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U. R. Ananthamurthy and the Discourse of Modernity is the first comprehensive study, in English, of the fiction of U. R. Ananthamurthy, one of the most significant postcolonial writers in India. It traces the formative influences on the writer and his creative development and locates his fiction within the regional literary tradition, pointing out, at the same time to his distinctive contribution. It outlines the global modernity debate and its ramifications on the Indian scene, and examines the shifts in the writer's perspective with reference to the shifts in the global philosophical position from modernity to postmodernity. It presents a critical analysis of all his novels and important short stories in the context of modernity discourse and in relation to his discursive writing. Based on the insights derived from the study of fiction, it attempts at making a humble and justifiable intervention in the modernity debate.

The book will be of interest to scholars and readers, in general, concerned with the modernity debate as it attempts to clarify some of the issues involved, with reference to the ideas of the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas and the French philosopher Michel Foucault. It tries to make sense of the conflicting and contradictory attitudes within India, on the relevance of Enlightenment modernity and western science, over a period from the colonial past to the present age marked by the influence of postmodern thought. It will be helpful in appreciating the complexity of the creative and discursive writing of Ananthamurthy, from an evolved perspective.

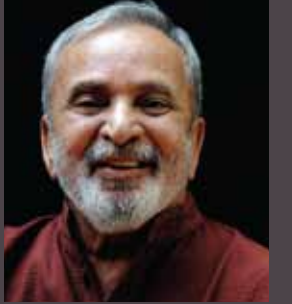
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U. R. Ananthamurthy is one of the leading Kannada writers whose writing reflects a constant and profound engagement with the issues that deeply affect our lives. He has written five major novels, some of which are translated into many European and other Indian languages. He also has to his credit several volumes of short stories, critical and discursive essays, poems and a play. He has been known for his social and environmental activism and for his bold stand on day to day socio-political issues. He has been conferred the Jnanapith, the highest literary honour in India and the prestigious civil honour Padmavibhushan. His fiction and discursive writing reflect a persistent preoccupation with the modernity discourse and an indefatigable search for values in a tension-filled conflict-ridden world.

An ardent educationist, he has had a distinguished professional experience as the Vice-chancellor of the Mahathma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, as a visiting Professor and Fellow at several universities in India and abroad, and as a Professor of English at the University of Mysore.



Ganesha U. H.

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*Modernity Debate in
the Postmodern Present
and the Colonial Past*

Debates emanate from dualities, situations of conflict, contradictions and paradoxes. Modernity is a paradox of sorts. So too was the colonial experience. The paradoxical nature of the responses to colonialism, varying from resistance to complicity was determined by the duality of the Indian tradition, an instance for which is the coexistence of the caste system and the practice of untouchability along with the Upanishadic world view reflecting cosmic consciousness. Thus, in India, it is a case of several dualities, one supplanting or cohabiting with the other, since the precolonial through the colonial to the present postmodern age. Understanding a writer's engagement with the modernity discourse presupposes a historical perspective and knowledge of the several denominations of duality the nation has passed through. It is particularly so in the case of Ananthamurthy, for, now it has been well recognised that there is

a marked shift in his ideological position with respect to western Enlightenment modernity. While he looks at the Indian traditions and ways of life from the perspective derived from western modernist epistemology during the first phase of his writing, the same modernist epistemology is suspect in the later phase. There is an attitude of ambivalence and at times of rejection towards modernity. Such shifts in the writer's position can be made sense of, only with reference to the global modernity debate at present and in the colonial past. The postcolonial and postmodern ideological resistance to modernity is often historically inherited. Our attitude to modernity is bound up, consciously or otherwise, with our perspective on colonialism as the forerunner of modernity. Hence, in this chapter, along with a discussion of the global modernity debate and its implications for India, an attempt is also made to consider the varying responses to the colonial rule. Such a going back to history will be necessary for a total grasp on the implications of modernity debate.

The word 'modernity' has varied connotations. In the present context, it is to be understood, chiefly, as western Enlightenment modernity, which in the case of India and other colonised countries was mediated through European colonialism. The debate, among thinkers, on the relevance of Enlightenment modernity to humanity is referred to here as the modernity debate.

Modernity embodies a number of concepts and values which are differently codified by various thinkers. The Indian sociologist Deepankar Gupta argues that modernity has been misrecognised in India because of the tendency to equate it with technology and with other contemporary artefacts. He locates