UNIT 1 THE WRITER AND HIS LITERARY CONTEXT

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall give you (i) a short history of the Kannada language and literature in order to acquaint you with the literary trends from the very beginning till date; (ii) a brief view of the growth of the Kannada novel and identify the chief concerns and themes of Kannada novels; and finally (iii) introduce you to the writer and his works and their major themes. All this will help you to understand U.R. Ananitha Murthy’s novel Sanskara better and will enable you to put it in the context of Kannada literature. It will also hopefully help you to understand his unique contribution to Indian literature.

Many a time our students know more about Western literature than they do about their own language and literature. This unit will update your knowledge of Kannada literature and also help you to get a comparative perspective.

1.1 KANNADA LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

1.1.1 Kannada Language

Kannada is one of the oldest Dravidian languages and is spoken in its various dialects by close to 5 crore people. It is the state language of Karnataka, one of the four southern states in India. The Kannada language has been spoken for about 2500 years, with the Kannada writing system being in use for about the last 1900 years.

The initial development of the Kannada language is similar to that of other Dravidian languages, notably Tamil and Telugu. During later centuries,
Kannada, along with Telugu, has been greatly influenced by Sanskrit vocabulary and literary styles. Spoken Kannada tends to vary from region to region. The written form is more or less constant throughout Karnataka, however. Linguists identify about 20 dialects of Kannada. The Kannada script itself is derived from Brahmi script.

Kannada is almost as old as Tamil, the truest of the Dravidian family. Initially the area of the Kannada speech extended much further to the north than the present Karnataka, but it was pushed back by the Indo-Aryan Marathi. The early (pre-800 AD) bits and pieces of Kannada literature that are available are insufficient to lay claims to the literature’s origins. The oldest extant book is Shrivijaya’s *Kavi Raja Marga* (circa 840).

### 1.1.2 Old Kannada Literature

The old Kannada phase of Kannada literature marks the period from the 10th century to approximately the 12th century. This period consists mainly of Jain religious literature. The most famous poet of this period was Pampa (902-975 AD), one of the most famous writers in the Kannada language. His *Vikramarjuna Vijaya* (also called *Pampa Bharatha*) is hailed as a classic to this day. With this and his other important work *Adipurana* he set a benchmark of poetic excellence for the Kannada poets of the future. The former work is an adaptation of the celebrated Mahabharata, and is the first such adaptation in Kannada. Noted for the strong human bent and the dignified style of his writing, Pampa has been one of the most influential writers in Kannada. He is identified as the *adi kavi* (first poet).

Ponna (939-966 AD) was also an important writer from the same period, with *Shantri-Purana* as his magnum opus. Another major writer of the period was Ranna (949 CE). His most famous works are the Jain religious work *Ajita-Tirthankara Purana* and the *Gada-Yuddham* (The Mace Fight), a bird’s eye view of the Mahabharata, set in the last day of the Battle of Kurukshetra and relating the story of the Mahabharata through a series of flashbacks. Structurally, the poetry in this period is in the Champa style – essentially it is poetry interspersed with lyrical prose.

### 1.1.3 Medieval Kannada Literature

The medieval Kannada period gave birth to several genres in Kannada literature, with new forms of composition coming into use, including Ragale (a form of blank verse) and metres like Bhamini, Shatpadi, Sangatya and Desi. The works of this period are based on Jain, Hindu and secular themes. Two of the early writers (13th century) of this period were Harihara and Raghavanka, both trailblazers in their own right. Harihara established the Ragale form of composition, and most of his works are based on the Shaiva and Veerashaiva traditions. Raghavanka popularized the Shatpadi (six-lined stanza) metre through his six works, the most famous being *Harisichandra Charitre*, based on the life of the Hindu mythological character Harishchandra. The work is noted for its intense attention to human ideals. A famous Jain writer of the same period is Janna, who expressed Jain religious teachings through his works, *Yashodhara Charite* and *Ananthanatha Purana*. A seminal work on Kannada grammar from the same period is *Shabda Mani Darpana* by Keshi Raja.
Vachanas were revolutionary poems. They were the strongest reactions to the existing social, religious and economic conditions of that time. More importantly, they hold a mirror to the seed of a social revolution, which caused a radical re-examination of the ideas of caste, creed and religion. One of the important ideas coming out of this revolution was the view that work is worship and a pathway to spirituality. Some of the important writers of Vachana literature include Basaveshvara (1131-1167 AD), Allama Prabhu, Chenna Basavanna, Jedara Dasimayya and Akka Mahadevi, the first woman-writer in Kannada.

Arguably, Kumara Vyasa has been the most famous and most influential Kannada writer of all times. His lifetime work, the Karnata Bharata Katha Manjari, is a sublime adaptation of the first ten Parvas (chapters) of the Mahabharata. A devotee of Krishna, Kumara Vyasa ends his epic with the passing of Krishna in the tenth chapter of the Mahabharata. The work is easily the most celebrated in Kannada literature. Its fame arises out of the fact that it has appealed to people of all strata of education and intellect right up to the present day. The work is entirely composed in the Bhamini Shatpadi metre, a form of six-lined stanza. The range of human emotions that Kumara Vyasa explores and the versatility of his vocabulary are extensive. The work is particularly known for its use of sophisticated metaphors, earning Kumara Vyasa the title Rupaka Samrajya Chakravarti (Emperor of the Metaphors).

Bhakti literature is the composition by the Dasas or saints, around 15th century, singing the glory of God through poems. These poems called Padas were usually of 10 to 20 lines. They express the desire of the Bhakta or devotee to be one with God. This form of poetry was highly amenable to musical composition and exposition. This music evolved into the highly sophisticated and codified Karnatic music. The Haridasas spread the message of peace, love and bhakti in their Dasa Sahitya, which are also popularly known as Devaranamas. Important writers of the Bhakti genre are Purandara Dasa (1494-1564), and Kanaka Dasa.

1.1.4 Modern Kannada Literature

Modern Kannada literature begins with the arrival of English language through colonial administration. This literature is called Navodaya Sahitya. Navodaya literally means a new birth. This indeed was the reincarnation of Kannada literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, after a period of dormancy in the face of the British occupation of India. This period saw greats like B.M. Srikanthaiah, K.V. Putappa, popularly known as Kuvempu, D.R. Bendre, Masti Venkatesh Ayyangar, P.T. Narasimbhar, K.S. Narasimha Swamy, Shivaram Karanth, A.N. Krishna Rao, Basavaraja Kattimani, Niranjana, Betgeri Krishnasarma and many others. These writers were highly influenced by western literature, but recreated the west in the Kannada context. It was Srikanthaiah who started this movement of sorts with his translation of a few critically acclaimed English poems of the Romantic period. Many educated Kannadigas, especially those who were in the teaching profession, realized that they needed to express themselves in their mother tongue and started writing in Kannada. Kuvempu is a case in point, who was convinced by his professor (of British origin) that he should write in his mother tongue. Kuvempu went on to become a Rashtrakavi (national poet). His love of nature, realization of the greatness of man’s spirit and the vision to see the blend of nature and God made him more than Kannada’s Wordsworth.
His most famous work is the *Sri Ramayana Darshanam*, based on the Ramayana. He wrote two extraordinary novels – *Kamaru Heggaditi* and *Malegalalli Madumagalu*. Another interesting writer is Shivaram Karanth who was a man of great intellect, rock-solid convictions and a profound social commitment. His powerful social novels include *Marali Mamniye (Back to the Soil)*, *Bettada Jiva*, *Mainangala Sulyalli*, *Chomana Dudi* and *Mukajjiya Kanasugalu* (*A Dumb Granny’s Dreams*). Masti Vankatesh Ayyangar’s novel *Chikkavirajendradri* brought him the Jnanpith award. Niranjana and Basavaraj Kattimani are regarded as progressive writers. They wrote against social evils.

### 1.1.5 Post-Independence Period

Indian independence in 1947 brought with it the promise of freedom and a new genre sprouted in Kannada poetry. The torchbearer of this tradition was Gopalakrishna Adiga. The *Navya* poets wrote for and like disillusioned intellectuals. The sophistication in the use of language and the importance of technique to literature reached new heights in this genre. U.R. Anantha Murthy, P. Lankesh, A.K. Ramanujan, K.V. Tirumalesh, Shantinatha Desai, Subraya Chokkadi, Sumathindra Nadig, H.M. Chennayya, Gangadhar Chittal, V.K. Gokak, K.S. Nisar Ahmed and Vaidehi, are all leading writers of this movement. Students should note that *Samskara* emerged out of the Navya movement.

*Navyottara* (Postmodernist) Kannada literature in the last 50 years has been closely related to social aspects. The oppressions of the caste system gave rise to the Bandaaya and Dalit genres of Kannada literature. Feminist movements in Indian society gave rise to the Streevaadi (Feminist) genre of poetry. Short stories have been very popular in the 20th century. Siddalingayya, Devanuru Mahadeva, Amaresh Nigadoni, Mogalli Ganesh, Boluvar Mahammad Kunhi and Sara Abubakar are all leading writers of this movement. They are all currently writing.

It is a testimony to the greatness of Kannada literature that its writers have won seven Jnanpith awards (K.V. Putappa, D.R. Bendre, V.K. Gokak, Shivarama Karanth, Masti Venkatesh Ayyangar, U.R. Anantha Murthy and Girish Karnad), more than writers of any other Indian language. Also, more than 46 Kannada writers have received the Indian Sahitya Akademi award.

This section has provided you with a brief account of the development of Kannada literature from its ancient past to the present. Kannada poetry has had a very long, rich and varied history. Prose however, emerged only in 20th century. Prose writers like Masti Venkatesh Ayyangar, Shivarama Karanth, Kuvempu, Anantha Murthy and Lankesh have created a literature which is greatly significant in tone and structure. Kannada literature has had a longer and more sustained history than that of many other Indian languages.

**Questions/Activities**

1. Write an essay on the origin and development of modern Kannada literature.
2. Pinpoint some of the important writers who gave new dimensions to the Kannada literature.

3. Pick up at least one of the several Jnanpith awardees of Kannada literature and try and find out more about him.

1.2 A SHORT HISTORY OF KANNADA NOVEL

1.2.1 The Emerging Kannada Novel

Any discussion of the post-colonial literary cultures in India must begin with a reference to the history of colonialism. The process of colonization affected not only the economic and political spheres, but also the culture of the colonized. The different literary genres, models, and movements – indeed, the very institution of “literature” – in the regional languages of India, in the colonial and post-colonial period have their beginnings in the attempts of the colonized people to come to terms with the colonial rule. The development of linguistic self-awareness, the formation of new literary and cultural practices is closely connected with the regulation of the socio-cultural life of the colonized by the establishment of colonial administrative apparatus. In this section we shall examine some moments in the history of the novel and set out its relationship to colonial rule and the emergence of nationalism. This attempt is to sketch the 19th century historical context that made possible the emergence of the novel. We shall also deal with the representation of life in the early Kannada novels.

The most significant phase in the cultural history of colonial India was the emergence of the English educated middle-class. It is important to note here that the Brahmans were the first to receive the benefits of English education and to exploit the opportunities it afforded to consolidate their political and socio-economic position in the new order that was emerging. Another related development of 19th century history was the construction of the Vedic tradition, which was only one of the diverse traditions of India, as the canonical tradition. The result was the codification of customs and the textualization of tradition, with Brahmans as the sole authority in matters relating to native customs and practices. This enabled the colonial state to regulate and discipline the heterogeneous customs and practices that were resistant to its exercise of political and cultural control. This process further reinforced the cultural and political power of the Brahmin community. Ideologically, the English educated Indian middle class of the 19th century was the product of an admixture of liberalism, utilitarianism and a “discovered” or constructed Vedic tradition.

Within the knowledge system and ideological framework imposed by the British, the Indian middle class began to develop some form of patriotism. On the one hand, the middle class began to articulate the “spiritual greatness” of the Indian civilization, and, on the other it strove to assimilate Western science and technology. The cultural ideal of an “East-West” synthesis is one of the important features of the nationalist discourse. This paved the way for the emergence later of an elite intelligentsia. The very logic of its emergence separated this intelligentsia from the local traditions and the life-styles of the common people. Having emerged as a “trishanku” class between the rulers and the ruled, it was not possible for this middle class to embody politically its feeling of patriotism, especially during the ascendancy of colonial rule. Thus it
was important, socially and politically, for this class to define and establish its identity.

Given the multi-dialect formation of India, the consolidation of different dialects into major regional languages played a crucial role in the growth of Indian nationalism. The goal of a unified Karnataka was, in the early 20th century, an important factor both in shaping the freedom movement and in the development of Kannada literature in Karnataka. The emergence of a socially and politically dominant elite, the projection and propagation of the dialect of this elite as the language of the region, deploying that language in newspapers and other print media, in education, and in creating a literature to articulate its socio-political aspirations—these were the concrete historical features of the 19th century nationalist discourse. In the process of defining its social identity, the middle class tried to secure both regional and national identity.

And it is during this process that the novel emerged. This particular form of narrative was developed by the middle class to clarify its place and task in a rapidly changing world. Thus the beginning of new literary efforts in regional languages can be seen as an aspect of the shaping of national identity. The Kannada novel, as a new form of storytelling, grew out of the socio-political needs of the middle class. It is not surprising, then, that the early Kannada novels tell the story of this “trishanku” elite’s efforts to consolidate its political position and achieve a sense of social identity. The Kannada novel foregrounds the problems, the aspirations, and the anxieties of this class; the struggles of the lower classes and other historical problems are passed over in silence. In this sense, one can say that the novel in Kannada, as elsewhere, is “an epic of the middle-class”.

1.2.2 Early Kannada Novelists

A noteworthy feature of the history of the novel in Karnataka is that most of the early writers were Saraswath Brahmins. Look at some of the names of the writers and translators: Gulwadi Venkata Rao, Bolara Babu Rao, Annaji Rao, Benagal Rama Rao, H. Narayana Rao, Panje Mangesh Rao—all were Saraswath Brahmins. Another feature is that, in terms of their social stance, these writers were reformists.

Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka State was the first district in Karnataka to come under direct British rule, as part of the Madras Presidency, soon after the fall of Tippu Sultan in 1799. Since 1834, the Basel Mission started its activities in this region. By the time of the First World War, this Mission had sent more than 100 missionaries to India, and more than half of them were working in the field of language, literature and education. As elsewhere in India, in this region too, the Saraswaths were the first to receive English education and seize the opportunities opened up by that education. They were originally Karaniks (accountants) during the rule of the Keladi Kingdom and were traders in the 19th century. Their high social background and literacy had placed them in a position of advantage to best utilize the opportunities opened up by English education. Moreover, being a migrant community, the Saraswaths were skillful at adapting to new circumstances. In The Madras District Gazetteer and The Madras District Manuals we find highly appreciative remarks regarding this community’s progressive character, its adaptability and its business acumen. These sources also note, with
approval, their involvement in the field of education, their presence in upper level bureaucracy, their departure from traditional ways of living and their assumption of modern life-style: "They are an active and progressive class and many of them have ceased to attach any value to any particular way of living."

We should not, however, forget that the 'Saraswaths' pragmatism and their ability to adapt to new circumstances were really attempts, on their part, to preserve their social identity. As Frank Conlon has observed, this community, having begun its migration from Goa in the 18th century, has had to undergo many changes. In the early stages of its rule, the strategy of the colonial state was to govern and open up new opportunities without greatly upsetting the existing socio-economic structures. Given their access to the public and their literacy, the Saraswath community was in an ideal position to grab these limited opportunities and thus advance itself socially by learning new concepts and techniques. But this also gave rise to severe problems within the community. The teachings in the Basel mission schools began to disturb the religious beliefs of the community.

The educated Saraswaths started rebelling against the taboos and religious customs of their community. They questioned the basic tenets of the religion. In fact, one of the leaders of the Saraswath community, Ullal Raghunathayya, helped to found the Brahma Samaj in 1870. The Swami of Pandurangashram tried to enforce a strict observance of daily religious customs; this resulted in an intense ideological and philosophical conflict between the religious leader, who thought that the urban youth's sensibility was a violation of dharma; and the progressive youth of the community, who contended that the religious practices were meaningless in the modern context. This conflict gave rise to heated and vigorous debates on issues such as sea voyage, widow remarriage, education for women, disfigurement of widows, etc. It would be more appropriate to understand this conflict as an attempt to redefine religious practices in the changed historical circumstances. As I have already indicated, the Saraswath community was facing an identity crisis in the new social order, and the debate over religious reform was essentially an attempt to resolve that crisis. As Frank Conlon rightly pointed out:

It would be more accurate to state that all Saraswaths, including the Swami, were experiencing changed conditions and were endeavoring to adjust to the opportunities and requirements of the times. Many of the Swami's reforms were departures from what had been Saraswath practice in the previous century. What distinguished these reforms from those of social reformers was their reference to a different set of standards and priorities. The reformers for their part similarly aimed at an abstract model derived more from the Western experience.

The Saraswaths' involvement in this conflict also enabled them to become the pioneers of modern literature. The novel emerged as an important medium in which to portray this conflict and to articulate the terms for its resolution. It is a form through which the middle class attempted to "make sense of a world radically altered by colonialism and to redefine (its) place in the world". The early novels in Dakshina Kannada District deal with the problems that arose out of the Saraswath community's social situation. Among them are Gulwadi Venkat Rao's Indira Bai (1899), generally considered as the first social novel of Kannada, and Bolar Babu Rao's Vagdevi (1905). These novels rehearse in detail the debate between the traditional and progressive sections of the
community, and convey the firm conviction that the defeat of the characters subscribing to traditional values is historically inevitable.

In *Indira Bai*, the characters representing tradition are portrayed as hypocritical and dishonest and the educated characters are presented as mature and honest. Bheema Rao, the local businessman, poisons his own servant Sundara Rao, because his wife does not like the servant. He gives his daughter in marriage to Vittal Rao who is very ill and who dies soon after the marriage. When the President of the santamandali tries to seduce Indira, her parents tell her to satisfy him. Finally Indira runs away and marries Bhaskar Rao, a western-educated Assistant Collector, with the help of the local lawyer Amrita Rao. The message of the story is clear. Those who subscribe to western rationality and act according to it are good. Indira Bai too escapes from "tradition and orthodoxy" through "reading".

According to Gulwadi Venkat Rao, his novel is about truth and honesty, the only virtues that are valid not only here but also in the hereafter. *Indira Bai* reads as a satire, since the tension between opposing values is resolved outside the structure of the novel. There is a certain kind of optimism regarding the coming history. Indeed, the absence of tension in the structure of the novel and the optimism regarding the future are two characteristic features of most early novels of Kannada.

In Bolara Babu Rao's *Vagdevi*, there are no characters to represent modern values. It portrays the corruption and the inevitable crumbling of the old order. The characters are dissolute, selfish and cowardly. In Gulwadi's novel, at least the dharmagurus are portrayed as men of integrity, *Vagdevi* however portrays them as most corrupt. Thus we see the dissolute and lecherous religious head, Chanchalneta, seducing the innocent Vagdevi, keeping her as his mistrees, and even bringing her to live on the Temple premises. Vagdevi too learns to use her "body" and "beauty" to acquire money and status. There are, then, no good characters, no heroes, in this corrupt social order, which, thus, has no right to continue. At the end of the novel, the whole edifice collapses under the accumulated weight of the characters' sinful lives.

In both these novels, the traditional life is understood and evaluated on the basis of western rationality. According to them, the transformation of Indian life is a historical necessity. But the point of view here is subjective, and the assumption is that the individual is the source of history, meaning and work. The narratives try to rationalize the subjugation of "Indian" culture. The world-view of the middle class, itself a product of colonial modernization, redefines religion, truth, virtue, etc. There is an attempt to reform social and gender roles within a liberal-individualist framework. Let us look at this conversation between Amba Bai and Indira Bai in *Indira Bai*:

"What book are you reading?"
"I finished *Stri Dharma Niti* yesterday, and now I'm reading *Aesop's Fables.*"
"Aren't those missionary books?"
"I've no idea."
"They publish those books to violate the purity of our caste."
"I don't see anything of that sort in the books I'm reading. How can the purity of caste be violated by merely reading these books?"
"They contain things that go against our religion."
"Not in the books I’ve read. They contain very good instructions for women about how to behave with parents, husbands, and strangers."

"Not in the books I’ve read" – notice the historical conviction of this response. It turned out to be the case in history. The educated Saraswaths of the 19th and 20th century marched ahead by rejecting Amba Bais and Bheema Raos. The early novels reconstruct religion in the light of the knowledge acquired by the emerging middle class. They accept universal standards based especially on the notion of progress. They are nationalists to the extent they try to “re-equip the nation culturally in order to transform it”. Their concern is with the regeneration of national culture. In the largely reformist thrust of these novels, the element of cultural distinctiveness is underplayed.

Bhagirath by Gulvadi Venkata Rao, Indir by Kerur Vasudeva Rao, Madiddunno Maharaya by M.S. Puttanna, Sushile by Nanjanagudu Tirumalamba, are the names of a few important... Kannada novels.

1.2.3 Important Kannada Novelists

After 1930, Kannada novels began to flourish. Many important Kannada novelists emerged during the 1930s. The greatest of them, undoubtedly, was Dr. Shivarama Karantha, another Jnanpith awardee from Karnataka. He wrote more than 60 novels and in his novels he continued the reformist tradition of Gulwadi, although his treatment of traditional society is more complex and his criticism softer. His novels tell the story of the great transformation of Dakshina Kannada district. Within the liberal ideological framework of his novels, Shivarama Karantha tries to articulate some kind of scientific religion, economy, and individualism. We can see this clearly in Comana Dudi, Marali Mannige, Maimanagala Suliyalli, Mugida Yuddha, Ondaryada Urulalli, Sarasammana Samadhi, Kudiyara Kusu, Alida Mele, Mookajjya Kanasugalu, and Bettada Jiva. These novels detail, with insight and empathy, the changing life in pre-Independence India. When Karantha deals with post-Independence Indian politics, he depicts, in moralistic terms, the corruption of people. In Chomana Dudi the narrator is fully aware of the shape of things to come. The focus, however, is on traditional society in transition. The desire of Choma to own a piece of land is a historical expression of the changing social relationship in the countryside, even though Karantha describes it as something innate to human nature. Still the novel makes it clear that the very humanism which underlies its structure, cannot be realized within that structure. Choma’s drum keeps on beating. We may consider the symbol of the drum important for understanding the way in which not only Karanth, but also other Kannada writers have conceptualized art. As a matter of fact, after 1928 we have many novels with artist-heroes. For Karantha, Choma’s drum symbolizes art: it is an expression of pain, of social reality. Karanth’s humanism sees nationalism in largely cultural terms, even as it understands culture (“the role of the artist”) in elite terms. Basically, Karanth’s novels examine human nature, and tell the story of the success and failure of individuals. The individual is the source of all historical change. That is why it is not surprising that in his later novels he depicts post-Independence politics as a story of corruption and dishonesty.

This section helps you to understand the emergence and development of Kannada novels from its beginning to the present. Dr. Shivarama Karanth has been awarded the prestigious Jnanpith award for his novel “Mookajjiga Kanasugalu”. Kannada novels generally have had a very long, rich history. Novelist like Masti Venkatesh Ayyangar, Shivarama Karanth, Kuvempu, Anantha Murthy and Lankesh have written internationally reputed novels. Sadly however, many good novels have remained untranslated into English or any Indian language.

Questions

1. Summarize the anti-Brahminism in the novels discussed above.
2. Analyze the social context that caused the birth of Kannada novels.
3. Who were the important Kannada novelists in its early stages?
4. Pinpoint some of the important writers who gave new dimensions to the Kannada novels.
5. Learn more about Jnanpith award winner novelist Dr. Shivarama Karantha.

1.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF DR. U.R. ANANTHA MURTHY

1.3.1 A Biographical Sketch of U.R. Anantha Murthy

Udupi Rajagopala Acharya Anantha Murthy was born on December 21, 1932 at Melige, a remote village in Tirthahalli Taluk, in Shimoga District of Karnataka State. Anantha Murthy had his early Sanskrit education in a traditional pathashala. He completed his B.A. Honours from Maharaja’s College, Mysore and Post-graduation in English from the University of Mysore in 1956. Later in 1966, he earned his Ph. D (English & Comparative Literature) from the University of Birmingham, U.K.

He began his career as a Lecturer in English in 1956 and continued as such till 1963. Later he joined the Regional College of Education, Mysore, as a Reader in English and served there till 1970. During the period 1970-80 he was Reader in English at Mysore University. He was Professor of English at the Department of English, University of Mysore during 1980-92. He became the Vice-Chancellor of the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala in 1987-91.

He has been a visiting Professor at a number of foreign and Indian Universities like the University of Iowa (1975), Tufts University (1978), University of Hyderabad (2001), University of Cornell (2000), University of Pennsylvania (2000), Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi (1993), University of Tubingen, Germany (1992), and Shivaji University, Kolhapur (1982).

He was Chairman, National Book Trust of India, Delhi in 1992-93; President, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi in 1993-98; and Chairman, Indian Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi in 1998-2002.

Awards

U.R. Anantha Murthy has received numerous awards both from the Government and also Akademis and other academic institutions for excellence
Lectures

He has lectured on a wide variety of subjects including politics, culture, literature and art. Some important lectures of his are: on “Culture and Destiny” at Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal; on “Indian Literature” in the University of Madison and Chicago in 1985; on “Indian Society, Culture, Politics, and Literature” at the University of Birmingham, Alabama in 1987; on “Colonialism and Indian Literature” at the University of California in; and on “Art in the Modern Age” at Bangalore University in 1989.

In one of his interviews, Anantha Murthy has stressed the need for de-glamorizing English.

Currently, he is residing at Bangalore and his address is – 498, 6th A main, RMV 2nd stage, Bangalore-560 094, Telefax, 080-3415125

1.3.2 His Works

In Kannada, Anantha Murthy’s works can be classified into short stories, poetry, plays, novels and essays. The list of his publications given below –

Short stories

Aidu Dashakada Kathegalu, 2001
Suryana Kudure, 1995
Mooru Dasakada Kathegalu, 1989
Akasha Mattu Bekku, 1981
Mauni, 1972
Prasne, 1962
Endendu Mugiyyada Kathe, 1955

Poetry

Eeevaregina Kavithegalu (collected poems) (2001)
Mithuna (1992)
Ajjana Hegala Sukkugal (1989)
15 Padyagalu (1970)
Bavali,(1963)

Novels

Divya (2001)
Bhava (1994)
Avasthe (1978)
Bharathipura (1973)
Samskara (1965)

Play

Avahane (1971)
Essays and others

Kannada, Karnataka, 2001
Yuga Pallata, 2001
Daw Da Jing, 1994
Poorvapara, 1990
Samakshama, 1982
Prajne Mattu Parisara, 1974

Journal

Rukuvathu, a cultural and literary quarterly in Kannada, started 1 Jan 1981.

His novel Sanskara (1965) has been translated into English, Russian, French, Hungarian, German, Swedish, Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, Marathi, Urdu, Tamil and Gujarati.

Publications in English/English translations

English translations

Many of Dr. Anantha Murthy’s works in Kannada have been translated to English by different persons. Details are as follows:

i. ‘Initiation’ a Kannada story translated by Gary Wills.
iii. Bhava, a novel & ‘Twenty Vachanas from Shunya Sampadane’ is a set of twenty poems translated from the Kannada by Judith Kroll.
iv. Bharathipura, a novel has been translated by P. Shreenivasa Rao (1996).
vi. A recent publication Stallion of the Sun and Other Stories brings together five stories from his five collections translated by Narayan Hegde (1999).

English

The other works in English include essays on various topics like Literature and Culture (2002), “The Concept of Man in Kannada Literature” (1979) and “Why Not Worship in the Nude?”

Film versions

Sanskara was made into an award-winning film in 1970. Two of his stories, ‘Bara’ and ‘Ghatashraddha’ have also appeared in film versions.

1.3.3 Anantha Murthy as a Writer.

U.R. Anantha Murthy is one of the most significant writers in contemporary India. A Lohiaite socialist in his outlook, much of his work is a severe indictment of brahminical orthodoxy and evinces a spirit that is restless for
change. Samskara (1965) expresses his rage at the oppressive tradition of brahminism that is decadent and burdensome and describes the spiritual struggle of an individual as he tries to forge a new identity for himself. In Bharathipuram (1973) his central character Jagannatha, a Brahmin landlord newly returned from England after completing studies there, wants to usher in a social revolution by leading a group of untouchables into the temple. If we accept this character as an alter ego of the writer, then a passage in the novel gives us an idea of the mind of the dreaming revolutionary:

He [Jagannatha] must wait for the birth of a new man within, whose eyes would look upon and comprehend the reality around with compassion, and at the same time, dissect it clinically with a desire to change it for the better; who would passionately love it and still stay detached; understand why there was the caste system and realize that he too was not above it but would transcend it in his actions and walk with his head held high. With that birth, Jagannatha would be able both to embrace the world and renounce it, grow gradually into a concrete form, walk the path of cruelty, violence and greed and still stay unaffected, reduce Manjunatha into a cipher and unload the baskets of human excrement from the untouchables’ heads. An Indian would attain real dignity only when it became possible for a Brahmin boy to desire a dark-skinned untouchable girl with flowers in her hair, only when a Brahmin girl longed to be hugged by a coarse-haired and dark-skinned untouchable boy. (Bharathipuram: 203-204)

Here is an agenda of change most of which still remains unrealized. However, in this novel the writer interrogates the notion of an ideal revolutionary. The social revolution envisaged by Jagannatha fails and in depicting this failure, Anantha Murthy is writing ‘a critique of the limitations of the radical middle classes, claiming an exclusive and sympathetic right to change the nation,’ as Professor Nagarajan puts it in his introduction to the English translation of the novel (xiv).

Anantha Murthy is perhaps best described by the term ‘critical insider’ that he himself used in his essay ‘Being A Writer’ (1992), (Literature and Culture: 139) “A truly critical insider”, he says, “would have boundless compassion for the poor and dispossessed in India, would passionately engage himself with the present in all its conflict of values, and only with such a mind and heart would he know what is usable in the rich past of India for a creative present” (139). Talking about how others have viewed him, he says: “I am described as a rebel against the caste system, a votary of individualism, a modernist against traditions—for which I am either praised or disliked. Nowadays … I am also either attacked or praised as a traditionalist, as a lapsed revolutionary, or as one growing soft (or wise?). In the manner of all writers past their middle age. People don’t seem to respond to the passionate critique of religion in my earlier works, and the critique of modernization which follows, in my later works” (140).

Clearly his thematic concerns have evolved over the years. This evolution can perhaps be seen in the recent publication Stallion of the Sun and Other Stories (1999) which brings together five stories from his five collections. These stories, says the jacket, represent the writer’s journey from ‘an angry young radical to an intensely humanist conservative’.
1.4 LET US SUM UP

In this section we have given you information on U. R. Anantha Murthy and his multi-faceted creativity and his characteristic themes. This should help you to understand *Samskara*, the text under study, better.

1.5 QUESTIONS

1. What are the major works of Dr. Anantha Murthy?
2. Do you think you can find the time to read the writer’s *Bharathipura* or at least one or two of his short stories? My own choice from among his short stories would be ‘Ghatashraddha’ and ‘Clip Joint’.
3. Remember, any extra reading of the writer will pay you rich dividends in terms of your understanding and your score in the examination.