

Chapter: 3

Ananthamurthy and Existential Quest

Every age brings its dilemma with its development in various fields. These dilemmas can prove the most crucial history. Such visions need not to be always baseless as they are the stuff of which men make the record of their lived experience. Since human life is nothing but a search for meaning and value of this world, this human search of meaning and value is all pervasive. Human existence has always been a problem for man, where many contradictions and illusions take place with actions.

The outer environment which includes family, community, society, nation or we can say the whole world make a web for the individual. The individual experiences the outer world and formulates new conceptions, meanings and conclusions about the world but it is not possible that this world will always respond in a rational manner to the curiosities of the individual. Many curiosities, contradictions and questions remain unsolved in this world and sometimes endeavors for the solutions sweep away all the reason and meaning and lead towards a kind of contradictions or conflicts. These contradictions and conflicts, ultimately, end in a loss of individual identity and meaninglessness of this world. In this modern era where conflicts are pervasive, this sense of lost of identity increases. If we count, we will find that all the movements, literary theories like Colonialism, Existentialism, Feminism, Essentialism, Casteism, and Marxism etc are the results of identity crisis. The identity is wrapped in the name of sex, culture, religion, caste, class, race etc. Thus, Existentialism is a mode of assessing human existence and particularly in its contemporary form concentrates on the individual human self. The term Existentialism was first used by Gabriel Marcel to define Sartrean philosophy. Contradictory to naturalism and realism of the 18th and 19th century which lead one to treat everyman as object, existentialism endows its full

faith in man's integrity. Sartre, in his article "A More Precise Characterization of Existentialism", points out the same thing:

. . . and everyone in the eighteenth century thought that all men had a common essence called *human nature*. Existentialism, on the contrary, maintains that in man - and in man alone - existence precedes essence. This simply means that man first *is*, and only subsequently is this or that, in a word, man must create his own essence: it is in throwing himself into the world, suffering there, struggling there, that he gradually defines himself. (*The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre* 157)

According to Existentialists, individual confronts contradictory situations which threaten to submerge individuality and personality in abstract, ideal essences or in such absolutes as 'the nation', 'the race', 'the tribe' etc. So existentialism is a mode which is very contradictory to the concept of essentialism. Existential thinkers, in general, have observed that in identity crisis, man passionately reasserts himself as an individual, conscious of the fact that no valid substitution can ever be made for a human existential crisis. Existentialism has risen in modern Europe because of the gradually increasing pressures of collectivism and abstract idealism has forced the individual to a determined self-affirmation. The rise of existentialism is indications of a specifically European crisis, but, in its broader ramifications, it is indicative of the modern crisis of human existence either from Europe or from any other continent of the world. In the times of severe strain and stress, when the fundamentals of human life and the established system of values have been shaken, when individual experiences the insecurity of life, and the solution tends to assert itself suspiciously. Existentialist argues that, whether abstract ideas exist or not they are not important to the existing individual who has to make concrete decisions. Hence, all humans are contributors of a universal quest, working in different cultures by different modes of living and diverse systems

of belief. However, in every generation of voyagers, there are many who strike out on their own, and swim against the tide. These people do not afraid of being challenged by the repressive collective norms which the world provides.

Influenced by the western existential writers, Indian writers began to experiment with the different forms of literature. The period of 1960's was the period of chaos as tossed between traditional culture and western modernity. The writers of this period tried to find a suitable form which could reflect their inconsistency between these opposite realities; tradition and modernism. Influenced by the writings of Sartre, Camus and Kafka, Ananthamurthy's writings reflect the Indian existential crisis experienced by educated Indians. In this train of ideology, we can put both *Samskara* and *Bharathipura* where the major characters have been shown in the light of existential crisis.

Samskara deals with the creative and moral crisis of Prenashecharya, a high priest, torn between the ideals of a world of skeptic and sanctity in which he is living. *Bharathipura* is a story of a landlord highly educated, who after returning to abroad faces a society which is traditional based on inequality and biases. In this society, Jagannatha finds himself and others as mere fetuses in the womb of god. He, with his struggle, tries to find out the way to emerge out from the contradictory values of his society. With these observations, we can assess that in *Bharathipura* and *Samskara* the interaction of orthodoxy, ethnicity, value system and community are based on Hinduism which has neither ceased nor apparently reached its peak. Both novels are the continuous disturbance to the established verities related to traditional Brahmanic social behavior, communal consciousness, religious activity, and family life. Jagannatha believes that his rebellious actions in a smooth ethnic unit can reshape its community existence and its decadent value system. Since acceptance and rebel to the social behavior suggest a dynamic process and

change within which collective identity and individual find expression, he wants a change in the collective belief that Holeyaru are made only to clean the shit and the people of upper caste are the masters of everything. As it is widely accepted that any value system or religion which is static or inflexible falls or breaks with the pressure of new emerging forces.

Ananthamurthy represents Bharathipura as a locality in which new forces of economy, education, and equality are emerging to change. In a rigid community, individuals are forced to choose either mischievous paths to live hypocritically or they become deviant if they choose opposite paths. Ananthamurthy represents Agrahara as a community where these two opposite ideologies conflict. On one side are the Brahmins of Agrahara who have all kind of desires but they repress their desires till they find another way to achieve it. Durgabhatta sees Chandri with lusty eyes but not openly, Dashacharya eats food before cremation but in Prijatapura. They choose malicious paths to maintain the orthodoxy of their community. But Naranappa openly chooses to become a deviant for the sake of his desires because he is aware of the fact that if his path is wrong in the eyes of society, the ways in which others are living are also wrong. Praneshacharya also marries to an invalid to keep his asceticism alive. Thus, the picture of the Agrahara that emerges in the mind of the writer is not positive, rather it is highly disgusting with its orthodoxy, its oppressive faithfulness to religious dogmas and ritualistic ambiance.

Samskara represents a decadent structure which once coming out its complacency, cannot be integrated again. Both the novels deal with the social and personal dilemma of individuals in psychological complexity and the individuals after conflicts choose to become individual. Meenakshi Mukherjee says in this context, "The crisis of a civilization, in which, through a painful process, a collective code is giving way to individual choice" (*Realism and Reality* 169). In the earlier part of the novel, Acharya is not an individual, but his fate is the destiny of the

community as well. He chooses the actions which his community expects to him so that he would be free from the responsibility of his own actions. The most important notion of existentialism which is reflected in the novels of Ananathamurthy is identity crisis which forces the individual to take stands in life. The tension between what we are and what we choose to be reflects in both the novels. Praneshacharya finds himself confronting with the question that “what manner of a man am I? I am just like you— a soul driven by lust and hate. Is this my first lesson in humanity” (*Samskara* 77)? Like Praneshacharya, Jagannatha feels an unbearable condition of the lower caste people:

Jagannatha would ponder over this sense of emptiness night and day, how can I make my words make sense to them? How can I make them accept what I’m telling them and make my words real by turning them into action? How can I slit the womb of Manjunatha and walk out? Bring them out. (*Bharathipura* 60)

The anxiety of the novelist (and of the heroes) is more existential, less social and political, what makes a person individual, rather than dynamic relative to contradictory situations. It would not be wrong to conclude that the clash in Praneshacharya is between his earlier asceticism and present eroticism as a result of the existential crisis which he faces after the death of Narannapa. The psychological inconsistency in Jagannatha is throughout the novel because of his understanding of the nothingness of the life in Bharathipura without opposing the set patterns of society which have degenerated the forces. This realization compels him to oppose the very structure of the society to which he belongs. Like Shakespeare’s Hamlet both were caught into conflicting situation of “to be or not to be” (*Hamlet* 26). This inconsistency emerges through specific circumstances in their lives. Praneshacharya feels the despair when he does not find the solution in the religious texts upon which he has relied his life. Jagannatha is caught by the despair

when he finds his changed self in contradiction to the rigidity of his community. So, the circumstances play an important role in the change of individual's perception. The individual responds these circumstances of despair which leads to identity crisis in different ways, and either they can accept the change or deny to act. Praneshacharya, Naranappa and Jagannatha accept change by taking the responsibility of their actions. But on the contrary Nagamani chooses death. She could not find any resolution to the repressive circumstances created by the patriarchal order. She is a mere thing in the hands of the fate and society. Before accepting the truth of the relation of Dharma to Artha, Kama and Moksha, Praneshacharya was also an object but existentialism denies this 'thingness' of man, as Sartre argues in *Existentialism is a Humanism*:

Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world - and defines himself afterwards. If man as existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. (349)

In the earlier part of the novel, Praneshacharya embodies in himself a moral choice which proclaims the superiority of asceticism over eroticism. By marrying an invalid, he is practicing the virtue of laboring the asceticism to which his society labels as the metaphor of superiority or spirituality. He feels proud, "By marrying an invalid, I get ripe and ready" (*Samskara* 2). He earns superiority through self sacrifice, through killing his individuality. He studies scriptures and goes to Kashi to earn everyone's admiration and respect for his learning. He lives a life by performing the rituals, giving lessons to others, chanting the scriptures for others and serving his invalid wife. He does everything in guise of duty and social responsibility. The existential responsibility is not a limited concept; rather it includes in itself the broader aspect of responsibility i.e. social responsibility. The existentialists have used, with great profundity, the eloquent words like

anguish, abandonment, despair etc. to present man's condition. Earlier the conflicted personality of Praneshacharya is questioned by Naranappa. He argues that his public readings of erotic Sanskrit tales arouse young men's sexual desires, whereas he himself is trying to become a person who is unaffected by these desires. Naranappa challenges Praneshacharya's dualism:

Now you explicate it, Acharya-re didn't the Achari himself corrupt the Brahmanism of the place? . . . That's why our elders always said: read the Vedas, read the Puranas, but don't try to interpret them. Acharya-re, you are the one who's studied in Kashi – you tell me, who ruined Brahmanism? (*Samskara* 25)

Praneshacharya always hopes to win Naranappa by taking him back to good brahminical ways. A self-governing life of choice and individual decisions is possible only when a destination is made by taking the responsibility of action. Sartre in this regard says that existentialism "puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders" (*Existentialism is a Humanism* 349-50). Existentialists consider responsibility of action as a chief tool to do something authentic, something individual which can be the solution of the existential crisis. When Naranappa would have felt the nothingness of the life which all Brahmins are living he chooses to be opposite to it. He takes the responsibility of his hedonistic ways which becomes the reason to the transition of Praneshacharya. The responsibility of his/her action is necessary as the individualistic action of change does not require any metaphysical answer. As existentialists believe that God is dead and now human beings have to take the responsibility of their actions. Jagannatha, like the Existentialists, feels that all is not well in the town and God is weaker who could not combat with the evil, or he is the cause of the evils in Bharathipura. He believes that the glory of Manjunatha should be destroyed because He is only one who is responsible for the ruining of Bharathipura. Jagannatha, like Derrida, rejects the notion

of 'metaphysics or logocentrism' where the core of presence (God) is seen as being truth. God functions, Derrida argues, as a sort of core truth, a 'transcendental signified'. As Derrida rejects the emphasis on centres, origins and essences, Jagannatha rejects the essence and center of Bharathipura which is Manjunatha. Characters in *Bharathipura* and *Samskara* discover every truth in religion or God. They try to find every solution through Him. As Jagannatha sees Manjunatha holds every act in Bharathipura. He is the only authority who is shaping the life of people. Jagannatha calls the people of Bharathipura 'the fetuses in the womb of god'. Like the foetus they have nothing their own, they are made by this God and will have to live according to Him. He tries to make a stone a stone which is considered as God. He feels that people have made this stone God and by making it profane he can prove it stone again. In the same way, the assumptions related to sacred things are proved wrong by Naranappa by eating the sacred fish and splitting on the holy stone. Jagannatha offers Saligrama to Holeyaru to touch and thinks, "If you touch what I offer you, it'll become a mere a stone to all of them" (*Bharathipura* 159). He rejects the authority of God or these made perceptions and tries to show their futility but the anachronistic nature of the community makes his intention futile. If he tries to make the stone a mere stone for upper castes by the touching of these lower castes it will become a Saligrama for these lower castes. Jagannatha thinks about the consequence of his action which is dilemmatic:

If you touch what I offer you, it will become a mere stone to all of them. My anguish is becoming the saligrama; because I offer it to you and because you touch it and because they see you touching it, let the stone become the saligrama and let the saligrama become a stone even as the evening deepens. (*Bharathipura* 159)

The context of the novels is the conflict between social and individual, ideal and unusual and existence and essence. In the course of the novels, Prenashacharya and Jagannatha are being

transformed from being the collective hero, connected by imperishable threads to the community whose fate is crystallized in their own. They have to plan out their own paths, search out roles for themselves as there are no safe social positions they can occupy with their authentic actions. When the definite essentials of the collective conscious guide the individuals in their pursuits, there never raises the question of choice. But when the question 'how to live best' arises then the individual face the question of choice and it becomes a matter of personal deliberation and in the words a matter of will. Prenashacharya and Jgannatha both struggle to come out of the established structure of Brahmin community but their inconsistency shows that this process of change and transformation, whether of the society and personal is not easy. The responsibility is also on two levels one is the responsibility of the rules of the society to manage an ideal personality and second is the responsibility of the individual actions to overcome the made or idealized social responsibility. Praneshacharya realizes this responsibility of his actions and claims:

Even if I lost control, the responsibility to decide was still mine. Man's decision is valid only because it is possible to lose control, not because it is easy we shape ourselves through our choices, bring form and line to this thing we call our person. Naranappa became the person he chose to be. I chose to be something else and lived by it. (*Samskara* 98)

He realizes that man can be something out of the existential crisis only by taking the responsibility of action. "I am not free till I realize that the turning is also my act, I'm to answer for it" (*Samskara* 98). His confession to the inappropriateness to the dualities and conflicts which ruled his earlier life is knowledge of self. Putta leads the tortured self of the Acharya to new world of ordinary things where everything sacred and profane, cruelty and compassion, spirituality and insanity mix in one. Though he has no ideology like Naranappa, he is a man familiar and adjusting

fellow to the world around. He is a riddle master, expert bargainer. According to A. K. Ramanujan, Putta is, “Praneshacharya’s initiator into the mysteries of the ordinary and the familiar, the purity of the unregenerate, the wholeness of the crude. This vision of this world is part of the Acharya’s new ‘samskara’, his ‘passage’” (142). Putta’s adjusting ways to life compel Praneshacharya to think about the incompleteness of his barren life in comparison to Putta’s. He neither lives in imaginary world nor in the initial world of Praneshacharya which is regularity ridden and has no place for cruelty, profane and individuality. These characters are the representation of the different responses to the life. The rightness and the appropriateness of the ways depend on the existence of the individuals. Like Jagannatha, Raghav Puranic also returns from abroad with a great enthusiasm to do something different and revolutionary in Bharathipura. He does this by marrying to a widow but his action gets futile in India where he feels collective change is impossible. He cuts himself to the community and lives in his imagined England. He calls Bharathipura as a “medieval town” which is symbolic of the whole India. In actuality Raghav Puranic fails to respond the anachronistic nature of India. He fails to maintain a balance between his liberal ways and rigid ways of his community. After knowing the intention of Jagannatha he says:

I am sorry to say so, but I think it is utterly futile in india. We are living in the womb of God. Perhaps you can save yourselves and a few others who are like you. But a collective action is impossible. Therefore I say: westernize yourself. Stay sane. But don’t attempt to change this country. She is amorphous. (*Bharathipura* 102)

Jagannatha does not respond his pessimism but criticizes his imaginary world which is far ahead to the reality, “He is grappling with reality even if it be to cheat others. Just as those who live in the womb of God are inactive, Puranic, who thinks he’s outside it, is also inert”

(*Bharathipura* 104). He asserts, “I have to sort myself with action; I must firm up. There is no other way” (107). Firstly, individual has to struggle with himself and after the confirmation of his/her perception’s aptness (s)he has to combat with the society which makes constant pressure on the psyche of the individual through various ideological or state machineries. Individual concerns become important only when individuals make crucial choices to change the course of their lives, and give a new meaning to it. Earlier, Chandri lives with Naranappa and now she chooses Praneshacharya to make her life meaningful. She takes the decision to cremate Naranappa’s body when everybody is waiting for a metaphysical answer. The actions depend on the individual’s understanding to the situation. Praneshacharya is expecting answer through the religious books or through Maruti God and the other members of Agrahara are expecting it through Praneshacharya who is a messenger for the metaphysical answer for them. So the choice of his action is rely on God and Religious books and the other people rely on him as they do not take the responsibility of their actions. It requires intellectual understanding to choose the action which is beneficial for both the individual and the society. Chandri’s step to cremate the body fulfills both responsibilities, first for herself and Naranappa and secondly for her community. Everyone was neglecting the stench of the body and the increasing danger of epidemic. The people of Agrahara choose to leave the place but Chandri fulfills her humanistic responsibility. She chooses in-between path to live a life which negotiates between Praneshacharya’s rigid ways and Narnappa’s reprobate ways. In similar way, Jagannatha chooses to act in comparison to Raghav Puranic. He knows that the action for the enhancement of the position of Holeyaru is not the action only for them but it will be a starting point for himself to become a new man.

Bharathipura with a smiling face but a stinking backside; the Holyraus clear her shit, carrying it in baskets, walking through the back-alleys. They are never seen on

the streets . . . , who have nothing but this land. But some day I will; and then I'll become a new man. (*Bharathipura* 84)

The desire to become a new man is a desire to break the burden of his cultural and communal past which is a hindrance in his perception as a human being. Naranappa, Chandri, Jagannatha, and Praneshacharya all break their communal burden openly for different purposes. They alter the notion of morality imposed by the society. Though man is regarded as being moral by nature and morality is said to be given not by nature but by culture. To identify morality, there are applicable norms and cultural frameworks. The connotations of a married Brahmin taking an untouchable mistress, cremation of a Brahmin by an untouchable, and touching the Saligrama by lower caste people, are unacceptable and against the customs which attack the very norms of morality. It can be assumed that the norms of morality are made to keep the distinction between the upper and lower classes. The protagonist, Jagannatha, tries to break this social hierarchy based on the norm of morality. He feels nervous after reading the letter which exposes his mother's physical relation to clerk Krishnaiah. He tries to become a neutral to these personal dilemmas. His psychological conflicts between his personal and social ideologies go throughout the novel. His own individual conscience prevents him to follow the social conscience. However he is inconsistent about his decision as Praneshacharya is. So the novels are the representation of the psychic disturbance of individuals when they choose a way out of their individuality. The contradictory values of the agrahara which Acharya shares in the beginning of the novel and the inconsistent self of Jagannatha before the 'new moon day' extend beyond the framework of religion or caste. Initially their clash is with religion and caste but after it becomes subjective. They combat with themselves to resolve the question that how far they want to oppose? How much they have the capacity to revolt to the outer and inner turmoil? Are they ready to accept the change?

They both represent two fundamentally different responses to experience: one emphasizing order and restraint, the other abandonment and passion.

In *Bharathipura*, Ganesha, the son of temple priest reads *Devdasa* a novel by Kannada writer A.N. Krishna Rao, given to him by Jagannatha. He feels the boredom of life, he is living and about to live, “This womb of God stinks with stale oil, camphor, joss sticks, kumkuma. . . . It’s all I eat when I hungry. . . . In his entire life, Ganesha had not known the joys of eating spicy . . .” (*Bharathipura* 242). Ganesha takes the decision immediately and throws the Linga in the river because he does not think about the results. As a result, people make him an agent of Bhoothacharya. They consider that he is subjugated by Bhoothacharya to take the wrath on people who try to defile the glory of Manjunatha. Jagannatha and Praneshacharya take much time in speculation to do or not to do. Through their characters, Ananthamurthy represents the dilemma of the authoritative people in the society when they have to leave their authority and the status of superiority in the name of equality and change.

The notions related to morality hinder the individuals to take the step. The inner turmoil of Praneshacharya requires a rejection of his earlier status of respectability in a collective religious milieu. Being very much part of a collective behavior or codes, the individuals tries to adjust between the idealized world of an integrated society and the lonely world of the individual consciousness as a result his/her failure compels him/her to revolt. As Stephen Eric Bonner in his book *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*, observes the trait of Existentialism:

Existentialism, . . . gives primacy to the “lived life” of the individual; it emphasizes the “meaning giving act” as did Husserl; it makes a reference to a paradox and the “divorce” within reality as did Kierkegaard and Kafka; it highlights the “extreme situation” as did Jaspers; it deals with inauthenticity and seeks to offer an authentic

way of responding to the experiences of anxiety (angst), the absurd, and death; and it is preoccupied with what Simon de Beauvoir termed “the solitary man”. (47)

Praneshacharya and Jagannatha share the same predicament and experience and find themselves disowned by their collective codes. This would not be wrong to conclude that the greatest social and individualistic shift in present scenario comes when men are compelled to break their primary ties that bound them to tradition-directed society. Now-a-days the society is characterized by increasing personal freedom, by the choices it offers to its members, and by the initiative it gives in order to survive with its crucial problems. The society is in its transitional phase in India where the old modes of living are in conflict with the new modes of living. This transitional phase is not easy in any society especially in a country like India where individuals have great regard for the established values of past. Because societies justify the roles assigned to its individuals with a bulky tradition of myths. In these societies, existential crisis are at the socio-economic-religious consequently leads to the problem of personal choice for highly individualized characters. At the same time, it would be misleading if we conclude that the forces of tradition and social behavioral codes have no weight for the inner-directed character. On the contrary, individual is bound to these codes which incorporate the tradition of a country. Social conformity to the established codes of society restrains individual choice of means.

Elaborating on similar lines, sociologist Ortin E. Klapp in his *Collective Search for Identity* defines that “The transitional society, therefore, faces the problem of redefining its identity” (329). He divides the human society in three categories on the basis of its technological advancement; one is traditional, second is transitional and third is technologically advanced societies. A traditional society is stable and its members hardly face any identity or existential crisis. In this society individuals accept all the behavioral codes assigned to them without questioning them. On

the other hand a transitional society is urban oriented and the movement from village to cities in search of opportunities provides intellectual mobility to the people. He asserts that the transitional society, therefore, faces the problem of redefining its identity. With its high standard of living in a technologically advanced society, identity problems are multiple. Thus both the individual and the community are under great stress and feel the need to redefine their identities individually and collectively in a transitional phase. As the societies are important in the growth of an individual but an individual also plays an important role to mold the society's face in which he/she is living. Bharathipura and Durvasapura both are the transitional societies in which the individuals are getting aware of the rigidity of the rules which are dominating the very essence of their life and to following these rules without recognizing and questioning.

In Ananthamurthy's *Samskara*, Naranappa reconsiders his identity in terms of a community that has become rigid, static and inflexible. In India, the Hindu society tended to become non-flexible, rigid and even tradition-ridden. The rigidity is the cause for individual intolerance. Jagannatha in *Bharathipura* struggles hard with multiple identities of being a landlord, a Brahmin, a son, and a secularist before he finally resolves his identity crisis by becoming a Marxist intellectual for whom the equality to all is more important. The awareness of Praneshacharya, Jgannatha and Narannapa arouses a feeling of rebel and they acquire a kind of flexibility which frees them to accepted humanistic traits of life. The demands of society's collective norms upon the individual and his choice always exist in a continuous conflict. In this conflict it depends on the individual's capacity to struggle and how much determination he/she has to combat the situational and existential crisis of life. Existentialists divide the individuals in two categories one who takes the responsibility of their individual actions and another who stay obedient to the accepted social conformity. Nietzsche calls the people who follow collectivity, as 'herd',

Kierkegaard as 'crowd' and Heidegger coins the term 'das man' for them. These are the people who do not define themselves uniquely but simply as part of public. Another category is Nietzsche's *Übermensch* (Overman) is "an idealistic type of a higher kind of human being, half saint, half genius" (Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* 132). He is the 'individual' of Kierkegaard, the 'free man' of Sartre, and the 'being' of Heidegger, who has the ability to decide his own way of life and to stand alone from the herd mentality. As it has been observed that the tradition-directed individual does not think as an individual and never tries to shape his own destiny in terms of personal. Earlier Praneshacharya do not think as an individual but lives and does according to the 'herd mentality'. Praneshacharya had very strong identity unified and strengthened by a collective consciousness and enjoyed stability and security in a communal way. But after the death of Naranappa he finds that the wish to collective security makes individual inauthentic to self and the metaphysical world does not respond to man's crisis behind which individual is only a puppet. But these Characters of Ananthamurthy reveal qualities of individualism in contradistinction to the common will only after the realization or the acceptance of the responsibility of their own actions. Praneshacharya's journey from Durvasapura to the mystery of the world outside his agrahara is a part of his struggle to redefine his identity. In a state of confused identity and continuous inner turmoil, he decides to reject the codes of the community which he followed so far as not only a significant member but as a best among his own people. Jagannatha acts, in spite of the fact that his action plan has turned a political act. He is eager to forge a new image for himself and opts for a revolt at the level of consciousness.

If we examine the novels through the glasses of existentialism which asserts that 'existence precedes essence', we find the characters struggling with their essence to be authentic to their

existence. According to Sartre, determination, choice and will all are depend on his existence.

Sartre supports the idea that:

It means that, first of all man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and only afterwards defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterwards will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. . . Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after his thrust towards existence. . . . (*Existentialism is a Humanism* 40)

The existence always clashes with the essence. Essentialism is a belief which propagates that people, cultures or literature each possess an 'essence', that is, a core, essential and fixed quality. There are two different realities: the 'essential' and the 'perceived'. Classical humanists believe in unchangeable human nature. They consider essence as permanent, irreversible, and eternal, and present in every possible world. They believe essence with its omnipresence identifies every action of human beings. This belief has been criticized by John Locke, T.E. Hume, Hegel, Carl Marx, Nietzsche, and Sartre, and by many other modern and existential thinkers. According to them individual struggles between the essence and his/her existence which causes identity politics, a contemporary variety of essentialism. This identity politics is working almost all the fields of knowledge. The struggles starts with two reasons one when the individual finds these acquired values quite oppressive and hindrance in achieving the satisfaction to the self which is the primary destination of a modern mind. It happens in the case of Jagannatha. The second reason is when individual faces the irresolvable circumstances, critical situations. The solution requires the breakdown of the perceived to reserve the essence as happened in the case of

Praneshacharya. So in both the cases, existence comes first in which individuals try to define their self.

Ananthamurthy's works have a verity of characters rooted in the complex social fabric in which they operate without questioning but their unauthentic values are pushed by their existence in a specific situation where they realize the injustice of the life which they have lived. In *Samskara*, Vedic texts and Maruti deny to answer to Praneshacharya. In *Bharathipura*, the pathetic condition of Holeyaru and religious hypocrisy is unbearable to Jagannatha. The author skillfully attempts to exploit the tension between two world views. One which represses an individual to stay in essential self, predetermined, the identity that is determined by one's birth, by 'Karma' and 'Varna'. The second world view is a new awareness of self, partly conditioned by existential thinking. The process of transition is always uneasy and difficult, especially when one is part of a fixed and settled order of things, and the still tentative stirrings of the self offer only unclear predictions. So in this regard Ananthamurthy's works are the examples in which individuals are fighting to overcome their essence. He shows this state of being neutral to essential human conditions can't be acquired completely but to some extent. Writers own inconsistency reflects when his characters ends up in opposite to what they intend to be. Naranappa in *Samskara* tries to break down his own Brahminical essence in support of skepticism. Praneshacharya struggles to his asceticism to become a skeptic. As a student in the holy city of Kashi he thinks about his friend Mahabala who quits the study of scriptures and begins living with a prostitute. Back in Durvasapura he thinks about Naranappa, his reprobate cousin, who challenges to destroy Brahminism (*Samskara* 23). The essence of Praneshacharya as being an ascetic is questioned by Naranappa:

Aha! The Acharya too can get angry! Lust and anger, I thought, were only for the likes of us. But then anger plays on the nose-tips of people who try to hold down lust. That's what they say. Durvasa, Parashara, Bhrgu, Brihaspati, Kashyapa, all the sages were given to anger (*Samskara* 23).

Naranappa clears the ambivalent consequences of his own present situation and that of Praneshacharya. It was his philosophy that every action turns exact opposite in the end. He admits, “As the Achari's virtue grew, so did the sins of everyone else in the Agrahara. One day a funny thing happened. What, Acharya-re, are you listening? There's a moral at the end -- every action results not in what is expected but in its exact opposite” (*Samskara* 24-25). Ironically, Naranappa's own actions results opposite. For he who claims to have renounced Brahminism, Naranappa as he lays dying mumbles, “O Mother! O God Ramachandra, Narayana!” (*Samskara* 45). A reprobate can't speak these words about God while all through his life he was denouncing God. As the Brahmins of Agrahara believes that Naranappa leaves Brahmanism but Brahmanism did not leave him. It is not his Brahmanism that speaks at the death bed but his realization death's inevitability and the nothingness of the ways he had lived that comes through the name of God. So throughout the life he negotiate to hedonistic ways of life but in the end he realizes the nothingness of the life which he lived to defeat his essence.

Praneshacharya, on the other hand, tries to reduce himself to asceticism, but fails, “if he had left desire, desires had not left him” (*Samskara* 78). The brahminical essence becomes a hindrance in the individuality of Brahmins as they follow the rigid paths to preserve the superiority of their caste. In traditional Brahmin value system, food is prohibited after the death of a person till the cremation of the dead body. Dashacharya and other Brahmins have to break this essence because the unresolved dilemma of cremation according to the customs. The continuity of the

custom would have surely take them to death. Jagannatha endeavors to break his essence to get his individuality which stops him to become a dumb in the hands of society and God. So the cultural or perceived essence is clashes with existence which paves way to freedom, choice, authenticity, and individuality.

A post-modern approach avoids essentialism by focusing on the multiple viewpoints available to any one individual. One side Ananthamurthy and all the Navya movement's writers believe that the movement of history towards progress is recurring and not one dimensional and individuals matter in history and change it. In this matter Ananthamurthy says:

I argued that if individuals did not resist or fight for change, the shape of things would have been different. But by saying individual do not matter, you are making history an automatic kind of process and if that is the case, it is very convenient for an intellectual brought up on science and modern analytic tools to say that what happens next is predetermined. (*Bharathipura* 254-255)

This is what Jagannatha tries to do. He wants to change the process of history but at the same time the characters do not find any resolution clearly. Jagannatha is not capable of understanding the multiple realities of one nation, "It struck Jagannatha how difficult is to understand a country where a Pilla, a Satyaparkash, and even a man like this poor Brahmin coexist" (*Bharathipura* 179). At this vary stage Jagannatha knows the fact that there are multiple realities in India and it is not so easy to adjust in between these. This is the controversy of the situation that Jagannata is caught in the other clashes while resolving the one. He knows the fact that by taking Holeyaru in the temple and defiling the Shaligrama with their touch he is romanticizing God and His powers. By giving Holeyaru white Dhotis to wear, he is romanticizing bhraminical wearing. He opposes these ideas and at the same time he has to imply on that very structure of Brahmanism

and God. This is the irony of the situation which Jagannatha creates to the upliftment of the Holeyarus. He tells to Pilla, “My anguish is becoming the saligrama; because I offer it to you and because you touch it and because they see you touching it, let the stone become the saligrama and let the saligrama become a stone even as the evening deepens” (*Bharathipura* 159).

Jagannatha knows that the touching the Saligrama and the entry in the temple will make Brahmins secular when they will see the polluted God but the Holeyaru will accept the religious livings of Brahmins with touch and entrance. It reflects the same dilemma experienced by Naranappa. Praneshacharya, Jagannatha and Naranappa all end exact opposite to what is intended to be. Despite of the fact they act. These two novels are the stories of the two, Jagannatha and Praneshacharya fall between two worlds of realities, their inner and outer, real and imaginary. Their psychological inconsistency in different situations, times and circumstances is the result of the clashes between their essence and individuality. Two protagonists located at different times but one thing that is same is their burden to achieve the authenticity of self through emerging from their outer and inner conflicts.

After the death of his wife Bhagirathi, which symbolizes his liberation from asceticism, Praneshacharya chooses the world of freedom, cruelty, emotions, adjustment and enjoyment. Praneshacharya looks at his existence from an entirely new perspective. He feels intensely disturbed: “Even if I leave everything behind, the community clings to me asking me to fulfill duties the Brahmin is born to. It is not easy to free oneself of this” (*Samskara* 96). The novels highlight that each person is embedded in a matrix of social and psychological factors that interact in different contexts. It is shown that in Indian traditional value system there is no space for individual freedom, always preferring morals, values, customs and rules. It is the individual who is born in this universe of nothingness but with his/her efforts make the space to live in it. Chief

proponents of this particular philosophy, Sartre observes that “by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity” (*Existentialism and Human Emotions* 40-64).

Praneshacharya realises that he is not bound to any role-playing, that he has the freedom to respond to each emergent situation the way he thinks best. In his efforts to fulfill the role defined for him by others made him anxious to provide a consistent image of himself which would be acceptable to his followers. So long as a person tries to confine himself to other people’s notion he is living an ‘inauthentic’ life, because he is a thing or an object rather than an individual who is characterized by consciousness, and exercises his choice. Certain ambivalence may trouble the quest of such heroes, but in the case of Praneshacharya and Jagannatha this inconsistency, ambivalence and uncertainty, resolves in favor of positive action only on surface level. The ambivalence is a response to the existence in an anachronistic society. Jagannatha loses his faith in his action as it becomes political act Praneshacharya finds both the worlds, his own rigid world and the cruel and selfish world of Putta improper to live a holistic life but despite of their understanding of the inappropriateness of the action and nothingness of being inert, they choose to act. Ananthamurthy is supporting the idea that life is not instant but a contradictory one with many structures and situations among which individual may resort to various modes of response with tactic adjustment.

So, Ananthamurthy’s is concerned to present not only the wretchedness of modern existence, but also individual’s awareness of his/her own situation; the encounter between the society around and the self, the conflict of the hero with structures and values which assume the form of oppression. These novels, each one in its own unique way, deal primarily with the inner

turmoil and conflict of characters between competing loyalties. The alienation and individuality from the collective consciousness encounter with a new reality that is unfamiliar and alien, offers him much light after a prolonged period of darkness. The light which brings the inconsistency comes to end, is symbolic of the inner vision of the writer who believes in to become a critical insider. So, Ananthamurthy has represented individuals in a world that is on the threshold of modernity but steeped in the traditional but their individual actions will open the gates of the modernity to a country like India.

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