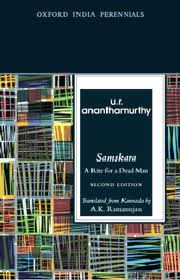
**Ananthamurthy, U. R. (1932–)**

Nikhila H.



[ananthamurthyimage1.jpg]

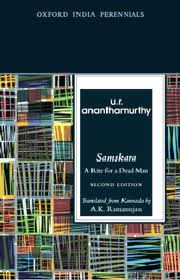
Udupi Rajagopalacharya Ananthamurthy is a major figure of the modernist literary movement in Kannada, a professor of English, a literary critic, and a leading public intellectual in Karnataka.



[ananthamurthyimage2.jpg]

Cover page of the English translation of Samskara

The formative influences of his literary career are seen as his interactions with socialists Ram Manohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Shantaveri Gopalagowda during his student days, and his close association in Mysore with Gopalakrishna Adiga and a group of writers who identified themselves with the Navya literary movement in Kannada. Ananthamurthy wrote his first published novel Samskara (1965) in England where he had gone to pursue his PhD on a Commonwealth Fellowship. The occasion of a death in a Brahmin agrahara gives rise to incisive scrutiny of the caste order and a journey of ruthless introspection for the protagonist, Praneshacharya. The novel and the film version that followed in 1970 became controversial and were criticized for what was seen as an attack on the Brahminical order. Over the years, however, Samskara has achieved iconic status and has been widely discussed in academia both in India and abroad. The novel has been translated into many Indian languages, as well as English, Russian, French, German, Hungarian, and Swedish languages.

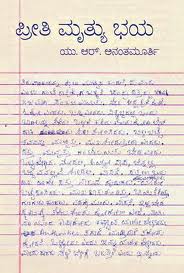


[ananthamurthyimage3.jpg]

The second novel, Bharathipura (1973), follows the trajectory of Samskara, and delineates the consequences of the attempt by the Brahmin protagonist, Jagannatha, to hit at the caste order of purity and pollution by symbolically getting those called Holeyas (untouchables) to touch the sacred worship-stone in the Brahmin household and to secure their entry into the local temple. Critic D. R. Nagaraj sees these two novels along with his short story collections Prashne (Question, 1962) and Mauni (Silent One, 1972) and such essays in cultural criticism as Pragne mattu Parisara (Consciousness and Milieu, 1974) as belonging to the radical phase of Ananthamurthy’s writing career. His second self-reflexive phase includes the short story collection Suryana Kudure (Stallion of the Sun, 1979), the essay collection Purvapara (For the Past, 1989), and the novel Bhava (Existence, 1994). His novel Awasthe (The Condition, 1994) is loosely based on the life of a socialist peasant leader. His most recent novel is Preethi Mruthyu Bhaya (Love Death Fear, 2012).

In his essays, time and again, Ananthamurthy has famously employed the spatial metaphor of ‘frontyard’ and ‘backyard’ to mark out the hierarchies and differences prevalent in the use of different languages in India. While the ‘frontyard’ is the zone of Sanskrit (and now English), high classicism and scholarship, men and their matters, and the world of authority, the ‘backyard’ is the arena of the folk, the everyday, of women and their secrets, of intimacy and friendship, all transacted in the bhashas, the performative dimension of non-Sanskritic Indian languages.

Ananthamurthy has been Professor of English at Mysore University and visiting professor in a number of other Indian and foreign universities. He has held important positions, such as chancellor of Central University of Karnataka, vice chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University in Kottayam, Kerala, chairman of National Book Trust, president of Sahitya Akademi, and chairman of Film and Television Institute of India. He has been feted with the Jnanapith and Padma Bhushan Awards for his accomplishments.



[ananthamurthyimage4.jpg]

The unusual cover page of Ananthamurthy’s latest novel, *Preeti Mruthyu Bhaya* (2012).

**Sources:**

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Baral K. C. et al. (2005). *U.R. Ananthamurthy’s Samskara: A Critical Reader*, New Delhi: Pencraft International.

Nagaraj D. R. (2012). *Listening to the Loom*, New Delhi: Permanent Black.

**Selected Works in English Translation:**

*Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man* (Translated by A.K. Ramanujan, 1978)

*Awasthe* : The Condition (Translated by Shantinath Desai, 1990)

*Stallion of the Sun and Other Stories* (Translated by Narayan Hegde, 1999)

*U.R. Ananthamurthy Omnibus* (Edited by Manu Chakravarthy, 2008)

*Bharathipura* (Translated by Susheela Punitha, 2010)

**Timeline of life and career**

1932 – Born

1956 – Is appointed Lecturer of English

1966 – Earns a PhD from the University of Birmingham, U.K.

1992 – Is appointed Chairman of the National Book Trust of India

1993 – Is appointed President of the Sahitya Academy

1994 – Wins the Jnanapith Award

1998 – Wins the Padma Bhushan Award

**Timeline of important publications**

1965 – Samskara

1973 – Bharathipura

1974 - Pragne mattu Parisara

1979 – Suryana Kudure

1989 – Purvapara

1994 – Bhava and Awasthe

2012 – Preethi Mruthyu Bhaya