview.

U.R. Ananthamurthy's famous novel "Samskara" explores the intricacies of caste, religion, and social conventions in rural India. The novel's topics can be examined via the prism of critical caste theory. The protagonist of "Samskara" is a Brahmin scholar named Praneshacharya, who is forced to make a moral decision after a prostitute in his town passes away. The book examines the ways in which Praneshacharya's caste and religion impact his behaviour and the responses of people around him.

A framework for analysing how caste functions as a system of privilege, oppression, and power is provided by critical caste theory, which is based on the writings of academics such as B.R. Ambedkar and others. It draws attention to how social systems including gender, class, and religion connect with caste.

In "Samskara," caste rules the village's way of life in every way. In terms of privilege and power, Brahmins are at the top of the social ladder, while Dalits are at the bottom and are subject to prejudice and marginalisation.

Praneshacharya's devotion to Brahminical customs and traditions is a reflection of the society the story portrays, which is firmly based in the caste system. With the use of critical caste theory, we may comprehend that caste is a dynamic structure that influences people's interactions and identities rather than only a static social category. The psychological struggle that Praneshacharya experienced-being split between his moral obligations and his Brahmin duties-illustrates the difficulties that arise with balancing personal morality with caste conventions.

Hinduism in particular is a major factor in the continuation of caste systems in "Samskara." The social hierarchy is upheld by the purity-pollution worldview that is intrinsic to Brahminical Hinduism, which includes customs and rituals intended to uphold the superiority of the higher castes. Ananthamurthy does not, however, present religion in a uniform manner. The book criticises the repressive parts of religious dogma through characters like Chandri, a lady from a lower caste who opposes Brahminical authority. We can examine how religious institutions support caste hierarchies and advance the interests of dominant castes with the aid of critical caste theory.

Additionally, "Samskara" examines the difficulties of personal agency in the context of the caste system. Even though Praneshacharya is constrained by religious obligations and social conventions, his encounters with the nonconformist Naranappa underscore the potential for defiance and subversion. The significance of recognising caste privilege and participation in the continuation of caste-based oppression is emphasised by critical caste theory. The path

that Praneshacharya took to become self-aware and engage in moral introspection illustrates the transformational power of facing one's own privilege and opposing oppressive structures.

"Samskara" provides a critical caste theory-based, nuanced examination of religion and caste. The story asks readers to consider the intricacies of morality, power, and identity in a caste-ridden society by exploring the intersections of religion, caste, and individual action.

Religion and caste become central themes as the villagers struggle with the appropriate rituals and practices to deal with Naranappa's death. Praneshacharya, torn between his religious duties as a Brahmin and his moral conscience, embarks on a journey of self-discovery and existential turmoil. His struggle to reconcile religious orthodoxy with individual morality highlights the tensions between tradition and modernity, orthodoxy and dissent. Naranappa's death upends the traditional order of the village and causes a moral crisis among the residents.

Narasimha, the nephew of Praneshacharya, represents the modern-educated Brahmins whose arrival exacerbates the clash between tradition and progress. The traditional authority of the village elders and the stronghold of Brahminical orthodoxy are challenged by Narasimha's secular education and liberal viewpoints. His presence represents the disintegration of conventional values and the rise of new, caste- and religion-neutral social processes.

Ananthamurthy contrasts religious rites and philosophical discussions with the harsh realities of caste tyranny and social injustice throughout the entire book. The individuals' battles to understand caste and religion's complexity are a reflection of larger societal conflicts between orthodoxy and reform, tradition and progress.

In "Samskara," caste and religion play significant roles in influencing the lives and outcomes of the characters and illustrating the complex fabric of Indian society. The novel presents a profound meditation on the complexity of identity, community, and human existence in a

caste-ridden society through its examination of religious traditions, social dynamics, and moral dilemmas.

By questioning the customary caste-based exclusion from religious rites, Chandri's participation in "Samskara" offers a critical viewpoint on how caste and religion connect in Indian society. Chandri challenges the conventional power structures as a woman of lower caste who opposes Brahminical orthodoxy and expresses her agency in the face of marginalisation and prejudice. A powerful critique of the caste system and its repressive practices is offered by Chandri's character. Because of her lower caste rank, Chandri is not allowed to participate in religious events or Brahminical rituals, yet she does not take her marginalised status lying down. Rather, she defies accepted conventions and claims her equality and dignity as a religious person.

Chandri bravely asserts her agency and refuses to be silenced by caste-based discrimination, challenging the traditional power dynamics and exposing the hypocrisy inherent in Brahminical orthodoxy. Her defiance of caste-based exclusion from religious rituals highlights the inherent injustice and discrimination perpetuated by the caste system, particularly against marginalised communities. This is one of the most significant instances of Chandri challenging caste-based exclusion. Chandri confronts Praneshacharya, the Brahmin protagonist, and demands her right to perform funeral rites for Naranappa, a non-conformist who defied Brahminical authority.

Furthermore, Chandri's role emphasises the intersections between gender and caste, showing how oppression and prejudice against women from lower castes are perpetuated. Chandri is a lady from a lower caste who stands at the bottom of the social order and experiences discrimination on two fronts: caste and gender. Thus, her opposition to being excluded from religious rites on the basis of caste has additional significance as a feminist critique of

patriarchal systems that uphold caste oppression. Ananthamurthy asks readers to consider how caste and religion interact to maintain marginalisation and inequality through the lens of Chandri's story. The bravery with which Chandri defied Brahminical orthodoxy serves as a potent reminder of the agency and resiliency of marginalised communities in the face of structural injustice.

By upending the custom of caste-based exclusion from religious rites, Chandri's role in "Samskara" provides a critical viewpoint on how caste and religion intersect in Indian society. Her rejection of Brahminical dogma upends established power structures and highlights the larger fight for equality and social justice in a caste-based society.

Praneshacharya represents the ideas of Brahminical purity and superiority at the start of the book. He believes in the integrity of his Brahmin identity and the superiority of Brahminical culture, thus he faithfully follows caste norms and traditions. Because of his deep commitment to caste, Praneshacharya is initially disgusted by the idea of conducting burial rites for Naranappa, a member of a lower caste who led an unconventional life. But Praneshacharya is forced to face his own moral ambiguity and deceit after Naranappa's passing. As the community looks to him for direction on how to handle Naranappa's passing, Praneshacharya experiences mixed feelings and finds it difficult to balance his moral principles with his religious convictions. His internal conflict is a reflection of the conflicts that run throughout the book between morality and tradition, orthodoxy and rebellion.

As he starts to doubt the validity of Brahminical authority and the equity of caste-based discrimination, Praneshacharya's changing views on caste standards become clear. His meetings with individuals like as his nephew Narasimha, who symbolises educated Brahmins, and Chandri, who questions Brahminical orthodoxy, expose him to many perspectives and make him rethink strongly held beliefs. Praneshacharya begins to critically

examine caste rules as the story goes on, and this leads to a pivotal moral realisation where he faces the injustice and hypocrisy of the caste system. His choice to carry out Naranappa's burial ceremonies in spite of social criticism and personal misgivings represents his rejection of caste-based prejudice and his upholding of moral integrity.

Praneshacharya's eventual critique of the caste system signifies a dramatic change in his outlook from uncritical allegiance to critical introspection.

Although the author was well aware of this, some have claimed that the caste system is an inherent component of Hinduism. His article "Five Decades of my Writing" states: "The world I grew up in believed that the caste system and the hierarchies that went along with it were permanent, like rocks, and created by God" (2007:17). By creating the persona of Praneshacharya, the author dispels these legends. The novelist demonstrates how easy it is for others to misunderstand the Dharma when a genius like Praneshacharya can do so.

The novelist demonstrates how people can undoubtedly misunderstand the Dharma if a genius like Praneshacharya does. The account of a brahmin who was "debarred from the places of sacrifice" (Samskara, 48) due to his gambling addiction is then related by Praneshacharya in a particular episode in the book, however even in that case, the gods answered the gambler's appeal. As he states at the start of the book that he does not want to speak to Chandri because "he would be polluted," Praneshacharya himself believes in the idea of contamination (Samskara, 2)

Towards the end of the story, Praneshacharya is experiencing pollution, thus he is unwilling to eat in the temple. A common misperception is that if a polluted person eats at the temple, the temple chariot would stop moving. While Praneshacharya eats in the temple, his servants' carriage never stops. It appears that the pollution his wife's passing generated was unfounded. Similarly, the misconceptions surrounding contamination from human contact and the

untouchability system itself—which is based on the belief that some individuals are less deserving than others—need to be debunked.

Ananthamurthy encourages readers to reflect on their own role in maintaining repressive societal institutions and to work towards a world with more compassion and fairness through his journey.

The type of criticism that Ananthmurthy tried could only have been performed by a Brahmin. The fact that the book is an insider's description of a person who lived in a society that practiced untouchability makes it much more significant. The book offers a compelling analysis of the caste system, clearly demonstrating its inappropriateness in contemporary society and refuting the widespread belief that it is sanctioned by religion. Furthermore, the novel takes on even more authenticity as a social chronicle when we learn that it is partially based on the author's childhood experiences rather than being purely imaginary

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Hindu society's samskara practice, which combines caste, religion, and rituals, is a microcosm of the larger forces that influence Indian culture and social structure. As we draw to an end this lengthy investigation, it is imperative that we go over the major ideas and take stock of the revelations that have surfaced, considering the ways in which these components combine to weave the complex fabric of Hindu life and philosophy.

The rituals of passage known as samskara, which mark a person's existence from conception to death, are an essential component of social integration and cultural continuity. Hinduism's religious and philosophical foundation is strongly ingrained in these rites, which highlight the cyclical nature of life, the significance of dharma (duty), and the quest for moksha (liberation). Every samskara denotes a momentous shift, endowing it with both religious import and collective validation.

The caste system, a hierarchical social framework that has traditionally determined people's roles, responsibilities, and religious practices, is essential to the performance and importance of samskaras. The classification of people into Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and the marginalized Dalits under the varna system has had a significant impact on how samskaras are seen and understood. The complex interaction between samskara and caste emphasizes how ritual plays a key role in upholding social hierarchy and the status quo.

The Brahmins are the keepers of ceremonial purity and sacred knowledge; hence, samskaras are complex and rigorously prescribed. The holy thread ceremony, or Upanayana, is a classic example of a ritual that upholds social hierarchy. This rite, which is mostly reserved for the upper castes, signifies the beginning of formal education and spiritual discipline and

highlights the respected position of Brahmins in both the religious and educational spheres. Brahmin priests' careful execution of Vedic ceremonies solidifies their place at the top of the hierarchy of rituals.

Samskaras for Kshatriyas, the warrior class and ruling elite, place a strong emphasis on leadership and fighting prowess. Their rituals have aspects that prepare people for their eventual responsibilities as protectors and rulers, even if they share a framework with Brahmin rites. The way that their samskaras incorporate both physical training and the worship of weapons underscores the caste-specific modifications that serve their social duties.

The caste Vaishyas, who are linked to trade and agriculture, also follow samskaras that correspond to their economic roles. The emphasis on success and money in their ceremonies serves to emphasize how important they are to maintaining the material well-being of the community. Vaishya samskaras uphold a unique identity that corresponds with their social and economic obligations, but being less complex than those of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The caste Vaishyas, who are linked to trade and agriculture, also follow samskaras that correspond to their economic roles. The emphasis on success and money in their ceremonies serves to emphasize how important they are to maintaining the material well-being of the community. Vaishya samskaras uphold a unique identity that corresponds with their social and economic obligations, but being less complex than those of Brahmins and Kshatriyas.

Due to their historic caste status, Shudras have had restricted access to the official Vedic ceremonies that are reserved for the higher castes. Their samskaras are less elaborate and concentrate more on social and utilitarian themes. Shudra rites have been enriched over

time by regional variances and local customs, which have allowed them to express their cultural identity within caste-imposed limitations.

Historically disenfranchised and shut out of mainstream Hinduism, Dalits have created their own customs and rituals. Not always within the official Vedic framework, these customs help to identify important life phases and promote a feeling of belonging. As they continue to fight for social justice and acknowledgement, Dalit samskaras are being reclaimed and redefined in modern times.

Samskara and caste are closely linked notions that involve the concepts of ritual purity and contamination. The rituals performed and the relations among various castes are determined by the laws defining what is deemed pure or unclean. This is especially true during life-giving and life-ending ceremonies, where a Brahmin priest's attendance is usually considered necessary to maintain the integrity of the ceremony. Embracing the caste-based subtleties of ritual practice, the Antyeshti, or burial rites, entail complex procedures to purify the departed and the living family members.

The strict caste system and related samskara ceremonies are changing dramatically in the modern day. Caste-based disparities are being questioned and reevaluated as a result of urbanization, education, and sociopolitical movements. New, inclusive rituals reflecting the changing social landscape are being created by inter-caste marriages and the democratization of religious practices.

In order to combat the discriminatory behaviors ingrained in the caste system, the Dalit movement and other social justice initiatives have been essential. There is a growing movement arguing for everyone's right to participate in religious and cultural ceremonies, regardless of caste, and working to make samskaras available to all. The old samskara

frameworks are changing due to this inclusion movement, becoming more in line with modern ideals of social justice and equality.

The enduring caste system and its impact on samskaras continue to be complicated issues in spite of these changes. The discourse on samskara in Hindu society is still shaped by the realities of modernity and tradition clashing together, as well as the enduring prejudice based on caste. The continual development of these rituals has as its constant theme the conflict between upholding progressive values and conserving traditional heritage.

With this thorough analysis of caste, religion, and rituals in Samskara coming to an end, it is clear that these components are dynamic rather than static, always adjusting to the shifting socio-cultural environment. Hindu civilization is complex, with religious activities intricately entwined with social structures and cultural standards. This is demonstrated by the interplay between caste and samskara. Knowing this interaction offers important insights into the larger dynamics of Indian culture as well as the difficulties in balancing modernity with tradition.

Samskara practices have to be flexible enough to change and grow without losing their essential qualities. Reinterpreting and performing these rituals in a way that is guided by the pursuit of social equality and the respect of individual dignity is imperative. The reformation of samskara rituals provides an opportunity to promote a more inclusive and equitable community, even while Hindu society struggles with the effects of the caste system.

In summary, samskara's examination of caste, religion, and rituals highlights the intricacy and diversity of Hindu cultural practices. Notwithstanding their strong historical roots, many customs are subject to modern influences. A greater cultural movement towards inclusivity and social justice is reflected in the ongoing attempts to redefine and democratise

samskaras. Caste, religion, and samskara rituals will continue to interact to provide a crucial prism through which the changing dynamics of culture and identity can be understood as Hindu society navigates this transforming path.

As casteism is examined in "Samskara," the chapters "Caste and Rituals" and "Religion and Caste" highlight the complex web of social mores and religious convictions that uphold caste hierarchy in the Brahmin society that the book portrays. The story shows how deeply embedded caste standards control social interactions, customs, and traditions, establishing a strict social order where cleanliness and pollution are scrupulously monitored. This is done via the perspective of caste and rituals. Praneshacharya and other characters struggle with the burden of their caste responsibilities, illustrating the conflict between personal preferences and caste-based social norms. The relationship between Hinduism and caste identity is further explored in the chapter on religion and caste, showing how religious rituals and beliefs support caste distinctions and tolerate discrimination. The work effectively illustrates the marginalisation and exclusion experienced by people who are viewed as inferior in the caste hierarchy, highlighting the widespread existence of caste discrimination in both the secular and spiritual spheres of society. "Samskara" asks readers to confront the pervasive heritage of casteism and to think about the prospects of emancipation and social transformation within a society that is firmly rooted in caste-based oppression through its sophisticated investigation of caste dynamics.

The main theme of "Samskara" is casteism, which permeates the story in a complicated way and highlights the paradoxes and complexity present in caste-based civilizations. The novel, which is set in a rural Indian Brahmin community, examines how caste customs and norms influence social interactions, mould personal identities, and uphold oppressive regimes. The

work explores the moral quandaries and internal strife experienced by individuals constrained by the strict caste system via the persona of revered Brahmin scholar Praneshacharya. The death of Naranappa, an outcaste woman, and the ensuing quandary of carrying out her burial ceremonies test Praneshacharya's devotion to caste customs and obligations.

Praneshacharya's existential crisis is sparked by this crucial incident, as he struggles to reconcile his moral conscience and religious convictions. The tale highlights the cruelty and hypocrisy of caste-based prejudice as Praneshacharya struggles with the choice of protecting caste purity or showing sympathy for the oppressed.

"Samskara" offers a moving examination of the intricacies of caste-based civilizations as well as a potent condemnation of casteism. The novel offers insights into the potential for resistance and transformation while also exposing the injustices and inequalities supported by caste norms and rituals through its vividly rendered characters and moving story. The protagonists' moral quandaries and existential crises force readers to examine their own role in the continuation of caste discrimination as well as to imagine a more just and equal future. Thus, "Samskara" serves as a timeless reminder of the pervasiveness of casteism and the pressing necessity for group action to stop discrimination based on caste and establish a society founded on the values of justice, equality, and human dignity for all.

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