

# Dalits Identity and Subaltern Voices in Samskara by U R. Ananthamurthy

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## Abstract

The article explores the concept of Dalit identity and subaltern voices in India, especially in U. R. Ananthamurthy's novel "*Samskara*," it focused on the hegemonic hierarchy caste system. The central concept is the cremation of Naranappa's body, with Praneshacharya as the protagonist representing a spiritual and traditional person. The novel *Samskara* also explores the conflict between Hinduism and modern religions in India, highlighting the need for a better understanding of Dharma and cultural aspects. *Samskara*, a 1960s religious novel, is a powerful film exploring a decaying Brahmin colony in Karnataka, reworking ancient Hindu themes and providing a glossary of Hindu myths and customs. Naranappa represents a modern person, while Chandri and Belli represent Dalits. The novel explores elements of casteism, patriarchy, superstitious beliefs, and greedy personalities. Chandri not only sacrifice her jewelry, but sacrifices her body to Praneshacharya for cremation of Naranappa's dead body. Belli also a low caste, they treated as sexual object. 'Sripati doesn't like to speak with Belli but he wants sleeps with her'. Who thinks that he would be polluted, if he speaks with her? He, however, does not think that touching of body, is not polluted?

**Keywords:** Subaltern Voices, *Samskara*, Dalit Identity, Modern, Cremation, Tradition, Epic, patriarchy, Superstitious Believes, Brahmin, Anti- Brahmin, Greedy, Protagonist, polluted, Explore, India, Caste.

## Introduction

U. R. Anantha Murthy, a Kannada literary figure, is known for his novels, poetry, criticism, and short stories, influenced by Lohiate Marxist thought and Western ideology. Baburao Bagul's writings explore caste and gender relations in Indian society, highlighting the invisibility of lower classes in mainstream literature. He questions why Shudras and Athishudras were denied a place due to their commitment to aestheticism and cultural conditioning, which prioritized abstraction over living human beings.

The novel explores the identity of Dalits through the lens of two ideological structures: Non-Dalit male writers who view them as natural and upper caste male writers who capture female Dalits, creating a voiceless people consciousness in patriarchy society. Dalits' life is governed by patriarchy, with idolizing impulses often invisible. Brahmin women contrast Dalits with Brahmins, constructing binary oppositions. *Samskara*, a term in Indian philosophy, refers to mental impressions, recollections, and psychological imprints, and is also used in Buddhism and Pali.

India's caste system, over 3,000 years old, divides Hindus into four categories based on karma and dharma, with Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (rulers), Vaishyas (traders), Shudras (labourers), and Dalits (outcastes) as the four main groups.

Subaltern refers to marginalized individuals in social sciences, often overlooked or misappropriated. Subalternist studies examine emerging movements' rhetoric and actions, focusing on subalterns rather than elites.

Subaltern studies, influenced by Gramsci, emphasize cultural hegemony, asserting that subordinates are not inferior due to economic destitution but also accept hegemonic discourse. Hegemony, derived from Greek hegemony, refers to the dominant position of one group over others.

Samskara, a novel by A. K. Ramanujan, is set alongside Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Tayeb's *Season of Migration to the North*, offering existential suspense and life-and-death encounters.

The novel explores the life and existence of Brahmins and Untouchables, focusing on the conflict between tradition and modernity. Praneshacharya, a well-educated Brahmin, returns from Banaras as the 'Crest-jewel of Vedic Learning'. Naranappa's body cremation is central to the story, as he revolts against the Brahmin hood. Chandri, Belli, and Padmavati represent Dalits and Subalterns in Durvasapura. The novel introduces Dalits identity and the conflict between tradition and modernity.

U.R. Ananthamurthy's works reveal his ongoing engagement with the Brahmin male self, using three recurring modes: naturalization, magician binaries, and appropriation of the female body. He reinforces Brahmin identity by contrasting it with the dominant discourse, using female and lower caste subjects' sexualities. Samskara, Ghatashraddha, and Akkayya all feature Brahmin male patriarchy.

Lois McNay examines Michel Foucault's sexuality and its role in understanding women's experiences within culturally determined feminine images. She highlights power conception in dominant discourse, particularly in Ananthamurthy's fiction, where lower caste women are idealized sexual objects and marginalized. The narrative perpetuates upper caste male appropriation of these marginalized female bodies, highlighting the underlying project of power conception.

Samskara portrays lower caste female figures through brahminical male discourse, resembling the iconic representation of black women's sexuality in dominant white male discourse. Belli's representation as a naked body is a replica of the language that historically codes lower caste women as "always available." Brahmin society romanticizes lower caste and gendered characters as objects of upper caste male desire, dismembering them and turning parts of their bodies into fetishizes. This denies proper selfhood to marginalized subjects and reinforces their object status in the dominant discourse. The ambivalent object in the upper caste male imaginary signals both fear and desire, reinforcing the coding of sex with the body of the lower caste woman.

Ananthamurthy uses Lawrentian paradigms, influenced by D.H. Lawrence, to rework gender appropriation and caste hegemony. His works, like Samskara, mask the implicit phallic appropriation of the female body. Kate Millet discusses the agenda of controlling female sexuality, revealing the structures within which the cult of the "phallus" becomes manipulated, leading to female subjugation.

Ananthamurthy's Samskara explores the desire for domination over marginalized female body figures, particularly the upper caste male's desire for the lower caste woman. The sexualized lower caste female body serves as an instrument of "redemption" for the Brahmin male self. Pranasha's discovery of personal and sexual fulfillment in the forest leads to renewed self-consciousness, as he associates Chandri's body with nature, evoking a desire to dominate by grasping and seizing it.

The text Samskara discusses the construction of lower caste female figures as "available" within the dominant discourse, with the female body being portrayed as fertile and ready for seed. This coding of women as nature carries the implicit male desire to apprehend, dominate, and defeat, foreclosing women's sexual agency. The text also reinforces the naturalization of sexuality in the lower caste female

body by constructing Manichean binaries between the sexualities of marginalized female figures and the Brahmin women. The invalid wife of Pranasha is seen as symbolizing the Brahmin woman's frigidity, while Naranappa's dead wife is described as a "wilted" woman.

In Samskara, the protagonist, Pranasha, is repelled by his wife Bhagirathi's emaciated body and her mother's advice. The novel explores the tropes of ambivalent desire for the other, such as darkness and intoxicating flowers, which are romanticized and weave fear into desire. The exoticized representations of women's bodies and sexuality reinforce women's alienation from the dominant male discourse. The Manichean binaries construct the difference in sexualities of both male and female subjects, legitimizing their domination by the upper caste male. Romanticization is another strategy used to objectify and alienate marginalized women from the Brahmin discourse, attempting to alienate and manage female sexuality.

### Review of Literature

New York Review book, it is a tale of existential suspense, a life-and-death encounter between the sacred and the profane, the pure and the impure, the ascetic and the erotic.

Ananthamurthy described his village as a medieval colony cut off from scientific progress and governed by priests, a world where myth "had an unbroken continuity with reality."

Falguni Chaudhary reviewed, Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man explores the hierarchical structures in Brahminical Hinduism, highlighting the disintegration of values. In a post-COVID world, news of discrimination against lower caste volunteers and social workers is rising. Ananthamurthy's novel offers a post-structuralist approach to the rigid caste ideologies prevalent in Hindu discourse.

### Objectives

- To study Dalit's identity and subaltern voices in the novel
- To study the identity of Dalits through the lens of two ideological structures: Non-Dalit male writers who view them as natural and upper caste male writers who capture female Dalits, creating a voiceless people consciousness in patriarchy society.
- To study Dalits face patriarchy, idolizing impulses often invisible.
- To study Brahmin women contrast Dalits with Brahmins, creating binary oppositions.
- To study the term Samskara, in Indian philosophy, refers to mental impressions and psychological imprints.
- To study the Subaltern studies, influenced by Gramsci, focus on marginalized individuals in social sciences, examining emerging movements' rhetoric and actions, emphasizing cultural hegemony and accepting hegemonic discourse.
- To study delves into the tumultuous relationship between tradition and modernity, highlighting the significance of Praneshacharya as the 'Crest-jewel of Vedic Learning' and Naranappa's body cremation.
- To study Samskara's portrayal of lower caste female figures in brahminical male discourse, comparing them to black women's sexuality in dominant white discourse, reinforces societal romanticization and gender coding.

## Methodology

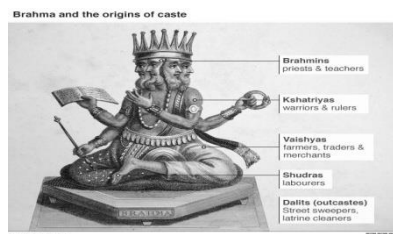
The study is based on secondary data that has been collected from various secondary sources such as books, magazines, journals, net sources. The data has been presented in the form of article and interpretations have been made in light of the objectives of the study cited above.

## Dalits identity and Subaltern voices

U. R. Anantha Murthy, a prominent Kannada literary figure, is known for his novels *Samskara*, *Bharatipura*, and *Avasthe*. He wrote poetry, criticism, and short stories, including the award-winning film *Samskara*. Murthy was influenced by Lohiate Marxist thought and Western ideology, highlighting the tension between Western modernism and social reform. His writings focus on caste and gender relations in Indian society. Upper caste writers mentioned Dalit's positions in their writings. They discussed invisibility of lower class in the works of major main-stream of writers, Baburao Bagul questions: "Why were the Shudras and the Athishudras denied a place in literature"? was it because the most of the writers were committed to the idea of aestheticism or art for its own sake, the term taken from the French, "l'art pour l'art," (Art for Art's Sake) expresses the idea that art has an inherent value independent of its subject-matter, or of any social, political, or ethical significance. They provided in the denunciation of cultural conditioning of upper-caste male writers, who considered abstraction more important than living human beings.

In this novel, identify twin ideological structures one is Non-Dalit male writers, who sees them as a natural, spontaneous primordial, while others partake them as invisible part of oppressed human society. While the former exalts them to state of idol, the later marks them off as an invisible. Explore the identity of Dalits in the theoretical formulations in *Samskara*. How the upper caste male writers are able to capture the female Dalits and they became a voiceless people consciousness in relation to the patriarchy society. Dalits life and existence was governing by patriarchy and how the idolizing impulses co-exist with a tendency to make them invisible besides the large theme. It was very significant for mentioning that the contrast between a Dalit and Brahmin women, which is written by Brahmin, it construct in terms of binary opposition strong vs weak, natural vs artificial, Earthly vs sophisticated. *Samskara*, according to Indian philosophy means mental impressions, recollections, or psychological imprint. According to Hindu philosophies it means development of Karma theory. The term also used in Buddhism and Pali, used to describe formation, and it is referred to as *Samskara*.

## Caste system



India's caste system is among the world's oldest forms of surviving social stratification. The system which divides Hindus into rigid hierarchical groups based on their karma (work) and dharma (the Hindi word for religion, but here it means duty) is generally accepted to be more than 3,000 years old. As mentioned in the Vedas *Manu Smriti*, the Hindu society has been classified into four categories: Brahmins

(priest or teacher), Kshatriyas (warriors or rulers) Vaishyas (traders or marchents), Shudras (laboures) and Dalits (outcastes) sweepers, cleaners.

### **Subaltern and Hegemony**

Subaltern refers to individuals whose voice and actions are ignored or misappropriated. Subaltern refers to marginalized sectors in social sciences, proposed by Antonio Gramsci and popularized by Gayatri Spivak. Subalternist studies focus on subalterns as agents of social and political change, examining emerging movements' rhetoric and actions, rather than elites. Indian theorist Gayatri Spivak questions Subaltern's speech in influential article, '**Can the Subaltern Speak**'?

Subaltern studies, borrowed from Gramsci, focus on cultural hegemony, arguing that subordinates are not inferior due to economic destitution but also accept hegemonic discourse, highlighting the importance of cultural hegemony. Hegemony refers to the dominance of one group over all others. Hegemony holds unrivalled power and can use their power to exert influence over others. The word hegemony comes from the Greek word hegemony, meaning "leader." The English word hegemony was first used in the early 1800s to describe the dominant position of the British Empire. In the novel Brahmin are holding supreme power in the society.

Samskara is one of the acknowledged master pieces of modern world Literature.

The story is set beside Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Tayeb's Season of Migration to the North. Samskara original was written in Kannada in 1960. It late, was translated into English by A. K. Ramanujan in 1976. The novel also, was adopted into movie. The tale is an existential suspense a life and death encounter between the sacred and the profane the pure and the impure the ascetic and the exotic.

The reader not only explores Brahmin's life and existence but also Untouchable life and existence. It revolves around the conflict between tradition vs modern. Praneshacharya is the protagonist, represents as a virtue, as a tradition and well educated, return from Banaras with a title 'Crest- jewel of Vedic Learning'. Naranappa's body cremation is the central concept. It was because by born as a Brahmin but revolt against the Brahmin hood, doesn't accept hypocritical behavior of Durvasapura Brahmins except Praneshacharya. Who represents Modern and anti-Brahmin? Chandri, Belli and Padmavati represent a Dalits and other people lived in the Durvasapura they represents as Subalterns. In the beginning of the Novel Ananthamurthy introduce Dalits identity, Praneshacharya finished his duties than taking meal while hearing one lady voice came from the yard, she calls Acharyare. It sound like Chandri's voice, if the Acharya talked to her he would be polluted; he would have to the bath again before his meal. Acharya came out. Chandri quickly pulled the end of her sari over her head, balanced and stood there afraid.

Acharya asked what is the matter?

Chandri shivered; words stuck in her mouth she held on the pillar.

Whatever?

Naranappa? What Naranappa?

Gone....

She covered her face with her hands.

Narayan, Narayan, When was that?

Just now

Between sobs Chandri answered:



Here Chandri, genuinely, is feeling pain. The news spread throughout the Durvasapura and his to his friends.

U.R. Ananthamurthy created caste cosmologies in his works reveal his continual engagement with the construction of the Brahmin male self. An examination of this upper caste writer's works spanning four decades reveals three recurring modes employed in the construction of the Brahmin male body. These models include the naturalization of the Brahmin male body, the construction of magician binaries, and the appropriation of the female body. In the texts under study, the coding of Brahmin identity in the upper caste male body is reinforced by the construction of its difference from the "Others" of the dominant discourse. By strategically deploying the sexualities of the female and lower caste subjects, the Brahmin discourse constitutes the Brahmin male subjecthoods. Samskara is not only encounter of the Brahmins male patriarchy but *Ghatashraddha*, *Akkayya* and other works are also encountered Brahmins male patriarchy. Lois McNay explores feminist engagement with Michel Foucault's sexuality, arguing it provides an analytical framework for understanding women's experiences within culturally determined feminine sexuality images. Power conception aids controlling female sexuality in dominant discourse. McNay's view highlights coding woman within dominant male sexuality narratives in Ananthamurthy's fiction. The lower caste women like Chandri and Belli in Samskara become idealized sexual objects, their bodies seen as waiting to be colonized by the high caste male. Their identities are subsumed under the sanatana myths of the sensuous "tempresses" of the sages like Menaka and Matsyagandhi (incidentally, these epic women too were outside the caste hierarchies and were the objects of ambivalent upper caste male desire). Ramanujam portrays lower caste women in Samskara as amoral ideals with untroubled sexuality, retaining upper caste male power for moral judgments. What the idealization of the lower caste woman's sexuality in Samskara mystifies, is the underlying project of the upper caste male appropriation of these marginalized female bodies.

It is possible to see a homology between the racial structures and caste structures on the axis of patriarchal gender constructions. Samskara portrays lower caste female figures through brahminical male discourse. Representation strategy resembles iconic representation of black woman's sexuality in dominant white male discourse. Belli's representation as a naked body ready to be appropriated replicates the language which historically codes the lower caste women as "always available" in the brahminical discourse. Brahmin society portrays lower caste women's bodies as the "narrative of sexualization. Lower caste and gendered characters, like Chandri, Matsyagandhi, and Jagannatha, are romanticized as objects of upper caste male desire. They become dismembered in the imagination of the Brahmin males, and parts of their bodies are turned into fetishizes. This maneuver, which denies proper selfhood to these marginalized subjects, underlines their object status in the dominant discourse. It leads to the fantasies of the high caste males Sripathi, Naranappa, and Pranesha about the breasts of the lower caste women throughout the novel. Pranesha fetishizes Belli's "earth colored" breasts (Samskara 123). Here, the color marking reinforces the erotic associations. It exists in the continuum of significations of the other in the exoticized terms of "darkness," all the while, powerfully invoking the romantic associations of these bodies with spontaneity and Nature (earth). What seems to underlie the stereotypical constructions of the lower caste women in terms of nature, vitality, and body in Samskara? Is the agenda of upper caste male domination of their bodies? Associating "spontaneity" with the lower caste female results in locating her within a sexualized sphere from which the Brahmin community is carefully dissociated. This female other is placed in binaries opposition to the "desexualized" Brahmin subject. She exists as the ambivalent object in the upper caste male imaginary signaling both fear and

desire. Just as spontaneity becomes synonymous with an essentialized sexuality in this textual discourse, the equations of woman with Nature function to reinforce the coding of sex with the body of the lower caste woman.

Ananthamurthy's deployment of Lawrentian paradigms (the influence of D.H. Lawrence on Ananthamurthy was considerable) becomes instrumental in reworking both gender appropriation and caste hegemony in his works.<sup>15</sup> Ananthamurthy's works replicate the Lawrentian paradigm of sexuality which masks the implicit phallic appropriation of the female body. In *Samskara* the dominant narrative of spontaneity and sexual fulfillment mystifies woman's sexual subjugation. Kate Millet discusses the agenda of controlling female sexuality, which underlies Lawrence's celebration of "vital life," to reveal the structures within which the cult of the "phallus" becomes manipulated in the creation of "a new order of dependence and subordination" of woman. Millet's penetrating discussion of Lawrence ends with the declaration that Lawrence's "sexual program for social and sexual redemption" only signifies the desire for the male assumption of the mastery "over the female in [...] total psychological and sensual domination" (Millet 241-2).

A similar desire for domination over the marginalized female body figures in Ananthamurthy's fiction. This desire for domination of the female body figures strongly in *Samskara*. Where the focus is, mainly, on the upper-caste male desire for the lower-caste woman? In the textual foregrounding of the dominant desire, the sexualized lower caste female body becomes an instrument of "redemption" of the Brahmin male self. The Brahmin discourse in which Ananthamurthy's novel is located employs the tropes of Nature, vitality, and spontaneity in the processes of objectifying the lower caste female body, and reinforcing the Brahmin male as the sexual subject. Pranesha's "discovery" of personal and sexual fulfillment in the forest leads to his renewed self-consciousness (this issue is discussed at length in the previous chapter). His recollection of this experience reveals how he collapses the image of Chandri with Nature by associating her body with the cool river water, the sarsaparilla in the forest, and the "smell of the grass roots smeared with wet earth." What this touch with Nature evokes in him is the desire to dominate by grasping and seizing it. In an act, which mimes his own appropriation of Chandri's body, he "tug [s] with both hands" violently at the sarsaparilla roots and severs it (*Samskara* 83-84).

In being constructed as close to Nature and "earth," the lower caste female figures become coded as always "available" within the dominant discourse. Sripathi, who is encouraged by Naranappa to live "fully," constructs the lower caste woman Belli's body as "the color of earth, fertile ready for seed, warmed by an early sun" (*Samskara* 37). Thus, the Brahmin males appropriate the marginalized female body even as they celebrate its desirability in terms of Nature and spontaneity. The coding of woman as Nature carries with it the implicit male desire to "apprehend, dominate and defeat" (Conboy et al 2). It becomes an attempt to foreclose woman's sexual agency. Belli becomes a body waiting to be colonized by the Brahmin male, who "had always been like ripe ears of corn bending before the falling rain" (*Samskara* 40). Chandri is described by the trope of the running river: "it says 'Yes' to everything, never a 'No'" (*Samskara* 44). This "yes," instead of suggesting agency and choice, is seen as mandated by her caste-status. The deployment of such tropes leads to the lower caste female body to be constructed and controlled as an object of upper caste desire. Another strategy of reinforcing the naturalization of sexuality in the lower caste female body is by the construction of Manichean binaries between the sexualities of the marginalized female figures and the Brahmin women in *Samskara*. The text constructs the lower caste women as sexually desirable in contrast with the sexually unattractive Brahmin women,

who are seen as “frigid with ‘dwarfish braids’ and withered bodies” (Mukhejee). The invalid wife of Pranesha becomes symbolic of the Brahmin woman’s frigidity. Similarly, Naranappa’s dead wife is constructed as a “wilted” woman. Sripathi disallows sexual attractiveness in the Brahmin women by describing them as: “[their] cheek sunken, breast withered, mouth smelling of lentil soup” (Samskara 37).

He is repelled by his wife, who follows her mother’s advice and “knots up her thighs” when he desires her. Pranesha’s gaze of disgust rejects Bhagirathi’s emaciated body with “her sunken breasts, her bulbous nose, [and] her short narrow braid” (Samskara 76). On the other hand, the tropes of ambivalent desire for the other—for example, the images of darkness, or the intoxicating flowers in Naranappa’s garden, which are associated with transgressive desire—are always romanticized. This romanticization weaves fear into desire. The trope of the snake-like braid of Chandri and Padmavati foreground the ambivalent upper caste male desire: “Chandri wore her black snake-hair coiled in a knot and wore the flowers of the ember-champak and the heavy fragrant screw-pine” (Samskara 15). As Mukhejee points out, “the hair-serpent-eroticism thread runs throughout the novel.” It figures not only in the descriptions of Chandri and Padmavati’s hair but also in the descriptions of the other lower caste women like “the acrobat at the fair as ‘serpentine’,” and in the articulation of Belli as “a snake writhing in sand” (Mukhejee 172). Pranesha watches the acrobat: “a shapely serpentine woman, all curves [who had] spread-eagled her hands and legs, swaying, balancing herself on bare belly at the end of a bamboo pole” (Samskara 114). The sense of danger involved in this act deepens the pleasure of Pranesha’s gaze on her. Woman’s alienation from the dominant male discourse becomes reinforced through the exoticized representations of her body and sexuality. A novel like *Samskara* reveals how the biological coding of sexuality with the lower caste woman becomes reinforced by the employment of the Manichean binaries, which construct the difference in sexualities of not only the male/female subjects but also the upper caste and lower caste women. In this textual discourse, the tropes articulating the lower caste female in terms of Nature and vitality work toward the legitimization of her domination by the upper caste male. Another strategy, which is functional in objectifying and alienating the marginalized woman from the brahmin discourse, is romanticization. By romanticizing the marginalized female bodies in terms of ambivalent upper caste desire, the Brahmin male discourse attempts to alienate and, thereby, manage female sexuality.

## Conclusion

Examining a male writer’s predictably inadequate construction of the female subject due to the limits of his access to female interiority, opens up a further area of study, which I must confess, is beyond the scope of this project. Such explorations would require a different methodology and also different theoretical tools of inquiry. It would require the historicizing of women’s writing in post-independence South India to construct the differences in the ways in which the male and female authors access female subjectivity in this cultural discourse. Since Ananthamurthy’s writing often engages with the construction of the lower caste female subjects, the theorizing of this marginalized subjectivity requires an in depth analysis of the patriarchal arrangements within the lower caste discourse.

In my view, the retrograde movement in Ananthamurthy’s works and the representation of women in terms of male desire, which I trace in these texts, are connected in a crucial manner with the writer’s particular location within the Brahmin patriarchal discourse that was trying to rework (but not dismantle) its ideology in the post independence Indian context. This problematic location seems to make the



spaces of female subjectivity inaccessible to him, or at least, not as readily usable as it is to a woman novelist like M.K. Indira, (a contemporary Kannada woman writer). Indira's *Phanivamma* (published in 1974) is an extremely sensitive and nuanced representation of the female subject's interiority. The cogency with which Indira is able to foreground the spaces of resistance of the brahmin widow, and to articulate her subversion of the upper caste hegemony by focusing on her as an active agent in *Phanivamma*, is absent in Ananthamurthy's explorations of the female subjectivity in his work (an inability particularly obvious in his construction of Chandri and Belli and Padmavati in "Samskara," for instance).

Kannada women writers like Vaidehi, Tejaswini Niranjana, and Vina Shanteshwar challenge male control of women in Indian society. Their female protagonists are often rebellious and economically independent, often represented as sexual subjects. Examining the representational politics of women within high caste male desires in Ananthamurthy's works can help develop broader theoretical and interpretative strategies for studying brahminical hegemony and gender relations. This will help historicize female subjectivity within the patriarchal Brahmin discourse in South India.

Another issue, which might lead to important insights about the cultural discourse of Ananthamurthy's work, is the filmic representations of his work. Both *Samskara* (1970) and "Ghatashraddha" (1977) were made into films. While *Samskara* received the national award that year and many international awards, it also leads to a controversy about the anti-brahminical sentiments it was supposed to reveal. The Madras Government even banned the screening of the movie. A protest was led by the intellectuals nationwide defending the writer's freedom to express his critique of the caste system. Much later, in one of his interviews, Ananthamurthy, made an interesting comment about how the filmic version made certain modifications, such as suppressing the incident of a Muslim cremating Naranappa's body, in order to stall the anticipated public anger in the wake of its release. Muralidhara Upadya discusses this interview in his recent book on Ananthamurthy.<sup>17</sup> In another interview collected in the same book, in his discussion of the other national award winning film *Ghatashraddha*. Ananthamurthy points out how the cinematic form made some changes in order to ensure public appeal. In Ananthamurthy's story *Yamunakka* is a shaven widow, but in the film the director Girish Kasaravalli presents her as a widow who has retained her hair.

However, though *Ghatashraddha* too invoked some negative response from the fanatical Brahmin groups, it did not raise a controversy of the scale created by *Samskara*. A probing study of the problems in making these films and the public responses they triggered off will lead to interesting insights about the cultural representations of caste and gender issues in the post independence South Indian context. But, since such an exploration will also require the understanding of the particular strategies and the representational politics involved in cinematic forms, especially the situating of these films in the context of the new wave South Indian Cinema, I cannot engage them in my present study. However, such an enquiry might reveal new equations of caste and gender. The highlighting of the caste issue, rather than the issue of gender exploitation, in the controversies which followed the release of these two films, raises interesting questions that could be addressed in other studies which focus on films based on Ananthamurthy's works.

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