

Bhava: A Quest for Truth

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Abstract

U. R. Ananthamurthy's *Bhava* explores the human quest for truth, identity, spirituality, and liberation from worldly existence. Through Vishwanatha Shastry, Narayana Tanthri, and Dinakar, the novel examines questions of birth, parentage, guilt, desire, and selfhood. Unlike *Bharatipura*, where such questions acquire strong social and political dimensions, *Bhava* treats them largely as personal and spiritual struggles. Seethamma, Chandrappa, and Prasad represent an alternative path of detachment, acceptance, labour, and renunciation. The novel ultimately suggests that discovering biological truth alone cannot liberate the individual; true freedom requires overcoming ego, desire, guilt, and attachment. Thus, *Bhava* becomes a meditation on existence, self-realization, and transcendence.

Keywords: *Bhava*; U. R. Ananthamurthy; truth; spirituality; existence; identity; liberation; ego; desire; guilt; detachment; renunciation; transcendence; self-realization; parentage; Indian literature.

The novel '*Bhava*' has a spiritualist motif which is a strong recurrent motif in the literature of Dr. U R Ananthamurthy, by and large. The quest for the meaning and origin, liberation from "*Bhava*" (existence), ambition to reach a state of being free from egotism, are his persistent themes. But in his earlier works, they were overshadowed by more burning social issues like cultural, fiscal, political topics. One may question whether the emotional twitching of Jagannatha and Krishnagowda was just politically motivated or was it spiritual? Similarly, did Keshava and Stuart in "Clipjoint" merely crave for a change in the lifestyle? They were not explicitly categorized as purely extremely personal, social, political, or spiritual feelings. One would manifest within the other or all would give a synergic effect. '*Bhava*' does not seem to have such an intensity of complexity and ambition. It is a very simple narrative. It has a most unusual feature, atypical of U R Ananthamurthy, where the narrative gives prominence to the chain of events, and chance of coincidence. It has an effort to stringing together all the strands of the story at the end. Constituting the scattered images and strands is the prime task of the story. The author seems to present a narrative that is free from the intrigues of society and politics which is purely humane. He seems to suggest that the intrigues are not important, rather, what is important is the way in which we live our daily lives.

As far as the story is concerned, there is a congruence in the character of the protagonists. Vishwanatha Shastry, Dinakar Narayana Tanthri, are all tangled in the whirlpool of the quest for the secret of their origin. Vishwanatha Shastry is not certain if he has fathered Dinkar or was he a son of the Malayalee pandith. Dinkar is unaware of his biological father. Narayana Tanthri is not sure whether Prasad is his son or Dinkar's son. Therefore, in the quest for truth and origin, there is an immediacy of personal axe to grind too. There are other major characters who just don't bother these quests for the origin, which suggests there is something beyond mundane trivial novels of human relations to the novel seems reveal

no secrets (of birth) . Only a few puzzling issues are resolved. Though it may quench the thirst of curiosity for those involved in those issues, it is not a revelation at the conscious levels.

It becomes more evident, when compared to such a similar situation in Bharatipura. Jagannatha gets irritated when he receives an anonymous letter that tells him he would not have stopped down to such an heinous act of allowing Harijans into (Manjunatha) temple, had he been the legitimate son of his father and further goes on to say that his biological father was writer Krishnaiah.

The taught boggler his mind if these had been no chance for only suspicion, such thoughts would not haunt him. The doubts that arise in the mind of Jagannatha about th ebirth are equally exploding to the readers, while he can take the Saligrama to the Dalit colony, when he did not mind ostracizing his family from his lineage. When he encouraged the Dalit to enter the Sanctum sanctorum if the temple he did not feel bad, why should he feel that it is the privilege only of his legally wedded father to enter the vagina of his mother? He struggles desperately to ascertain the fact does he wish to have a social revolution in the same seriousness. When he feels furious even to imagine that someone else is caressing the scar on the butts of Margaret, it is not wrong for the society to get furious when their long preserved religious sentiments are hurt.

‘*Bhava*’ lacks such complex dimensions in the birth secrets it grapples with 80. It is only Tantri, Shastry and Dinkar’s personal stories, individual issues. A passive reader usually only listens to what the author narrates. But usually in the works of U R Ananthamurthy, the reader is an active participant interactive with the writer. However, this does not happen in ‘*Bhava*’.

The reader just enjoys the erotic pleasure of the story now and then, as this is not just a question of acceptance or denial of issues and ideas posed in the text. It is the question of involvement.

The author’s view looks a bit portrayal of the characters like Tanthri, Shastry, Dinakar and Seethamma, Chandrappa, Gangu and Radha.

For Seethamma, spirituality is never a tough nut to crack. Her life is of a yogic sort, being involved in the affairs of the family she can be detached and disinterested. A liberated soul that loves (unrequited) without expecting love in return.

While Dinakar and Vishwanatha Shastry travel a lot, Gangu Radha do not. Their travel is in a very limited ambit. The commitment and concentration in their effort elevates their travel to the circumambulation around the sanctum Santorum of the temple.

Chandrappa and Prasad appear to be the situation’s two faces of the same coin. Though Gangu’s husband Chandrappa at certain situations superficially appears to be a mean stupid beast, more like an abnormal inwardly he is strange and mysterious. It stays beyond the rationalist logic of the reader.

It is only to Seethamma and Prasad that Chandrappa can be found intelligible. When Tantri used to be in the privacy with Gangu, Chandrappa would provide a sort

of security to them. He used to be there either watering the plants from the well or splitting fire wood and if only one asked the whereabouts of Gangu , he would say she wasn’t there. Even such a dull witted person was sharp enough in this.

Chandrappa was a hard worker. His very existence, human contact, interaction with people loves everything would go on only through his labour. Only Seethamma nd Prasad react t his labour and sentence.

For Vishwanath Shastry, Narayana Tanthri and Dinakar deciphering the secret of their origin is to get away from danger or wardoff themselves of their guilt or to quench their curiosity. So all these causes are mundane, earthy and worldly. Whereas Chandrappa and Prasad never bother to learn about them. Though

they are not blood relative, they are beyond that relationship. Prasad begins to tolerate his mother and Narayana Tanthri gradually.

We find an inner maturity and renunciation that leads him to resolution to become an ascetic. Whethere he accepts to become a Saint or not its certain that he gets liberation from '*Bhava*'.

Vishwanatha Shastry, Narayana Tantri and Dinakar consciously try to adopt the conventional ways to get liberated from '*Bhava*'. Vishwanatha Shastry becomes a keertanakara , Dinakar practices 'Ayyappa vrata' and advocates Narayana Shastry resorts to confessional soliloquies and self- analysis.

Though Vishwanatha Shastry tries to forget himself in Harikatha and Keerthana he can never get away from the haunting entanglements of his '*Bhava*'. He never seems to get liberated from it. He feels relieved of guilt when he learns that Dinakar is his own son after all. Narayana Shastry after having escaped from several perils continues to lead the same life even more relaxedly. His conscience wouldn't prick him any longer.

Dinakar, though cald in black dress and saggy beards, given to Ayyappa vrata his mind is not focused on the divine, but innumerable women with whom he had lusted and flirted haunt is mind. The letters that he wrote to his ex lovers and wife do not relieve him of his guilt and crime. In fact he was replaying (and enjoying) those lusty experiences as he wrote them.

Vishwanatha Shastry and Dinakar travels into all the possible in roads of life and their fruits. They even tried to experience spirituality. But compared to the simple lives of Seethamma, Chandrappa and Prasad, they all look distorted, disturbed and shallow people. In th every structural frame work of the novel, '*Bhava*' itself there is a rejection of values of '*Nele*'. Thus the novel conspicuously blatantly, indicates its choses and preferences by weaving the patterns of contrasts of ambitions and desires of the characters having transcendence and violations as the primary concern of the novel.

The single point agenda of the novel in the overt fashion is not the typical characteristic of U R Ananthamurthy. But his short story '*Jaratkaru*' has a similar pattern and intention. There seems to be both forward and backward movement of his thoughts and approaches in some of his short stories side by side. Some disappointingly backward movements and in other stories. '*Suryana Kudure*' and '*Akkayya*' leaps forward, while '*Jaratkaru*' and '*Bhava*' lets the reader down with backward jerks.

Bhava marks both continuity and departure in Ananthamurthy's fictional vision. While it retains his enduring preoccupation with existence, guilt, identity, and transcendence, its relatively uncomplicated narrative and limited socio-political engagement reduce the interpretative intensity found in his earlier works. Yet this simplicity itself invites reflection on the ordinary possibilities of liberation.

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