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The Dynamics of Caste, Power and Gender Construct: A Reading of U R Ananthamurthy's
Samskara and Bharathipura

Abstract:

U. R. Ananthamurthy is one of the most significant representatives of the "Navya" movement ("The new movement") in Kannada literature and is counted among the most eminent Indian authors. Both his books and his social engagement made him known far beyond the Indian language borders and later abroad. Ananthamurthy's central themes belong the examination of the caste system, religious rules and traditions, as well as the ambivalent relationship between the handed down cultural value system and the new values of a changing world. This paper makes an attempt to draw a brief analysis on the Dynamics of Caste, Power and Gender construct in Ananthamurthy's two significant novels *Samskara* (1965) and *Bharathipura* (1973). These novels intend to educate the people about the social evil practice and need to fight against it. Hence the various aspects of the novels interested me and hence inculcated in me the desire to make an attempt to draw a brief analysis of the novels selected for the study.

Keywords: Dynamics, Caste system, religion, orthodoxy, gender, power.

Introduction

U.R. Ananthamurthy is one amongst those well known writers who has employed the theme of Caste, Power and Gender construct in his novels. In his novels *Samskara* (1965) and *Bharathipura* (1973), he attacks the evil practice of casteism through the portrayals of major characters. The caste system in India is an important part of ancient Hindu tradition and dates back to 1200 BCE. Caste not only dictates one's occupation, but dietary habits and interaction with members of other castes as well. Members of a high caste enjoy more wealth and opportunities while members of a low caste perform menial jobs. Outside of the caste system are the Untouchables. Untouchable jobs, such as toilet cleaning and garbage removal, require them to be in contact with bodily fluids. They are therefore considered polluted and not to be touched. The importance of purity in the body and food is found in early Sanskrit literature. Untouchables have separate entrances to homes and must drink from separate wells. They are considered to be in a permanent state of impurity. Untouchables were named "Harijans" (Children of God) by Gandhi. He tried to raise their status with symbolic gestures such as befriending and eating with Untouchables. Upward mobility is very rare in the caste system. Most people remain in one caste their entire life and marry within their caste.

Caste System: Hierarchical representation

The novel *Samskara* (1965) written by U.R. Ananthamurthy puts light on the social evil named casteism and at the same time successfully manages to throw light upon the hypocritical attitude of the high-caste Brahmins and questions the very concept of brahminism. The novel revolves around the concept of 'Samskara' which in itself carries various connotations. The novel touches upon the various connotations of 'Samskara' at different instances in the novel. Ananthamurthy is, in fact, questioning the concept of Samskara which connotes culture, funeral rites, ritual etc. Hence the title of the novel 'Samskara' is apt as the complete novel revolves around this prevailing concept.

The significant factor about U.R. Ananthamurthy's novels is that he used a high-caste Brahmin as the protagonist to unveil the clear picture of the Brahmin community. Basically, his novels revolves around the social theme in his novel *Samskara* (1965) and the same approach of portraying a high-caste Brahmin as the protagonist rebelling against the norms set by the society where he lives. The novel can be termed philosophical to as it focuses on a lot of questions such as: what is meant by leading a right life, the validity of customs leading a right life, the validity of customs and traditions, who is a real Brahmin etc. As it was written

in an era when Brahminism was highly valued, the novel invited for itself contradiction and people's wrath. Consequently, it turned out to be U.R. Ananthamurthy's controversial novel. The characterization of the decaying Brahmin community was the prior reason in regarding or considering it as a controversial novel of U.R. Ananthamurthy's.

The novel is in fact of U.R. Ananthamurthy's an oldest and unanswered question in the history of mankind i.e., the uncertainty on the distinction as to what is good and what is bad. This question of course would have been discussed and argued about in the older times. Still, none have found a satisfactory answer or a reasonable answer for it. It is really incomprehensible that in an era which is regarded to be the age of absolute knowledge and freedom, one hasn't arrived to a satisfactory conclusion for this eternal question. This novel *Samskara* (1965) concentrates on this eternal question and attempts to take a deeper look at the perpetual paradox of "Good" and "Bad".

The novel is set in the early Twentieth century India demarcating the thin line between the so called conflicting moral values as defined and viewed by society. Traits of gluttony, lust and greed within the Brahmins are well-portrayed and hence implying that there are the inherent traits of human beings beyond boundaries of caste traits of human beings beyond boundaries of caste and greed. The novel, in fact, is stressing the fact that the traits in human beings are the same irrespective of the caste or creed they belong to. The novel is especially relevant to today's transient world where these issues are being questioned, challenged and debated as ever. On the whole, the novel carries in it a serious portrayal of a social issues that would surely make the reader think and reflect on convention and values that are part of the foundation of and social framework.

A quick summary of the novel would clearly make the things discussed in the above paragraphs explicit. The novel is set against the backdrop of the death of a rebelling member of orthodox clan of Brahmins, Naranappa. Naranappa was indulged in all the activities which were against Brahminism. As a result, after his death, none of them were ready to perform his last rites for fear of sullyng their caste. They take the issues to Praneshacharya, the most respected person in the community known for his knowledge, wisdom and sanctity. Praneshacharya looks out for an apt solution in scriptures but in vain. Later, he retires to mediate before Lord Maruti, seeking God's verdict to dispose the body. The Brahmins by then move out to the neighboring colony and monastery to assist them in finding a solution. Meanwhile, Naranappa's rotting corpse causes plague to arrive at a decision, Praneshacharya

stumbles out of the temple and in a spur of moment makes love with Chandri, the low-caste mistress of Naranappa. This liaison marks a turning point in Praneshacharya's life. After his wife's cremation who succumbs to plague who had reversed him until then as a learned teacher. Though he runs away from his native surroundings, Praneshacharya comes face to face with his real self and he realizes that he is basically no different from the hedonistic Naranappa. He contemplates on his past life as he walks aimlessly through the vague adjoining villages. The novel ends with Praneshacharya's return to the agrahara in a state of confusion that portrays the paradox central to the theme of the novel. In keeping with the essence of this theme, the book brings up several questions and highlights various aspects in accordance with and in contract to established norms, without offering any specific solution. Indeed, it confirms that there is no specific solution.

Ananthamurthy questions discrimination through the caste system, the repressive belief practice of the Brahmins, the repressive belief practice of the Brahmins. The novel *Bharathipura* (1973) is about an attempt to abolish the caste system. The novel again has a high-caste Brahmin as a protagonist who is rebelling against the caste system. Jagannatha goes back to his home town, which is bound to tradition, after studies in England and tries to change the social structures there. He wants to enable the untouchables to enter the temple and with this meets the resistance of the higher castes. His attempt to create a just system around him and with this inner freedom fails.

Hierarchical representation based on the caste and creed one belongs to has been a widely discussed topic from ancient times. Naranappa, a Brahmin by birth, pollutes his caste by the sacrilegious acts. He led an unbrahminical kind of life. And hence after his death, the question as to who would do the funeral rite arises. This significant question in the novel brings about the corrupted brahminical community to the forefront. Praneshacharya known for his holiness, knowledge and wisdom, who had led an ideal life in his whole life succumbs to failure in his attempt to find an apt solution for Naranappa's cremation. The novel brings to the fore many significant questions. The reader is left with the dilemma of what is it to be a Brahmin, the blind following of the age old culture is considered as brahminical. If so, what are we leaving the posterity with? The posterity is expected to follow age-old tradition and to blindly adhere to them. Would the blind following of age-old custom help them in retaining their identity?

The novel is more a questionnaire than a narrative. Traits like lust and greed don't underlie brahminical nature. A true Brahmin is supposed to be beyond all such material and carnal desires. Then how, is it that Lakshmanacharya and Garudacharya are considered as Brahmins and Naranappa grouped to neither of the castes. The novel implicitly suggests that people have asserted their casteism or individual identity based on the way what they portray themselves to be rather than what they really are. It's quite evident with the portrayal of characters such as Lakshmanacharya, Garudacharya and Naranappa. India is known for its culture and tradition. But the novels of U.R. Ananthamurthy present a different picture of our conservative traditional Indian Society. People are susceptible to all. The carnal and material desires irrespective of the caste they belong to, Praneshacharya's failure is indeed the victory of Naranappa's victory implies the futility of pompous brahminical traditional and customs. If one looks deeply into the gender roles, it's the low-caste deeply into the gender roles, it's the low-caste women like Chandri who have emerged as heroines in the complete novel. They are the women who are regarded as embodiment of seductive beauty. The high caste women are given least priority. In fact, they are high lightened for their hypocritical nature. The high-caste women are portrayed as sneakish, selfish and nagging women.

There is a reversal in gender roles too. When men in agrahara including Crest jewel of Vedic Learning Praneshacharya, fail to find a solution for Naranappa's "Samskara". Chandri takes up the initiative and cremates Naranappa with the help of Ahmed Bari, without the knowledge of the villagers. Chandri's timely action in contrast to Praneshacharya's far-sighted vision in a life after death, Chandri and Naranappa believe in a life on the earth. Though Chandri and Naranappa are involved in anti-social activities, they seem to represent the characters influenced by modern thoughts, but if they are represented as ideal people, then it would be an encouragement to anti-social activities. Praneshacharya's quest for salvation lets him nowhere thus posing a serious question on the adherence towards customs and tradition.

The story also tries to find the connotation for the word 'culture' and what it is to be cultured. Are low-castes people uncultured just because they are born in a community which is regarded as low-caste by the society? Can high-caste people be considered as cultured just for their position in the society? Praneshacharya, attempts to correct Naranappa's ways go in vain. His attempts seem to be an attempt to evaluate his own superiority by gaining control on Naranappa. Praneshacharya in *Samskara* (1965) has striking similarity to *Bharathipura* Jagannatha. Jagannatha, who returns to his home town Bharathipura from England, tries to

change the social structure. He tries to enable the untouchables to enter the temple and hence confronts the resistance of the higher castes to which he belonged to. His long-planned action is sabotaged in a fraction of second by Ganesh's unthought action of digging out the idol to express his contempt for the hypocritical norms and culture of the society around him fails. And with that, even his inner freedom fails. In his plan to enable untouchables to enter the temple, he comes across many illegal and extra-marital relationships amongst the low-caste people. At the same time, is even unblinded to the fact of promiscuous relationship of high-caste men. When it came upon gratifying their sexual desire, they viewed women as sex objects and their caste as something irrelevant.

U.R. Ananthamurthy's writings analyze aspects ranging from challenges and changes faced by Brahmin families. Most of his novels are based on the duality of politics and morality in human society and reaction of individuals in each situation. Rights, wrong and change clash in his work with one another while giving the reader a kind revelation and food for further thought.

What is a good-old tradition or new outlook, politicking or duty bound traditional or modern, revolution or status quo? Ananthamurthy does not pretend to know the answers of these questions but poses these questions to the readers.

Power Hierarchy: Hypocritical outlook

To define power is an enormously complex matter. One can only attempt to examine the way in which power has been used in the arena of casteism and thus establish a power hierarchy. In the most general terms, to possess power is to have the ability to achieve whatever is desired regardless of any opposition. Power may be expressed through consent based on the perceived legitimacy of those who hold it.

India is a patriarchal country and hence the manifestation of patriarchal ideology irrespective of the religion and caste one belongs to is quite obvious. Understanding India in itself is a strenuous and complex task. Patriarchy has its own ideologies wherein the power is conferred to one section of the society and another sect of the society remains deprived of it. As discussed earlier, India is a nation with infinite number of religion, castes and sub castes. It's quite expected that one religion or one caste occupy the prominent space in the society. It was Brahminical community who enabled themselves to stand top in the power hierarchy. With the power conferred to them, people in Brahmin community struggled to observe high

standard in the society. To retain power, one had to live up to the expectation of the society and establish themselves as one with high morale and hence superior. The people who occupied the second and comparatively less superior position in the power hierarchy turned to be the watch dogs anxiously waiting for an opportunity to degrade the Brahmin community. Hence Brahmin community tried to portray themselves equal to Gods and hence decided to deprive themselves of worldly pleasures and stand holy and saintly in the eyes of the onlookers. The generation who succeeded them found it difficult to lead the high standard of life expected from them wherein they had to forbid themselves of their human instincts and suppress their feelings. It turned out to be that the basic human qualities remained the same irrespective of the caste or religion they belong to. Human beings, as a natural tendency, desires to be the ones who hold the supreme power. And hence, it appeared that the Brahmins tried to retain their power in the society by portraying themselves to be highly morale and uncorrupted souls.

With the power in the hands, the exploitation of the less powerful ones is quite obvious. This was the phase where India witnessed the exploitation of the lower sect of the society in the name of caste, colour, race and occupation. The lower stratum of society was made to feel inferior by categorizing them as untouchables. Luxury and possession of materialistic things was denied to them. They were humiliated in every spheres of society. Poverty increased their suffering. Access to education was denied thereby ensuring that the sect would not possess enough knowledge to realise the injustice done to them. Every way towards the liberalization of the underprivileged was kept closed.

With the invasion of British Empire in India, it appeared that something good was achieved with granting education to every section of the society. Though British men had their own colonial agenda behind this act, the lower strata of the society did benefit out of it. They started being retrospective about their sufferings and their position in the society.

It takes a long time to understand the injustice meted out against oneself and the need to rebel against it. It was the same with the underprivileged folk in India who started realizing that Brahmins were no different from them and hence should not let them rule over them. With the Mahatma Gandhi's initiative to gain equal right in the society, there arose significant under currents in various sections of the society. While Gandhiji began the upliftment of the Scheduled castes and tribes by renaming them as Harijans, the Sons of God, many other writers took up writing as a tool to fight against the social evil called casteism. It was not

only the lower strata who realised the injustice and started rebelling against casteism, but the educated men of Brahmin community too joined them in this fight for equality.

Casteism was regarded as a social evil as it deprived the human status to the lower strata of the society. It treated the so-called lower section of the society as untouchables and the very sight of them evoked contempt in the so-called high class of the society. It appeared that certain menial jobs like cleaning the toilet, garbage were associated with the lower strata of the society. This demarcation of jobs as an occupation of a particular class was looked down upon by the social reformers and hence demanded a radical change in this particular approach.

It was during this era, writers like U R Ananthamurthy, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand emerged. These educated young men set a new milestone through their writings. U R Ananthamurthy, who belonged to the upper strata of the society, exposed the hypocrisy and rampant evil deeds of his own folk through his writings. His works appear more authentic as he belonged to the same clan which he was writing about. His characterisation appears autobiographical as it appeared in one of his interviews where he states that his characters are mostly drawn from his real life and his stay in Brahmin agrahara. His portrayal of Brahmin protagonists can be seen as his attempt to lend authenticity to his writing where the person who knows his clan well is being skeptical about his own clan. It can also be seen as a portrayal of the educated Brahmin who seems to realise the social injustice meted out towards the low folk by his community.

The power hierarchy was questioned and India witnessed the toppling down of the power hierarchy which was achieved on the basis of colour, caste, race and creed people belonged to. There was a change in attitude towards the virtues inherent in human beings. The people appeared to be moving far away from this misconception that the birth in a particular caste does not attribute noble virtues in a human being. The lineage one belongs to does not have anything to do with the personal traits. People were made to realise that the uncorrupted souls are not a part of particular lineage but is associated with individual characters.

There is an underlying fact one can't turn blind upon. Though patriarchy seems to be irrelevant in the modern India, its manifestation can be viewed at subtle level in the various spheres. It's the same with Brahminism and Brahmin community. Though they appear to claim that they stand for equality, their sub-conscious mind still lends them the feeling of being superior. Hence, this research appears to be relevant even in the present times thereby

conveying the social truth that the caste does not attribute nobility to any human beings. The power hierarchy is at stake in the research.

An analysis of both the novels *Samskara* (1965) and *Bharathipura* (1973), one can come across this feeling of superiority in the minds of both the protagonists. Jagannatha, in the beginning of the novel *Bharathipura* (1973) appears to be enjoying the respect shown towards him by the low caste and the people in the respectable position. Influenced by the West and in an effort to uplift himself, he decides to bring the untouchables to Lord Manjunatha temple and endow them with the equal rights. Though he claims to be working towards the emancipation of the low caste folk of his village, it is quite evident that he is working towards redeeming himself in the eyes of Margaret. In the novel, there is an instance where we find Jagannatha contemplating over the consequence of the letter he has sent for publication the next day in which he had announced his decision to take the Pariahs to the village temple which was forbidden for them. The very thought of being rejected by his own kinsmen and the village sends shivers in his body. Jagannatha, being a part of the respected Brahmin community was used to being respected and hence was scared of the thought of being humiliated.

Holeyaru were being trained to rebel against the injustice meted towards them. Paradoxically, it's the fear of the learned Brahmin which forces them to do what they themselves don't want to do. Jagannatha hardly recognises the Pariahs whom he trained everyday which itself is an indication towards the inhuman attitude of the Brahmin community. He does not recognise them as individuals asserting for liberation. The picturisation of the Holeyaru entering the temple headed by Jagannatha likens to that of a shepherd driving the flock of sheep. The fact is obvious that the power still lies within the hands of the learned Brahmin Jagannatha rather than the Holeyaru. Jagannatha's intention was to emancipate Holeyaru and endow them with the equal power enjoyed by the Brahmins. The concluding part of the story suggests a contrary idea.

Jagannatha's intended action claims to bestow power on the Holeyaru. But, a close analysis of the novels brings to light the fact that Jagannatha wanted to enjoy the power he seemed to have lost over Margaret. Jagannatha could not succeed in yielding Margaret to his wishes. In the thirst to be idealized and idolized, he is criticised by Margaret for not being his 'self'. Margaret's condemnation of Jagannatha for not being his 'self' suggests a hypocrite Brahmin in him. He wanted to retain his power over Margaret by his so-called nobility. This is true of

all the Brahmins who were struggling to retain their power in the society by portraying themselves to be embodiments of Godly virtues.

Focusing on Praneshacharya, U R Ananthamurthy successfully drives home the picture of a hypocrite Brahmin who yearns to be idealized and idolized and thus retains power. He led his whole life in an attempt to redeem himself high in the eyes of the fellow men. It appears that he had concealed his true 'self' and projected an individual who blindly followed the tradition. It was his knowledge and wisdom which gained him the title of Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning and thus enjoying the supreme power in the society. When the power seemed to slip from his hand, Praneshacharya panics. After making love with Chandri, Praneshacharya hesitates to admit it as he was well aware of the consequence. He was used to being respected and hence the thought of being looked down upon scared him. Even in the instance to change Naranappa's wayward behaviour, Praneshacharya is found to be confident about the power he had in the society. It was his over confidence about his ability to change any corrupted soul with his wisdom that stops him from ex-communicating Naranappa. One can also see that Praneshacharya cherished the fact that Naranappa who did not care to follow any Brahminical ways and who disrespected other fellow Brahmins, showed a sign of respect towards Praneshacharya. Praneshacharya's decision not to ex-communicate Naranappa can be interpreted as his way to retain power over Naranappa who respected him despite his hatred for Brahminhood and its hypocritical ways.

The Dynamics of Gender Construct

The concept of gender, as we now use it came into common parlance during the early 1970s. It was used as an analytical category to draw a line of demarcation between biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviours and competencies, which are then assigned as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. The purpose of affirming sex/gender distinction was to argue that the actual physical or mental effects of biological difference had been exaggerated to maintain a patriarchal system of power and to create a consciousness among women that they were naturally better suited to 'domestic' roles and to please the men folk. Many theorists and feminists have attempted to create awareness about the misconception of gender. Gender is a social construct while sex determines the biological construct of a human body. Patriarchy has endowed men with the power on the basis of associating gender difference to the biological difference. Gender construct in the society determines the behaviourism of the men and women. Women in the society are expected to

be shy, coy, beautiful, submissive, obedient and dependent on men. Men are expected to be strong, aggressive, and independent and thus enjoy the superior position in the society.

The behaviorism associated with the sexual differences is considered to be legitimate and hence universally accepted. Women in the society are basically subjugated and marginalized owing to their biological difference. Men occupy the prominent space owing to their superior status. Women are reduced to sexual objects for the gratification of male gaze.

Feminists have criticised this approach of reducing women to a sexual object wherein they are deprived of the human status. It is then that the feminists took up analysis of the works which are accrued the status of great piece of literature by the renowned writers across the world. Most of the writings reflected the manifestation of patriarchal ideology where the female characters appeared to be marginalised and their sufferings being ignored. Even the works which claimed to be bringing about social reform in the society seemed to neglect the role of women.

Erotic Depiction of Female Characters

The analysis of U R Ananthamurthy's both the novels *Samskara* (1965) and *Bharathipura* (1973) suggest the eroticization of female characters. It appears that the novel focuses mainly on the male characters. The reference to the female characters is mostly eroticized. Chandri in *Samskara* (1965) is mentioned with reference to her bewitching beauty rather than a woman who would be deprived of shelter with the death of Naranappa. It's quite amusing to notice that the characterisation of high- caste as ugly, dwarfish with short braids actually hints at the importance of physical beauty of a woman. The depiction though tries to substantiate the superiority of the human being irrespective of the caste they are born to; it also implies the superiority gained by the women through their beauty. A woman is glorified by the means of her mesmerizing beauty she possesses.

Women appear in primarily two contexts in the novels, namely the economic and the sexual. Positive sexuality is denied to the Brahmin women so as to substantiate the promiscuous relationship the Brahmin men maintain with the low caste women. Through this binary between asexual 'good' wives and transgressing sexual women, upper caste women's subjectivity is represented reductively. Conjugally, as Brahmin wives, they are redundant, dispensable because lacking in sexual appeal. Their lack of sexual attractiveness is offered as

an excuse for both Naranappa's and Sripati's abandonment of their wives. In the story, the only role of upper caste women seems to be to provide an area of lack- their unsatisfactory role in satisfying the male sexual instinct- a lack which gives the existential quest for identity.

“Which Brahmin girl,” fantasizes Sripati, “cheek sunken, breast withered, mouth stinking of lentil soup, which Brahmin girl was equal to Belli?”(Samskara 37)

If viewed from the man's emphasis on beauty, one can't turn blind to the fact that the casteism is challenged by the protagonists when they fall in for the beauty of the low caste women or women of other community. Jagannatha challenges the casteism prevalent in his community as a means to uplift himself in the eyes of Margaret and to gain her respect. Naranappa rebels against the community when he fell in love with the bewitching beauty of Chandri. Sripati too abandons his wife and does not pay attention to the caste which Belli belonged to and the reason behind his abandonment too was the sexual appeal of Belli which his own wife lacked. The Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning Praneshacharya, the embodiment of nobility too starts being retrospective about his identity when he succumbed to his carnal desire in the hands of Chandri. While he is attracted to the prospect of freedom from such conflict by living with Chandri, and entering the prohibited world symbolized by the cock-fight:

“Praneshacharya was in a panic. He had abruptly dropped into a demoniac world. He sat down, in utter fear: if in that nether-world where he decided to live with Chandri, if in that depth of darkness, in that cave, if the cruel engagement glinting in the eyes of these entranced creatures is just a part of that world, a Brahmin like him will wilt” (Samskara 117)

“The shop was full of village women, shyly drinking soda-pop from the sweet-smelling bottles. Farmer's children. Their heads, oiled and combed sleek....Praneshacharya stood outside the world of ordinary pleasures and looked at the gathered crowd.” (Samskara 114)

Otherness, the freedom that Praneshacharya is ambivalently attracted to and repelled from, is embodied primarily in women, superficially in the lower- caste women at the fair, but primarily in Chandri and Padmavati. When Praneshacharya meets Padmavati, all of the earlier images marking his awareness of sensual life, both pleasant and violent, become

embodied in her body as she becomes the object of his gaze, reproducing the paradigm of female body and male gaze:

“Elongated dark eyes, a black snake braid coming down her shoulder over her breast. The girl swaying at the end of the bamboo pole. Knives-wings-beaks-feathers. In the forest dark, the offering of full breasts...The bird is paralyzed by the stare of the black serpent. Dread. He turned around..” (Samskara 123)

The novels, when read in the light of men’s emphasis on beauty and the reduction of female characters as sexual objects for male gaze, hardly appears to focus on the attempt to uproot the social evil called casteism.

Masculinity and Femininity

Connell has developed a social scientific analysis of masculinities as part of his broader, relational theory of gender. For Connell, gender is the end-product of ongoing interpretations of and definitions placed upon the reproductive and sexual capacities of the human body. Masculinities and Femininities can be understood, therefore, as the effects of these interpretations and definitions: on bodies, on personalities and on a society’s culture and institutions.

In Connell’s account, masculinities occupy a higher ranking than femininity in the ‘gender hierarchy’ characteristic of modern Western societies. At the top of the gender hierarchy is ‘hegemonic masculinity’, the culturally dominant ideal of masculinity centered on authority, physical toughness and strength, heterosexuality and paid work. This is an ideal of masculinity that few actual men live up to, but from which most gain advantage and so Connell calls the next level ‘complicit masculinity’. Below this in the hierarchy are ‘subordinated masculinity’, the most important of which is homosexual masculinity. More generally, this form of masculinity includes a range of masculine behaviour which does not fully match up to the macho ideals of hegemonic masculinity. At the bottom of the gender hierarchy are femininities. Femininity is always subordinated to masculinity.

Feminist writers have used the concept of patriarchy to refer to the social system of masculine domination over women. In other radical feminist accounts of patriarchy, the control men have over women’s bodies is regarded as important. Patriarchy means rule by the male head of a social unit. Walby criticises patriarchy as a system of social structures and

practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. She identifies six structures of patriarchy- household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, culture.

The invisibility of women's physical and cultural labour is to be noted in both the novels. The novel *Samskara* (1965) portrays the insecure Brahminhood at the forefront. In the effort to showcase the dilemma of the Brahmin men, women are shown as the weak points in the ritual ceremony. Women's purity is the primary concern. In the ritual economy, women's impurity indirectly affects their husband's livelihood. That is, if women are impure their men may find no way to survive, to feed themselves or their families. The text repeatedly refers to the difficulty a ritual Brahmin has in obtaining a meal. At the same time, the women are depicted as lusting after gold. When Chandri steps forward to offer her jewelry for the expenses of Naranappa's rite:

"The women calculated swiftly: that heap of gold was worth at least two thousand rupees. One after another, the wives scanned their husbands' faces. The Brahmins bowed their heads: they were afraid, fearful lest the lust for gold might destroy Brahmin purity. But in the heart of every one of them flashed the question: if some other Brahmin should perform the funeral rite for Naranappa, he might keep his Brahminhood and yet put all that gold on his wife's neck." (Samskara 10)

The greed for gold in the upper caste women is portrayed in a negative light. Readers are made to feel that the nagging wives' compel the Brahmin men to perform the contemptuous act of cremating Naranappa. It's hardly made evident that a woman character emerges out as the embodiment of selflessness in comparison to the whole Brahmin characters portrayed in the novel. Even the learned man Praneshacharya gives a second thought about the cremation of Naranappa. Women's self less unpaid labour is hardly noticed. The representations of female characters in both the novels belie the female labour behind ritual purity. The fact is Brahmin women are crucial for the ritual sustenance of the priestly Brahmin's place in the cultural hierarchy, and hence, in the context of the text, the mode of economic survival. The constant washing of clothes, of floors, of ritual purification after casual contact with the 'impure' castes, and following 'impure' states such as childbirth or dead rites, is generally the responsibility of the wife of the Brahmin. The novels don't focus on such aspects. In the novel *Samskara* (1965), the household chores done by the women is taken as casual while the man performing the same as special.

“In the middle room, ritually washed saris and clothes hung out on a rope stretched for a clothes- line. Fresh pappadams fries and marinated red peppers spread out to dry on the verandah mat.” (Samskara 10)

The above lines don't make the mention of women community who do this on routine basis. The following lines hint at the labour of the men in the production of food and earning the livelihood.

“....the Brahmins raised green and yellow cucumber or water-melon in the sand-bank as vegetables for rainy days. In the rainy season, they used cucumber for everything, curry, mash, or soup made with the seeds; and like pregnant woman, the Brahmins longed for the soups of sour mango-mash. All twelve months of the year they had vows to keep; they had calls for ritual meals occasioned by deaths, weddings, young boys' initiations....The Brahmins' lives ran smoothly in this annual cycle of appointments.” (Samskara 16)

It's noteworthy that the term “Brahmin” which is a generic term tends to refer to only men and not the women folk of the community. Hence, they are referred to as Brahmin women. The erasure of woman as subject performing the labour can be seen in the novel. The same labour is glorified through the representation of the main character, Praneshacharya as an androgynous figure who performs the labour of women. The novel establishes specialness through the hard work he performs- feeding his invalid wife, cooking and cleaning. It appears that the cooking, cleaning and washing is established as the sphere of women's work.

The man is assumed to be the decision-maker in the family. Hence, woman has no role but to obey him. They are not involved in any discussions but are portrayed engaging in conversation about jewels and money in a negative light. It's quite evident in the novel that while the Brahmin men engage in conversation, the wives are excluded. They occupy the outer fringes of the discussion. The women are held responsible for any contemptuous acts by men. They are criticised as such: ancestors' liaison with Dravidian women; great sage Shankaracharya's dalliance with the temptress queen, the modern brothels of Basrur, the mistress, the low- caste women who give in to Brahmin men, fallen Brahmin women. They are held responsible for the impurity at a particular place. While the responsibility of women for the 'identity' of the agrahara is emphasized, it is quite clear that none of the rules are mandatory for men. While women are constantly blamed in the conversation, no such clarity exists in the case of Naranappa. The following lines suggest the same.

“...he may have rejected Brahminhood, but Brahminhood never left him. No one ever excommunicated him officially” (Samskara 9)

In the novel *Bharathipura* (1973), one can find that Jagannatha panics and is extremely disturbed when he confronts the truth about his birth. The man with the revolutionary ideas and who himself develops physical relationship with Margaret before the marriage is torn by the truth about his mother's infidelity. His voyeuristic gaze at the married women's sexual appeal is not questioned. He too expects the chastity in women which he as a man does not take heed of and indulges in promiscuous relationships. Women's sexual fidelity is demanded in a world where men are free to indulge in innumerable relationships for their sexual gratification.

Succumbing to carnal desire to any women they come across is considered a normal behaviour for man. It is linked with masculinity and hence nothing disagreeable. Most of the times, it is found that women suffer struggling to meet with the gendered behaviour ascribed by the society and fellow beings. But, there are certain instances when men feel choked to meet the demands of masculinity and masculine behaviourism. For instance, in the novel *Bharathipura* (1973) Jagannatha is criticized by Margaret for not being aggressive and hence finds him unmanly.

“Look, Jagan, Chandrasekhar's spite seems more authentic to me than your nobility. One can't really feel your presence, feel that you are there. Your anguish over your incompleteness appears to be playacting, but Chander suffers more. You see, his cruelty..... he becomes real but that..... even his meanness..... But you are not enough of a man”.

Conclusion

U R Ananthamurthy in both *Samskara* and *Bharathipura* explore how the differences of caste, class and gender function through social institutions and the manner in which they affect human interactions and relationships. In addition to it, the fictional representation of an Indian dilemma premised on traditional Indian culture and ethos in a literary mode that is western. U.R.Ananthmurthy's writings analyze aspects ranging from challenges and changes faced by Brahmin families. Most of his novels are based on the duality of politics and morality in human society and reaction o individuals in each situations. Rights, wrong and change clash in his work with one another while giving the reader a kind revealation and food for further thought.

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