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Close Reading Assignment- *Samskara*

The last chapter of part 1 in *Samskara* details how Praneshacharya pleads with Maruti. He is seeking advice on how to go about the burial rites for Naranappa, who has been disgraced. Naranappa had a lover named Chandri, and by the end of this quick moving chapter, Praneshacharya has engaged in sexual behaviour with her. Anantha Murthy, author of *Samskara*, utilises patterns in grammar, word repetition, and sensory details to build the contrast between the two halves of the chapter and the drama.

Murthy uses hyphens after dialogue, a grammar pattern she deliberately uses, to incorporate emotion. “O Maruti, how long is this ordeal going to last?”- he pleaded” (Murthy 62). The hyphen break shows the contrast between dialogue and internal thoughts, while also allowing the reader to read the dialogue with the proper emotion. These adjectives that describe Praneshacharya’s feelings also are helpful in showing his rising upset. He goes from pleading, to self doubting, to mortification, to anger- sensation that anyone can relate to, in a pattern that is realistic when facing obstacles.

Murthy uses word repetition to emphasize certain ideas, and create parallel ideas. For example, she uses the word “flower” multiple times. The image of the “flower-decked Maruti” (Murthy 62) creates a sharp contrast with what is described soon after: ideas such as “darkness”, and “rotting corpse.” One associates flowers generally with love, holiness, overall happiness. In this sense, it has almost an eerie feeling. Instead of achieving that feeling of hope and certainty that one hopes to gain from prayer, it causes more confusion and frustration. Flowers also have

common associations with fertility, innocence, and sex. The multiple usages of the word serve as a foreshadowing, in a sense. The leap from this scene to the sexual scene is fairly quick, but the usage of flowers helps build up the dynamic. Praneshacharya has possibly never been with a woman before, so the flowers could symbolize the loss of his innocence with Chandri. Murthy also uses the word “dark,” or the concept of “darkness,” multiple times. The significance of this will be addressed in the next paragraph.

The dynamic in this chapter changes so fast, which, if written poorly, would be a rough transition. However, with Murthy’s use of sensory details, the dynamic change is smooth and comprehensible. As mentioned before, the word “dark” is repeated. As the scene changes, this stays constant. “Dark” is not only a repeating word, but a sensory detail, as well. As Praneshacharya walks in the “forest dark” (Murthy 67), the scene seamlessly changes into the one with Chandri. Following suit, the sound of her bangles and low voice come into play, giving the reader (and Praneshacharya) some auditory clues regarding what is about to happen. The rest of this section is filled with sensory detail, such as the description of his “gentle grief-stricken voice.” The idea of “dark” continues as “nothing was visible,” another sensory hint, this time using sight rather than hearing. Of course, the sensory detail of touch is utilised to depict their sexual encounter, in the way of her “tight hold” and how he can feel her “hot breath” (Murthy 67).

Though so much happens in this short chapter, Murthy’s excellent uses of literary devices carry the dramatics across perfectly, with no rough edges. To conclude, she uses grammar patterns to show emotion, word repetition, and sensory clues to convey her story. The grammar patterns show Praneshacharya rising panic, and feeling of helplessness. The word repetition

gives the reader some foreshadowing and creates a flawless connection between the two scenes.

The sensory details also provide some transition, and help to vividly describe their encounter.