



# **Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596**

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## **Saakshi – The Witness: A Review**

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## Abstract:

Saakshi – The Witness is originally written in Kannada. It was published in 1986 by Sahitya Bhandara, Bengaluru. The English translation is done by L V Shanthakumari. The English translated version is published by Niyogi Books, 2017. Saakshi-The Witness is a captivating novel that delves into the intricacies of human relationships, societal dynamics, and the quest for justice. At its core, the novel is a poignant exploration of the human condition, highlighting the complexities of truth and the consequences of silence. The novel is a masterful blend of suspense, drama, and emotional depth, keeping readers on the edge of their seats until the final revelation.

**Key Words:** Saakshi, The Witness, Suspense, Drama, Human relationship

The literal translation of the word Saakshi is Witness or observer. Saakshi, the Aatman, is the pure consciousness and the knowledge that witnesses all thoughts, words and deeds without conjecturing with them or being affected by them. Saakshi is the pure awareness that observes the world of humans, even dwells among humans, even then remains unaffected by the triangle of Experiencer, experiencing and experienced.

The novel Saakshi – the Witness is also discussing the roots of human values along with the stark realities of sensual life. It ponders over the fundamental question of human life i.e is truth the basis of morality or morality is the basis of truth? Bhyrappa has made use of Puranas and Vedantic philosophy as well as Gandhian concepts to discuss this basic question of human life and its distortions through greediness, sensuality and desires. The novel focuses on what it means to be witness before the gods, to one's own self and to the others and in a courtroom.

This process of Saakshibhaav starts with the suicide of a village elder Parmeshwaryya. He commits suicide by the abiding guilt of being a fake witness in a murder trial. The story of the novel begins and ends in the court of Yama, the controller of human lives in the Hindu philosophy. The novel starts with the voice of Yama who gives permission to the soul of Parmeshwaryya to narrate his story as he has committed suicide out of guilt. The spirit is then sent back to the physical to be the witness of the deeds of the other characters of the novel. However, he is not given any other right except witnessing the lives and thought process of the other characters and not to intervene in the subsequent events.



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The physical world of the novel is set in the villages called Tiptur, Channarayapatna and Hassan. Parmeshwaryya observes the lives of the other characters as they face difficult situations and revelations that make them look inward and attempt an appraisal of their lives and values. The characters in the novel are having kaleidoscopic range from Ramakrishnayya (Son of Parmeshwaryya) who always prefers to be silent but is very deeply thoughtful. Ramakrishnayya's money-minded wife Sukanya and their son Ganesh. Manjayya is a (son-in-law of Parmeshwaryya), a lecherous, coconut farm owner. Sukanya's father Nagappa is a greedy businessman, Savitri is a daughter of Parmeshwaryya and wife of Manjayya. Satyappa an idealist Gandhian is Ramakrishnnaya's brother-in-law. All of them are some way or the other connected to the past life of Parmeshwaryya. Other than them the characters who bring profound changes in the story are the characters of Lakku and Sarojakshi. In the continuation of the aftermath of the murder trial, the story serially narrates different events from the point of view of these characters. Savitri realizes the truth behind her mother's suicide, greedy Nagappa dies of his greediness and could not let go of his greed, idealist Satyappa is dazed out of his ivory tower and is brought to reality by his family, especially his son, and society. However, Satyappa accepts this reality and brings changes to his perception to achieve the mission of his life. The arrogant, selfish and lustful Manjayya meets tragic death. However, though Manjayya character sound disgustful, Bhyrappa has portrayed his character in such a realistic way that at times it becomes hard to reject his arguments. Sarojakshi's character is similar to that of Manjayya and is very intriguing by nature. Only difference between the two is that Manjayya pursuits single pointed Kama while Sarojakshi's character shows that Kama can be spread across pursuits.

The story reaches the climax with two dramatic events. One is that of the brutal murder of lustful Manjayya at the hands of Lakku. And the second is the revelation of the death of Parmeshwaryya's wife. However, the second event is more unexpected for the readers than the brutal death of Manjayya.

Bhyrappa through his novel offers the readers two faces of idealism or Karma. One is represented by the character of Ramakrishnayya and the other by Satyappa. The former remains silent and unaffected and represents the tradition of Nivritti. The latter gets involved in the realistic earthly life and represents the tradition of Pravritti.



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The novel ends in the judgement court of Yama with the question, “What is the origin of lies?” With its richly drawn characters and evocative prose, Saakshi-The Witness is a compelling tale that resonates long after the last page is turned, leaving readers pondering the true nature of justice and the enduring power of the human spirit.



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