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## **HEDONIST SCHOOL IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IN THE CONTEXT OF ANANTAMURTHY'S *SAMSKARA* ARCHANA**

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### **Abstract**

The principal object of the present study is entitled; Hedonist school in Indian philosophy in the context of Anantamurthy's *Samskara*. Hedonism is the belief that pleasure, or the absence of pain, is the most important principle in determining the morality of a potential course of action. In the novel, Anantamurthy presents hedonism through Naranappa where Brahminism stands as a question for a disciplined life. This paper focuses on illustrating charvaka/hedonistic philosophy in *Samskara*, the lives, and the transformations of Naranappa and Praneshacharya. The reality of deeds that make the subconscious awake and the reality of human desires open a whole new path in life. This paper explores Brahminism and Anti-Brahminism through the different perspectives of the characters. In addition, the study of this novel brings out different critics. A critical study is undertaken to seek and discover the several complexities, the effect of hedonism on the creative psyche, and layers of meaning in Brahminism. The lifestyle of people depicts their desires. In the novel, Anantamurthy shows the same human desires in two different personalities, making them relatable. Naranappa's death challenges Brahminism in the novel which takes the plot ahead with Praneshacharya's realization.

### **Keywords**

Charvaka, Brahminism, Hedonism, Varnas, Desires, Human-life.

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“Charvaka, the one Indian philosophical school to propound hedonism as a way of life, appeared sometime between the fifth and sixth century B.C. in northern India. It is said that this hedonistic school stealthily crept into Indian speculation, created an unpleasant turmoil, and passed away as mysteriously as it had come.” (Riepe 551)

In Indian philosophy, there are Vedas which lead to spirituality, morals, and ethics. The most important ‘Brahminism’ is presented in Ananthamurthy’s novel *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*. It was first published in Kannada (1965) and later translated into English in 1976. Ananthamurthy presents the orthodox in religion where he shows the major incidents through the help of hedonism, Charvaka (materialism) which signifies a materialist or a person who believes in ‘eating, drinking and being merry.’ This philosophy was completely atheistic and based on materialism, a life that should be pleasurable and with no worries. Charvaka’s philosophy rejects the existence of otherworldly entities such as god and the afterlife. Hedonism presents a pleasurable life where an individual naturally craves whatever gives him the most pleasure and the least pain. *Samskara* is a representation of the conflict between orthodox Brahminism and Anti-Brahminism. The novel is set in an *agrahara* called Durvasapur and opens with Naranappa’s death, raising many questions. Questions about ‘real brahmin’ become the novel’s main theme and about the ‘funeral rites of Naranappa’. Ananthamurthy presents his characters with a strong story where he raises questions on Indian philosophy and Brahminism. The novel presents a miniature world of Indian Hindu Society. Through the characters, the writer presents the Hindu society which seems superstitious, illogical, fake, unreal, and sinful. If we talk about hedonist schools in Indian philosophy then Naranappa and Praneshacharya present the most relatable characteristics.

“Having rejected the teaching of the Vedas and Upanishads, and with them the notion of deity, afterlife, heaven, and hell, the Charvaka attempts to develop its ethics based on what lies closest to hand: the individual and his desires.” (Riepe 551)

These above lines suit Naranappa, Ananthamurthy uses Naranappa as a spokesperson to irradiate religious orthodoxy. He was a hedonist and he is shown to be more dreadful and threatening to the conservative Brahmins in the novel. He rebels against Brahmin authority posing a direct threat to their existence. He is presented as an individual whose liberty is

everything to him, his presence (when he to alive) seems to be like a 'challenge' to conservative Brahmins in *agrahara*. "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" (Ananthamurthy 12). Naranappa was disliked by all Brahmins in the *agrahara* for his hedonistic tendencies and blasphemous behavior. He disobeyed all religious laws of Brahmins and preached his rational approach to life. He did whatever he wanted which represents 'hedonism', he never cared for religion. According to him, religion is fake and unreal, life has to be lived with joy and pleasure. He broke all the limits of a Brahmin, he got mingled with Dalits and Muslims (which represents the caste system in Hindu society. According to *Chaturvarandharma*, there are four Varnas: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. This division of castes transfuses a sense of superiority and inferiority in Hindus.), he had a woman Chandri, who ate flesh and drank wine which was all against the law of Brahminism. Through Naranappa, Ananthamurthy expresses his concern for the hollow religious degeneration of moral values in Brahmins who use religion as an instrument to fulfill their selfish motives and desires. In the context of *Samskara*, Ananthamurthy seems to be with Naranappa to unmask the orthodox Brahmins and their hypocrisy.

"Sacred scripture is a scandalous hash of contradiction reconciled by tricky and conniving commentators. Bathing in the Ganges for moral purification, image, and stone worship is as ridiculous as the rites for the dead. What the priests call "sins" and "virtues" are words invented to frighten people into doing certain things advantageous to the priests." (Riepe 554)

Ananthamurthy talks about religion in a way where he presents orthodoxy, superstition, human desires, selfishness, temptation, carnal desires, and Dharma. Naranappa gives an indication of the degeneration and worthlessness of Brahminism his hedonistic life affects Praneshacharaya's life and moral values for Brahminhood. Naranappa attacks Praneshacharaya telling him "You read those lush sexy Puranas, but you preach a life of bareness. But my words...it means to *sleep with a woman*; if I say *eat fish*, it means *eat fish*." (Ananthamurthy 23) Naranappa challenges Praneshacharaya to step out of his cocoon and experience the world of senses. Praneshacharaya, a pious Brahmin who is completely into his faith of *dharma*.

Praneshacharaya at the age of sixteen married a crippled girl, named Bhagirathi believing that by doing so he was following Lord Krishna's command of 'Do what is to be done with no thought of fruit.' He feels that by serving his wife he could get *moksha*. Praneshacharaya was living a life with no thought of fruit, a life without pleasure. He reads erotic Puranic tales but leads a life of barrenness. We can see that Praneshacharaya is a well-known and highly educated Brahmin in *agrahara*, he is the one who gives instructions and performs rituals. Everybody listens to him and in the case of Naranappa's funeral, he tries to find a way where he gets trapped. Ananthamurthy presents 'desire' as an awakening metaphor, Praneshacharaya's encounter with Chandri urges his senses, it releases him from the rigid code. He realizes that he had no authority to decide anything for *agrahara*, after having a new experience he feels the service to his wife is contemptible. He thinks he is not different from Naranappa, he starts the process of self-questions and finds Chandri. Here, we can see that physical desires overtake spiritual ones.

Eventually, Ananthamurthy's novel *Samskara* presents 'hedonism' with the aspects of Brahminism. As we talked about hedonist school in Indian philosophy, we see that "There is no spirit of defeatism or depression discernible in Charvaka." (Riepe 552) In short, the writer

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directly talks about carnal desires where he presents that the human body is equal it demands equality, and no one can control his/her senses by preventing the desires. Naranappa is presented as an impure Brahmin because he breaks all the rules of Brahminism by attempting all not- acceptable things. On the other hand, Praneshacharaya becomes a hedonist by crossing the limits and realizing the reality of the world and human desires. Ananthamurthy raises many questions for Hindu society throughout the novel where his narrative style and issues present the importance of reality and truth.

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