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EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SETTINGS IN  
U.R.ANANTHAMURTHY'S SAMSKARA

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ABSTRACT

In Literature the time and place of a story are recognized as they take place nevertheless in more complex literature, it is also crucial to ascertain the entire atmosphere. While the location is often introduced in the exposition of a story, it is necessary to keep track of any changes that occur since a change in setting frequently serves an important purpose in the text. The setting in a work creates a realistic atmosphere for the readers to visualize the places described in the work.

The setting in Samskara plays a crucial role in depicting the character of Praneshacharya. At first, he is seen in his house, secondly in the forest, and thirdly in Melige. Each phase shows Acharya's different perspectives on life, his journey the character's development, and the setting which reflects the protagonist's state. The objective of this paper is to explore the settings in the novel Samskara and to analyze how the setting paves the way for the development of the novel and the plot.

Introduction

Praneshacharya lived in Durvasapura Agrahara along with his "invalid wife" Bhagirathi. He married her intending to get blessings from God for abstaining from bodily pleasures. Naranappa was a Brahmin who went against Brahmin rules in agrahara. One day he died of illness and no one came to cremate his body. Everyone feared they would be defiled if they touched a defiled body. Acharya looked for answers in Vedas and Puranas but could not find the solution to cremate Naranappa's body.

In the forest, during meditation, Chandri met Acharya. Acharya fell for her and had sexual relations with Chandri who was an outcast fisherwoman and concubine of Naranappa. The next day Chandri herself cremated Naranappa's body without anyone's knowledge. Acharya's wife died of fever. After cremating her he went inside the forest without knowing the certainty of the future. He

met Putta in the forest and befriended him. Acharya went to the car festival in Melige and did things that were contradictory to his old self. He went to cock fights, soda shops, and coffee houses. At last decided to return to Agrahara and reveal everything he did to the Agrahara people.

### Discussion

The novel starts with the setup in Praneshacharya's house. Acharya does his daily routine of taking care of his wife, bathing in the river, visiting the Maruti Temple, gathering for recitation of Legends with all the people in Agrahara. There were flowers in every house's backyard. People would visit each other's yards early in the morning to get flowers for worship and ask about their welfare.

" A total of ten houses stood on either side of the Agrahara street... The Tunga River flowed close to the backyards of the houses on one side of the street with steps to get down to the water," (15). Thus the setting of agrahara shows people's unity within agrahara and gives a rural setup.

The conflict arises when Naranappa dies and his body has to be cremated. The Agrahara people started to do the cremation as they feared they would be defiled if they touched a defiled person's body. Everyone in Agrahara assembled in Acharya's house and discussed Naranappa's cremation. Since they could not find an answer Praneshacharya went through Vedas for a solution. Since he was responsible for taking care of his ailing wife he could not find alone and peaceful time to meditate so he too could not find a solution.

Meanwhile, Naranappa's body started to rot and the agrahara was filled with stink. Rats started coming up and the doors of Agrahara which were never shut in daylight were shut. "There were no sacred designs to bless and decorate the threshold nor any sprinkling of cow dung water for the yard without them. It felt as if there was a dead body in every house, in some dark room. The Brahmins sat in the village hall, their heads in their hands, not knowing what to do next" (45). The number of rats was increasing and the children started counting them. The store room was full of rats, and the rice and lentils were covered by rat droppings.

Acharya took a bath in the river and went to Maruti temple to get an answer to the dilemma of cremating Naranappa. The temple was in the silence of the forest in a peaceful atmosphere. Acharya sat in front of the idol and meditated but he never got any answer.

The setting of the Agrahara at the beginning of the novel is a total contrast to the middle part. The rats were in every house's kitchen and the store rooms. Some died themselves rolling on the floor. Moreover, vultures started coming in groups. They sat on top of every house looking for the dead rats. Even though agrahara people shouted and shewed at vultures they stayed on unmoving.

"Not a creature was visible in the agrahara except his bedridden menstruating wife, some crows, and vultures. A terrible leery silence had settled on the place. Assaulting the nostrils with the fact that seven houses away a human corpse was rotting, lodging itself in the very sources of house, it pestered the mind, not permitting any oblivion" (71).

Acharya's wife died of fever. He cremated her with the help of Brahmins before dawn. His life's penance has been burned down to ashes. He went through the forest as his legs took him. On his way, Acharya saw a man named Putta who accompanied Acharya. Acharya and Putta went to a car festival in Melige. Acharya was filled with confusion. He was in a dilemma whether to go to Kundapura to live with Chandri or return to Agrahara. The car festival in Melige was "colorful with temple chariot in the middle of the town adorned with zodiac pictures." There was a huge crowd witnessing the festival. People were all around the place and shopkeepers encouraged people to visit their shops.

In Melige Acharya accompanied Putta to Bombay Box, a soda water shop, cock fighting, drinking coffee in the coffee shop, watching acrobat show and visiting Putta's relative Padmavati who was alone. All this time Acharya feared he would be noticed by some Brahmin there. Each time he visited a place

fear gripped him of being noticed. At last, he decided that he could not live with such fear and decided to return to Agrahara and reveal the truth to his people.

Setting	Character	Plot	Theme
In Acharya's house	The routine life of taking care of his wife was disturbed during meditation by his wife's sickness.	Decides to be alone, goes to Maruti temple for a peaceful place	Penance/ Meditation
In forest	Meditates seeks an answer from God but can't find a solution, weary and tired without eating.	Meditates but disturbed by Chandri, yields to physical pleasure	Humanity vs Religion
In Melige	Confused about whether to choose evil or good, either to go to Chandri or Agrahara	Fear of being noticed doesn't have the will to do evil/to go in the evil path, decides to return to Agrahara.	Evil vs Good

The novel opens with the setting in Acharya's house where he takes care of his ailing wife which becomes a daily routine. He is used to routine life and abstains from physical pleasures which he thinks to be a penance for which he will be rewarded by God. To meditate he goes to the Maruti temple for a peaceful atmosphere.

The second setting is moved to the forest where Acharya is seen meditating with all his focus on God. The forest is filled with darkness and sun rays beams amidst the trees' leaves, a calm and peaceful atmosphere creates the scene. Acharya's penance has been disturbed by Chandri. He too gives way to bodily pleasures. The theme of Humanity vs Religion is taken in here. Acharya didn't cremate Naranappa as he feared being defiled to touch a defiled body but he touched Chandri through which he would be defiled. So when humanity and religion are in front of people they choose religion rather than humanity and juxtapose religious rules when it comes to catering to their own needs.

The third setting of the novel is a place called Melige where a car festival goes on. Acharya left everything behind, after his wife's death and in confusion walks through the forest and reaches Melige. The setup of Melige is a colorful one that attracts people's eyes. It depicts Acharya's attraction towards worldly life for a moment. Acharya goes around the place but as he is used to a calm atmosphere he feels uncomfortable in a new world, which contradicts his past life. So he backs his decision of worldly life and chooses his past way of living.

### Conclusion

Since Acharya's wife was a hindrance to his meditation he went to the forest. In the forest the darkness, and serene atmosphere with no one around led Acharya to sin without any fear. In Melige Acharya had people around him which created a panic that he would be identified for participating in the car festival. The absence of people in the forest made Acharya sin without any fear but the same presence of people in Melige was the reason behind Acharya's return to good path as he was convicted of his sin.

Thus, the settings in the novel directly influence the decisions taken by the protagonist, Praneshacharya, which leads to the further development of the plot.

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