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## Dharma in Indian Philosophy and Literature: Ethical Dimensions and Social Critique in the Bhagavad Gita and U.R. Ananthamurthy's Samskara

<sup>1</sup>Richa Khurana, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Vivek Kumar

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Dept. of English

Galgotias University, Greater Noida

UP-203201

E-mail: rkhurana728@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of English

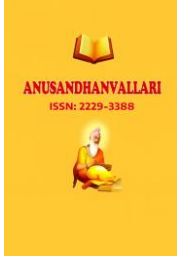
Galgotias University, Greater Noida

UP-203201

E-mail: vivek@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

### Abstract

At the centre of Indian philosophy is the concept of *dharma*, which encompasses a sophisticated and dynamic discussion of morality, duty, ethics, and righteousness. According to the Bhagavad Gita, *dharma* is a dynamic principle that harmonizes personal behavior with a greater cosmic purpose rather than a strict or external code. Krishna's call to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra highlights *svadharma*, or one's own duty, as originating from one's inherent nature (*svabhava*) and social role (*varna*), promoting action carried out without regard for the outcome (*nishkama karma*). In this sense, *dharma* is a spiritual path and a moral requirement, where self-realization and harmony among all people are inextricably linked to doing the right thing. Different philosophical schools in India have provided different interpretations of *dharma*. *Dharma* is ceremoniously codified and derived from Vedic injunctions in Mimamsa, which prioritizes orthopraxy over philosophical conjecture. Vedanta, especially Advaita Vedanta, on the other hand, sees ethical living as a prelude to the realization of non-dual consciousness (*Brahman*) and internalizes *dharma* as a way to achieve *moksha*. While Buddhist and Jain traditions offer alternative ethical frameworks based on non-violence (*ahimsa*) and the cessation of suffering, the Nyaya and Vaisheshika systems conceptualize *dharma* through ethical causality and rational inquiry. These traditions, though they differ, emphasize the importance of *dharma* as the guiding concept of both individual and group existence. *Samskara* by U.R. Ananthamurthy revisits this fundamental idea via the lenses of contemporary existential crisis, social stagnation, and the breakup of Brahminical orthodoxy. The novel explores the applicability and inflexibility of traditional ideas of *dharma*, particularly in light of moral ambiguity and human suffering, and is set in a



dilapidated *agrahara* in colonial Karnataka. A learned Brahmin and defender of scriptural purity, the protagonist Praneshacharya, experiences a deep spiritual and moral crisis when the death of an outcast pushes the bounds of ritual and obligation. The novel creates room for an internal moral awakening that goes beyond textual authority by criticizing the ossification of *dharma* into meaningless ritual.

**Keywords:-** *Dharma*, Indian Philosophy, Samskara, Morality, Ethics, *Swadharma*, Caste system

### Various Interpretations of *Dharma*

In the Morphological aspect, the term '*dharma*' originated from the root '*dhr*', which refers to 'to detain or to carry'. No individual word like duty, truth, moral values, religion, or righteousness can explain the intense and unique significance in the context of Hinduism. A renowned expert on Indian philosophy, Patrick Olivelle, explains *Dharma* in Manu's view as "It is the cosmic order manifested in the human realm through moral law and behavior. It governs both private virtue and public duty" (Olivelle 13). Lubin, a scholar, and expert in South Asian studies, has understood the concept of *Dharma* after reading various classical texts, including *Dharmasastra*, and states that "*Dharma*, a complex and nuanced term, has been interpreted in various ways, encompassing notions of duty, ethics, and the inherent order and harmony of the universe" (Lubin 451- 465). Arindam Chakrabarti, a distinguished academic, notices *Dharma* as, "resists a singular definition, functioning as ritual duty, moral compass, and a means to individual liberation in different contexts" (Chakrabarti 44). Ultimately, *Dharma* is not stable but flexible; a similar essence exists in all things and persons. However, it is an element that evolves and differs from individual to individual, community to community, and group to group.

### *Dharma* in context to Bhagavad Gita

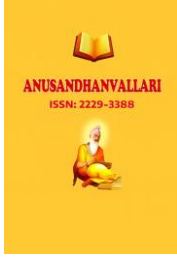
Chandra and Kulkarni, in their work, *Semantic and sentiment analysis of selected Bhagavad Gita*, put it as "The interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita is deeply intertwined with the concept of *Dharma*" (Chandra & Kulkarni 18). Dasgupta aptly explains that *The Bhagwat Puran* defines "*Dharma* as consisting in the worship of God without any ulterior motive; it is worship performed with perfect sincerity of heart by men who are kindly disposed towards all and have freed themselves from all feelings of jealousy" (Dasgupta 211).

The *Dharma* has various interpretations in context to Bhagavad Gita in the following ways:-

1. *Dharma* refers to one's duty (*swadharma*) and the nature, role, and stages in one's life. "*śhreyān swa-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt*

*swa-dharme nidhanam śhreyaḥ para-dharmo bhayāvahaḥ*" (BG 3.35).

"It is far better to perform one's natural prescribed duty, though tinged with faults than to perfectly perform another's prescribed duty. It is preferable to die in the discharge of one's duty than to follow the path of another, which is fraught with danger" (BG 3.35).



The verse underlines the significance of adhering to one's duties, even if they seem difficult or lead to failure. Krishna encourages Arjuna to follow his path as a warrior, even if it involves conflict, rather than adopting the *Dharma* of another (BG 3.35).

2. *Dharma*, works as a moral duty, directing human beings to align with the universal truth and principles.

"*karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana*

*mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stvakarmaṇi'" (BG 2.47)*

"You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction" (BG 2.47).

In this verse, Krishna instructs Arjuna the importance of selfless action, an essential aspect of *Dharma*. One should focus on doing one's duties beyond attachment to the outcome (BG 2.47).

3. *Dharma* also maintains social harmony and order so that everyone living in society should play their role appropriately.

"*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śharaṇam vraja*

*ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣhayiṣhyāmi mā śhuchaḥ" (BG 18.66)*

"Abandon all varieties of dharmas and simply surrender unto Me alone. I shall liberate you from all sinful reactions; do not fear" (BG 18.66).

Krishna advises Arjuna to transcend all conditional duties and moral codes and surrender entirely to the divine will. This ultimate surrender to God, or *Bhakti*, is the highest *Dharma*. (BG 18.66)

4. *Dharma* also helps individuals grow and explore the way towards *moksha* or liberation.

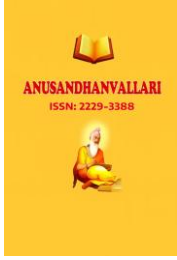
"*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśhāya cha duṣhkṛitām*

*dharmā-sansthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge" (BG 4.8).*

"To protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, and to reestablish the principles of *dharmā* I appear on this earth, age after age" (BG 4.8).

In this verse, Krishna reveals that he incarnates to restore *Dharma* when righteousness diminishes and unrighteousness increases. This highlights the eternal struggle between good and evil and the divine role in maintaining cosmic order (BG 4.8).

*Dharma*, as expounded in the Bhagavad Gita, represents obligation, justice, moral duty, societal peace, moral behavior, spiritual freedom, personal responsibility, and cosmic order. It is an adaptative and multidimensional notion that directs ethical values, social obligations, and spiritual aspirations. In U.R. Ananthamurthy's *Samskara*, *Dharma* emerges as the central subject, examined through the existential and moral predicament faced by



Praneshacharya, the protagonist. The novel analytically investigates the constraint of religious rituals and the struggle between *Swadharm*a and personal moral conduct. This dispute also arises in Bhagavad Gita, especially Krishna's advice to Arjuna in Kurukshetra, where *Dharma* is not solely about pursuing conventional norms but about inner actualization and uprightness.

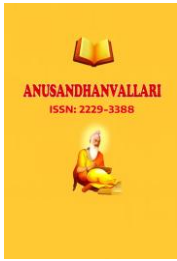
### Doctrine of Dharma in Samskara

Samskara is a sacred text about a decaying Brahmin village named Durvasapura in South India and the concurrent poetic restructuring of ancient Hindu beliefs. In India, the varna system of the Hindu religion which is also advocated by ancient Hindu scriptures like Bhagavad Gita, *Rig-Veda*, and *Manusmriti*, has a profound persuasion on the individuals in their routine life and has a great impact on the lives of Indian people. Religion and rituals can be witnessed fused in Samskara and take the shape of the background within which Praneshacharya searches for the true meaning of religion, spirituality, and rituals. The clash between religion and spirituality can be noticed between the two characters, Praneshacharya and Naranappa, and internally within Praneshacharya's consciousness.

The hierarchical structure of society advances the religious ground of the discourse and presumes the focal point of the text. Religion creates a pivotal backdrop of the novel, stressing the community of Brahmins where an important status is granted to them. Brahmins direct their supremacy in the societal scale from the Vedic authoritative where the division of society is categorized in four *varnas* (segments) depend on the notion of *purusukta* of Rig Veda which suggests that Brahmins were born from the mouth of Brahman and they are superiors. They are also known as *dvija* or twice-born, an approach disseminated by the foundational narratives of classical Sanskrit literature. To assure their supremacy the caste system was encompassed by rigid compliance to a set of norms, rules, and regulations which were assisted by constant livelihood to the concepts of holiness and contaminations results to caste discrimination by dividing the sects of society into sociocultural and physical bondage sanctioned by Hindu culture. Rajagopal Parthasarathy in his essay 'The Passing of the Brahmin Tradition' claims that, "Caste is a fact of existence in secular India, and untouchability through illegal, has not disappeared..." and suggests that "Durvasapura is a microcosm of brahmin India" (Parthasarathy 192). Brahmins in Agrahara were supposed to be kept under constraints and adhere to customs and vows associated with marriage, death, birth, and worship. The relation between religion and community can be clearly understood with the following lines by V.S. Naipaul:

"Caste and clan are more than brotherhoods; they define the individual completely. The individual is never on his own; he is always fundamentally a member of his group, with a complex apparatus of rules, rituals, and taboos. Every detail of behavior is regulated... Relationships are codified. And religion and religious practices lock everything into place" (Naipaul 102).

Religion constructs a set of principles, traditions, and social expectations and all of these integrate and comprise the supplement of its authentic meaning. With a specific period, this supplement substitutes the original meaning

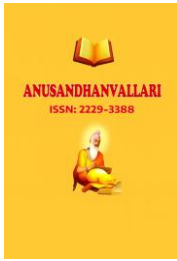


and consists of the religious devotion of the people. The same situation has been created in Durvasapura, which shaped the universe in a single path for its communal members, a state solely for Brahmins who were pressured under the stress of inherited conventions and customs of Hindu society.

Ananthamurthy illustrates in a fine-grained manner how the decline has been placed into the Brahmin society and how it has corroded the key components of an individual, both physically and spiritually. The Brahmins were living in ramshackle houses contaminated with cockroaches and mice. They were almost awful, with skeletal bodies, hollow eyes, grunted and bony cheeks, and bloated bellies. The picture of Brahmin women was repellent with their short tight hair, lean chests, moth affected sour odor of *saru* showcases the subject of decay and death of the traditional *dharma* which has turned down to an empty shell and claims *dharma* to be a multidimensional and flexible concept. Such Brahmins were symbolized as "impoverished" and "withered". They were parsimonious in nature and their obsession with land and money emphasized their inability to hold the principles of surrender and sacrifice conventionally related to Brahminism. The clash between professed goodness and real actions stresses the corrosion of *dharma* in their community. They do proclaim high moral and ethical values from others in public, but in their own life, they yield obscene and nasty animal desires. Their routine activities are directed by holy scriptures, but such customs lack accuracy. They engage in religious ceremonies, yet their deeds are void of spirituality. This states Ananthamurthy's criticism of religious inactivity – where religion seems to be stable rather than a channel for spiritual development. However, their *dharma* is limited to an exterior structure rather than an interior and flexible moral outlook.

The novel begins with the diligent disciplined life of Praneshacharya who is the protagonist of the novel. He departed to *Kashi* (Benaras) and gained his mastery over Vedic scriptures like *Rig Veda*, and Upanishads and secured the esteemed title of "The Crest Jewel of Vedic Learning". Praneshacharya performs all the Vedic rituals and practices his religious chores as an austere religious authority in the village of Durvasapura as well as neighboring villages. He is also married to a weak woman named Bhagirathi, just to befit his intention of attaining "ripeness and readiness" to achieve renunciation (*vairagya*) and detachment from the materialistic and sensual desires of society. It is a type of self-acclaimed assassination to attain liberation.

The intended choice of marrying a sick woman is a symbol of his own self-interest because he uses a lame woman to transcend the physical pleasures, yet also raises moral questions about using the existence of an individual for your spiritual exaltation. This action can be examined through the lens of *dharma*. By classifying Bhagirathi for his gain as a means to uphold spiritual aspiration, Acharya's deeds were on the edge of *dharma*, as they lacked genuineness and morality. His refusal of earthly objects and faith in rigid religious principles showcases his deception when later he consummates with Chandri, a Dalit woman and covets for sexual desires. While superstitious Brahmin principles carry renunciation of pleasures as a consequence of liberation, *dharma* involves honesty and righteousness in every deed. The author also portrays how Brahmins exercise untouchability evading a touch or even a conversation with *Shudras* to preserve their purity. Primarily, Praneshacharya was upset about his cleanliness when Chandri enters his home to tell him about the death of Naranappa. If the Acharya spoke to

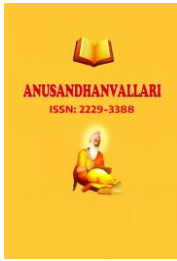


her then he would be impure and need to take a bath again (Ananthamurthy 4). Here, the novel makes a commentary on the constraints of Brahminical society and the discerning morality chosen by them while Acharya primarily flinches at Chandri due to the rigid caste-based notions of contamination, he later perishes his rigid notion, therefore, profaning his moral character as well as the doctrine of *Brahmacharya*.

"*Samskara* means religious purificatory rites and ceremonies for sanctifying the body, mind, and intellect of an individual so that he may become a full-fledged member of the community" (Maheshwari 16). So, the challenge that arises, Are the Brahmins of Agrahara true towards dharma? Have they attained the chastity to hold the nature of Brahminhood? The central character of the novel, Praneshacharya experiences the procedure of sanctification. His transformation from rigid ritualism to the real world of spirituality is insightful.

The composition commences with Naranappa's death, a Brahmin of Duravsapura whose deeds are in grim contrast to the Brahminic principles. The contradiction emerges witnessing Naranappa's funeral ritual because he was not following Brahminical practices as the Brahmin states: "Alive Naranappa was an enemy, dead a preventer of meals; as a corpse, a problem, a nuisance" (3). He has questioned the conventions of his community – yet in death, he still forces Brahmins to face their rigid ideals and the relevance of *dharma*. He has openly violated boundaries as he bonded with Muslims, courtesans, and poor men and women. Naranappa was a *Lokayatika* (a materialist school that embodies the sensory experience) who mocks every custom and he likely represents the opposition of Brahmin traditions. He used to live with a marginalized woman named Chandri, a courtesan from Kundapura, a nearby village town. He gulps alcoholic drinks and used to eat flesh with his Muslim friends on the holy day of *Ekadashi* in the open yard of his house where other Brahmins were cleansing themselves by fasting and prayer. He throws *Saligrama*, the pious stone that is considered by Lord Vishnu and handed to the upcoming generations, and then spits upon it. Accompanied by his Muslim friends, he slays the fish of the sacred temple pond and cooks and eats them. When the Acharyas caution him that they will banish him. He warns them "Try and excommunicate me now. I'll become a Muslim, I'll get you all tied to pillars and cram cow's flesh into your mouths and see to it personally that your sacred Brahminism is ground into the mud" (12). The Brahmins, who claim supreme authority and maintain the *varna*-based *dharma*, find themselves disabled neither to accept or reject Naranappa after his death. His life as well as death challenges the constraints of Brahmin *dharma* compelling the community and especially Praneshacharya, the central character to remark on whether compliance to external rituals truly comprises morality. In this way, Naranappa becomes the dark mirror of righteousness or purity and by giving up prescribed *dharma*; uncovers the emptiness and deceitfulness implanted in irrefutable custom.

The several meetings, the endless conversations, taking the counsel of various authorities, the study of scriptures etc. to figure out the nature of disposing of the dead body of Naranappa, and the consequent confusions uncover the suspicion that these blind followers of Hinduism have to loosen their control over practical *dharma*. What was once regarded as a typical moral *dharma* has been taken as a rigid custom unable to be treated for immediate human interest. After the death of Naranappa, a friend, Shankarayya, who belongs to the low caste Brahmin of Parijatapura, expresses his concern in the following words: "According to Brahmin thinking, a snake is also a



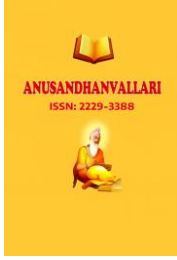
twice-born, if you happen to see a dead snake, you've to perform the proper rites for it; you shouldn't eat till you've done so. As that's the case, it's wrong to sit back with folded arms when a brahmin has passed on to the bosom of God" (18). This statement expresses how traditional *dharma* without kindness and humaneness can be superficial in nature.

On the contrary, Chandri, Naranappa's concubine, expresses his rationality and applies practical *dharma* by uttering the following lines: "It's rotting there, that thing, it's stinking there, its belly swollen. That's not her lover, Naranappa. It's neither Brahmin nor Shudra, A carcass. A stinking rotting carcass" (68). After realizing the defeat of Praneshacharya and other Brahmins to get an explanation from their religious scriptures, Chandri privately burns the dead body of Naranappa, with the help of his Muslim friend and fish merchant, Ahmad Bari through which Chandri implies a kind of lived *dharma*, which transcends caste and creed. She performs *karma yoga* which means selfless deed without the attachment of results – as mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, where Krishna encourages Arjuna to take action in agreement with his *svadharma* (individual ethical obligation), even when the direction is morally complicated.

However, Manjayya, an inferior *smarta* Brahmin community from Parijatapura, expresses his humane character and applies practical *dharma* through his concern for communal wellness. Not aware of the fact that Chandri has performed the funeral rites of Naranappa, he goes to Tirthahalli, the district headquarters: "In his very practical brain, the decision was well-formed already one, tell the municipality and get the dead body removed; two, call in doctors and get everybody inoculated; three, get rat exterminators and pumps, fill the ratholes with poison gas and stop them up; four, if necessary, evacuate the people from the Agrahara" (102). However, his reasons are temporal, Manjayya's distress for the Brahminical community and determined thinking sign a change from theoretical custom to socially rooted *dharma*.

Ananthamurthy criticizes the Brahminical society's absorption of *sastra* (scriptural principles) at the cost of *smrti* (moral principles). As Meenakshi Mukherjee states, the novel expresses "the social practice of the codes of sanctity/ Impurity that exists in that kind of society. The alternative way is to attain liberation through myths – here the great epics and legends which the Hindu considers as sacred rescue him from the severe codes" (Mukherjee 175). Yet these myths in scriptures are used inappropriately. For example, we can note that Brahmins lasciviously gawking Chandri. Although Chandri belongs to a lower caste and considered impure in Brahminical values, she is being coveted and symbolized as an object, "Like Matsyagandhi the fisherwoman in the Ravi varna print hung up in Durgabhata's bedroom. The same eyes and nose: no wonder Naranappa threw away the worship stone for her...." (8 – 9). So, it has been asserted that the Matsyagandhi episode in the Mahabharata, where sage Parashar involves in an intimacy with a Dalit woman beneath the sky. This allusion is signified here to justify and validate the personification of a marginalized woman named as Chandri.

Identically, the exploitation in Belli's case, another lower-caste woman, is demonstrated through mythological vision: "Shripati had taken Belli at the river when she had come to get water, only after he heard the Acharya



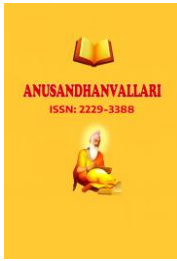
speaking of Shakuntala's beauty" (39). The fables of Shakuntala and Matsyagandhi – primarily conscious to remark the difficulty of *dharma* in classical literature – are swiped to enable moral lapse. Instead of arousing *Viveka* (discrimination) and *karuna* (compassion), these mythical allusions are limited to aesthetic frameworks for the violation of marginalized women.

Praneshacharya appears as a figure of ethical and divine superiority as compared to the perverted fellow Brahmins. His keen observation of their deception, insincerity, and falseness to Brahmin orthodoxy generates deep inner conflict. Testifying their performative rituals and lack of genuine character, he experiences an intense, almost sacrificial suffering that reflects his unchanging dedication to a spiritually led life. His endless sympathy for Naranappa is not emotional in nature; it is deeply rooted in his understanding of *dharma* as a panoramic, evolving moral code rather than a strict moral code. His severe dialogues with Naranappa are the ways through which he wants to awaken the sense of moral responsibility, to retrieve the life not merely ordained by societal tradition but lined up with the greater norms of righteousness.

Praneshacharya's fasting and his deep prayers are not formalistic acts in solitude; they are expressive acts of his inner turmoil in *dharma*, where self-control and purification are headed towards reviving moral order both within and around him. While he receives enormous respect and trust served by his community, he doesn't exploit his authority. Instead, he asserts traditions with the belief that the significance must be originated in communal agreement and religious legitimacy. He has attempted to shape his life along the path laid down by the gastric prescriptions.

Though, in the process of seeking *dharma*, Praneshacharya symbolizes the deteriorated culture of superstitions – a character who, despite his decency, is unable to investigate the constraints of conventional Brahminism. He extends the practice of temperance, sanctity, and blind faith in tradition in prolonged extremities. After marrying Baghirathi, he has not enjoyed his sexual life for the sake of maintaining the applicability of his candidacy for liberation (*moksha*). Yet, this suppression showcases a deep clash between the standards of *dharma* and the real-based *dharma*. Whereas he exhibits his admiration for beauty in literature, he is unable to make a distinction between beauty and ugliness in his own emotional and sensual life expresses the drawbacks of rigorous textual adaptations of *dharma*.

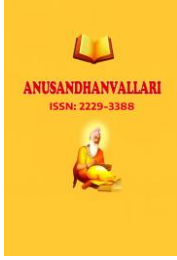
In Samskara, the ethical dilemma faced by Praneshacharya becomes, as Suresh Raval argues, "moving away from an unreflective relation to his rigid tradition and its stultifying implications for his society to a greater critical self – consciousness" (Raval 118). Therefore, this transformation begins an introspection expedition and reshapes his moral frameworks. Despite being praised as "the Crest – Jewel of Vedic Learning" (6), Praneshacharya discovers himself crippled when his knowledge is unable to resolve the ethical dilemma regarding the rites at the death of Naranappa, an outcaste. His resource to sacred scriptures and superstitious traditionalism fails to provide a coherent moral solution, resulting in taking him into the forest – an allegorical domain beyond the limits of Agrahara.



His anxiety takes him to the Maruti temple within the center of forest where he is hoping that falling of a flower from Maruti's idol to signify the symbol of divine intervention. When no such symbol appears, while he was returning back, he meets Chandri who was waiting for Praneshacharya's proclamation of God's decision. It was not divine sight but the touch of Chandri which catalyzes the transformation in Praneshacharya. Their union, void of custom or consent, serves as the threshold of sensual revelation, waving his defeat to position *dharma* purely with absolute orthodoxy. In the Afterword, Ramanujan remarks that "having forsaken *kama* (lust) from his household, he had to find it outside his customary space, in the forest, his sense of *dharma* had to be undone and remade by it" (146). Praneshacharya's intimacy thus develops the dignity of symbolic rebirth: "It felt as though he'd turned over and fallen into his childhood, lying in his mother's lap and finding rest thereafter great fatigue" (67). Nature, in contrast to the obsolete ethical order of the Agrahara, appears as a subtle area where forest, trees, earth, grass, and instinct – create a symbolic allegory for suppressed desires and wishes. His hunger, "so far unconscious, suddenly rages, and he cried out like a child in distress" (63), constituting a reversion that ironically matures him. This transition reveals a great shift – from the absolutism of scriptures towards practical *dharma* which is rooted in human reality, experiences, and emotions.

Importantly, the role of Chandri resonates with the social and cultural system of *Devadasis*, the sacred yet marginalized temple dancers who also span the restraints of purity and desire. Her touch stimulates Praneshacharya's moral awakening and satisfies the desires of the sages He learns that breaking the superstitions doesn't essentially ruin nature. Consequently, his newly generated sensitivity, "for the first time his eyes were beginning to see the beautiful and the ugly" (76).

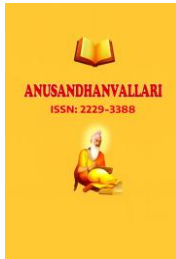
Few critics argued that the caste system is a part and parcel of Hinduism, the writer himself was acutely aware of it. Ananthamurthy in one of his essays "Five Decades of my Writing" states, "The world I grew up in assumed that the caste system and the hierarchies associated with it were rock-like and permanent and God-made" (17). The writer has tried to break these myths in his novel through the character of Praneshacharya. Ananthamurthy emphasizes when a master like Praneshacharya can misunderstand the *Dharma* then the other villagers surely can. He also recalls one incident when one of the Brahmins was "debarred from the places of sacrifice" (48), since he was used to gambling, but even God favors to gambler's call This instance relates to the idea when the Gods can visit to the gambler's call then they can't be prejudiced against some human beings which were named as untouchables. At the beginning of the novel, Praneshacharya believes in the concept of pollution as he doesn't want to talk to Chandri because "he would be polluted" (2). Towards the end of the novel, Praneshacharya doesn't want to sit and eat in the temple as he is in a pollution period (*sutaka* according to the death of Bhagirathi). There is a myth that if any individual in pollution will eat while sitting in the temple then the temple chariot will not move. On the other hand, Praneshacharya was sitting in the temple and the temple chariot didn't stop. So, the pollution generated by Bhagirathi's death is identified as a belief. Similarly, the myth of untouchability where the pollution done by the touch of the marginalized caste needs to be demolished. In another essay "Hinduism means many things to many people", Ananthamurthy states "It is the worship of *Nirankar Brahman*, as well as fulfilling



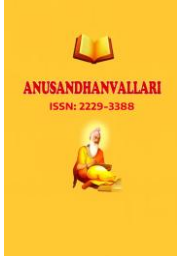
the most selfish desires through *vratas*. It says that this creation is the manifestation of God, and, it also holds the most rigid kind of caste system” (305).

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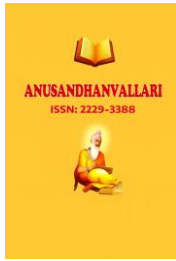
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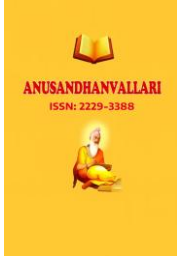
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