Introduction

The present thesis provides an examination of the regional elements in Basavaraj Naikar’s fiction. Data were collected through in-depth reading of the texts in their origin, interviews, journals, critical books, reviews and internet. With the use of comparative and analytical method, the study is carried out to arrive at befitting viewpoint to fix the author in a particularly specified area chosen as the subject matter of the study.

This dissertation focuses on the regional elements projected in Basavaraj Naikar’s novels, novellas and short stories. The setting of all the novels and short stories is Dharwad and north Karnataka.

The objectives of the thesis are as follows,
1. An attempt to understand regionalism in literature.
2. Application of the characteristic features of regionalism in the study of Naikar’s novels and short stories.
3. In order to highlight the importance of regionalism for the study of the local cultures versus the global cultures.

For the convenience of the study, the work is divided into five chapters. The beginning chapter is an introduction to the thesis.

The first chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study of regional literature. It is a short survey of Indian English literature with special reference to the regional elements in Indian English fiction. The chapter includes the life and career of Naikar briefly. A brief summary of the major literary works of Naikar has been attempted therein.

Region means a particular area. The English term ‘region’ has been derived from the Latin word *regionem* signifying course, limit or regional. The Oxford English Dictionary characterizes region as an “area of land or division.
of the earth’s surface having definable boundaries or characteristics.” (OUP 864) The term suggests wide parameters, for example, physical spaces, results of past experiences or events, focuses of man’s activities and cultural traits. Recently many departments like economics, anthropology, geography, political science, history and literature are more concerned about this term. On broader terms, ‘regionalism’ can be stated as a belief in the distinctiveness of the region— a consciousness of distinguishing conditions and traits that characterize the region along with its inhabitants, and identification of self with regional particularities. These characteristics consist of topography, history, language, ethnicity, race, culture and tradition.

Though regionalism is a very recent idea in literature, its origin and development can be better comprehended by analyzing the idea of it. Regionalism is directly identified with the soul of European Enlightenment. In England, the ideas of regionalism are normally followed from Francis Bacon through John Locke to the late 18th century and scholars, for example, William Godwin, Descartes, Voltaire and Diderot (in France) to Immanuel Kant (in Germany) worked therein. The 18th century modified and diffused the thoughts of the 17th century and many scholars came to the hypothetical conclusion that human conduct and establishments can be subject of rational study, similar to Newton’s world, and their shortcomings are attended.

It became necessary that with modernization, nations got established in places of the earlier agricultural societies ruled by regional elites. This rightly paves the way for the fact that it was regionalism that invents nations where they do not exist. It was regionalism and the district, according to Eric Hobsbawm, the British Marxist historian that engendered nations, not the other way round; and to effect this, nationalists had to invent myths, traditions and suitable history.
A regional novel is a novel which deals with the physical features, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, language etc., of a particular locality. However, this does not mean that regionalism is mere factual reporting. The regional artist emphasizes the unique features of a particular locality. But as in all other arts, so also in regional art, there is a constant selection and ordering of material. In other words, regional art is creative. The prominent Indian English regional novelists include R. K. Narayana, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya and others. In fact, most of the writers are regional often. Forgotten men of letters like K. Nagarajan and Krupabhai Satthianadhan may be studied fruitfully in this regard. This theorizing definitely befits Basavaraj Naikar’s novels and short stories. A survey of regionalism as reflected in Indian English fiction is made in Chapter 1.

Naikar in an interview with Jaydeep Sarangi said that bilingualism/multilingualism preserves the local colour literature. He said this:

Sarangi: Do you consider your bilingualism as a virtue?
Naikar: Definitely yes. All the Indian English writers should be bilingual so that they may give an authentic picture of Indian life and culture. The anglicised writers of India cannot give an authentic picture of native Indian culture although they may write good English. A bilingual writer of India is able to absorb the essence of Indian culture available in Sanskrit or his regional language like Kannada and Marathi and so on and express it in his English writings. But an anglicised writer or a writer who has had his education in English medium from his childhood or the one, who is educated in foreign universities, cannot write authentically about India, although some of them may be lucky to enjoy the media-hype. (Sarangi 157)

Indian author who is being influenced by multicultural situation has an authority to display his creative aspects in works. This becomes a cause for
various literary forms and norms which even were not present in the western literature. For example, India has produced its own forms of literature. Is not vachana a unique form of regional literature in Kannada? Therefore one should attempt to bring into effect the inner self to literature by exploring his local ideas into English in order that the world will recognize Indian sensibility as a nation with identity. To name a few writers who added their contribution to India’s sub-continental feature, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Amrita Pritam, and others have necessarily brought to India’s subculture a new vista. Basavaraj Naikar belongs to such a family of Indian writers who have contributed their own to Indian literature in English.

Basavaraj Naikar is a prolific writer in both Kannada and English. His interests range from novel-writing to folklore and from translation to criticism. Dr Naikar means ‘industry’ and he is industrious. He is known for catholicity of taste, abstraction of art and prolificacy. He says writing is a pleasure. It is true. As Prof Malcolm McKinnon thinks or Mr. Christopher Rollasan writes of Naikar himself that Naikar is a genuine writer. Yet it is not to be assumed that his writing is for himself or just for his students as some biased academicians, either out of jealousy or bigotry, think of him. Human interests are varied. So are Naikar’s interests both academic and creative. His writings, particularly creative—his novels The Sun Behind the Cloud, Light in the House and The Queen of Kittur and two books of short stories The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories and The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories—speak of his genuine interest and multifarious literary activities.

As many Indian writers have endeavoured to present the old Indian literature in other languages in English, Naikar has attempted by retelling the history and biographies of some historical and religious personalities. On the other hand, he does not lag behind to record the day to-day life amidst which he
experienced whatever from his routine. They have appeared in the form of novels and short stories. A small and different event finds place in Naikar’s hand and it appears a story, necessarily depicting the Indianness in general and the regional in particular. It may be a royal dynasty leading to the creation of a novel. The desire and dogma connected to beget a child, a desire to hoard gold and other affluence, transformation due to good moral advice, adultery -- all become the themes of Naikar’s imaginative yet realistic writings.

Basavaraj Naikar’s first work *The Sun Behind the Cloud* is a historical novel. It is made into a play. Its Kannada version is published years ago.

In 1857, an enormous British armed force entourage stayed outdoors on the banks of Malaprabha river. On finding out this, Nargaund's fearless men propelled an assault against the British. The British officer, Manson, was slaughtered. Later, another armed force driven by Colonel Malcolm, assaulted Naragund. By then, a few men inside Bhaskararao Bhave’s camp were won over by the British. Bhave’s men lost the fight, and his mother and other relatives submitted suicide by offering themselves up to the river Malaprabha. There is a story that Babasaheb escaped to the north of India as Nanasaheb did. In fact, he met Nanasaheb in Nepal.

Naikar’s *The Sun Behind the Cloud* is in the line of Sir Walter Scot and Alexander Dumas’s works. In our own country, Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*, Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi*, Khushwant Singh’s *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, K. A. Abbas’s *Inquilab* and Vimala Raine’s *Ambapali* are good historical narratives. In these novels whether of the West or of the East, the pervading strain is the bygone. What we find is a dynasty or a kingdom being depicted in all its regal glory. As Henry James, in his article “The Art of Fiction” (James, 855) thinks here the historical character is determined of the incidents – of the wars, peace, conflicts, or colonial encounter as in the case of Naikar’s novel. A historical novel unravels the period history of a dynasty, its
kings, administration, wars and conflicts. Sociological and political interests overlap. *The Sun Behind the Cloud* deals with the king of Naragund, Bhaskararaao Bhave’s colonial encounter with the British East India Company, on the events of disarmament and adoption in the latter part of the 19th century. The king’s dynasty is well depicted: his welfare state, the British rule and its interference, the king’s own enemies from within and without, the role of his ministers and army general Virabhadrnanayaka.

Dr Naikar’s novel *The Sun Behind the Cloud* draws a comparison with Meadow Taylor’s historical novels like *Tippu Sultan* or A. S. P. Ayyar’s *Baladitya*. John Joseph observes aptly:

> Naikar’s work *The Sun Behind the Cloud* can be very well compared with Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*. Both novels deal with the establishment of colonialism and the tragic consequences in India and Africa respectively.” (Joseph 22)

Jibesh Bhattacharya observes, “*The Sun Behind the Cloud* presents a native king’s revolt against the powerful British rulers, and may be treated as an account of the first battle for freedom by the Indians during the first half of the nineteenth century.” (Bhattacharya 92)

Chapter 2 of the thesis is a critical interpretation of Naikar’s first novel *The Sun Behind the Cloud*.

Basavaraj Naikar’s next novel *Light in the House* (2006) sounds like a metaphysical lyric. It is his masterpiece. It is the story of a saint poet namely Shishunala Sharif. It is a hagiography. Shishunala Sharif was a holy person, rationalist and social reformer of the 19th century north Karnataka. His syntheses of tatvapada (spirituals) are in Kannada. Sharif is perceived as the principal Muslim artist in Kannada literature.
Shishunala Sharif was born on 3 July 1819 (died in 1889) in Shishuvinahala, a village in Shiggaon taluk (Haveri dt), Karnataka. He was the only child and lately born. Legend has it that Shishunala Sharif was considered the gift of Allah. As a youngster Shishunala Sharif was extremely clever. In the wake of finishing his studies, he filled in as a teacher for some time, before taking up profound inquiry into life. He found a guru in Shri Kalasada Govindabhatta. They both shared an extremely welcoming relationship and regularly occupied with interesting otherworldly exchanges. Despite the fact that a Muslim by birth, Shishunala Sharif had faith in the fundamentals of Hinduism and brought public agreement. In his origination Shishuvinahala, even today, both Hindus and Muslims venerate him as a saint.

Shishunala Sharif was referred to make lyrics according to the circumstance and sing them to spread the message of communal harmony. Despite the fact that he never recorded his compositions, by listening him or others' conversations a large number of them have been passed down to future generations. Sharif's preachings even echo Lingayat religion. Naikar’s *Light in the House* reports the scattered and uncollected occasions of this saint's life. While lesser mortals see the world in parts, Sharif saw the world in its aggregate. India has a long history and convention of sainthood and from times immemorial, individuals have looked for divine intercession, visiting their shrines and making different petitions.

Sabita Tripathy observes:

Basavaraj Naikar’s *Light in the House* is an attempt at the depiction of essential human values and to make the society free from religious intoleranc and aversion to other sects. Saints and mystics of India through their invaluable preaching and teachings down the ages have endeavoured their best to forge communal harmony between various sects and creeds. The noble values of Sant Kabir, the Sai Baba of Siridi, saint Mauneswar
of Tinthani at Gulbarga, Sidharudhaswami of Hubli, Sharif of Shisunala and the Sufi saints have rendered yeomen service in reminding the people time and again for the need of communal unity by establishing a sense of brotherhood for peaceful coexistence in the society.(Tripathy 30)

Chapter 3 of the thesis is a perceptive analysis of Light in the House.

Naikar’s third novel The Queen of Kittur (2009) is also a historical novel and it is better written than The Sun Behind the Cloud. The Queen of Kittur provides the following regional details: Rani Chennamma was conceived in Kakati (a village in the north of Belgaum in Karnataka) in 1778 that is just about 56 years earlier than the birth of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi (born in Kolhapur). From an extremely youthful age she had all military training. She was surely understood for her fearless demonstrations.

Rani Chennamma was married to Mallasarja Desai, leader of Kittur at 15 years age. Her wedded life appeared to be a dismal story after her better half died in 1816. With this marriage she had one child. However, destiny appeared to play an awful diversion. Her child died in 1824, leaving the desolate soul to battle against the British. Then she received Shivalingappa, and made him beneficiary to the throne. The British East India Company did not acknowledge it. However, Chennamma challenged the British. The same happened in the case of Bhaskararao Bhave in The Sun Behind the Cloud.

The condition of Kittur went under the organization of Dharwad collectorate accountable for Mr. Thackeray. Mr. Chaplin, the British officer in Pune was to be consulted. Both did not acknowledge the new ruler and they forced the British overlordship.

Rani Chennamma and the nearby Kannadiga individuals faced the British overbearing. Chennamma sent a letter to the Governor at Bombay to argue the reason for Kittur. However, Elphinstone turned down the solicitation. The British attempted to seize the fortune of Kittur, esteemed around fifteen lakhs of
rupees. They assaulted with a power of 200 men and four firearms, for the most part from the third troop of Madras Native Horse Artillery. In the first round of war, amid October 1824, the British strengths lost intensely and St John Thackeray, Collector was slaughtered. Two British officers, Sir Walter Elliot and Mr. Stevenson were additionally taken as prisoners. Rani Chennamma discharged the prisoners with a comprehension with Chaplin that the war would be avoided. However, Chaplin proceeded with the war with more strength. The mortification of annihilation because of a little ruler was a lot for the British to swallow. They acquired greater armed forces from Mysore and Sholapur and encompassed Kittur.

Amid the second ambush, sub-authority of Sholapur, Mr. Munro, nephew of Sir Thomas Munro was slaughtered. The valiant Queen and her troopers protected their post, yet similar to the normal attribute, tricksters sneaked in and blended mud and excrement in the explosive in the groups. Rani Chennamma battled savagely with the guide of her lieutenant, Sangolli Rayanna, yet was eventually caught and detained at Bailhongal Fort (1824). She spent her days in meditation till her passing on 21 February 1829.

Naikar rewrites Chennamma’s history into a fine imaginative writing which bears universal qualities as Aristotle could think that literature is more universal than history.

Chapter 4 of the thesis is an interpretation of *The Queen of Kittur*.

Basavaraj Naikar is a prolific writer, no doubt. He is a writer of novellas, short stories too. He has authored four novellas, namely *Jakkanna, the Architect Divine, Kanakadas: The Golden Servant, Raja Mallasarja, and Rayanna, the Patriot*. His two books of short stories *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* and *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories* are fine creations about Indian life and society of the present times. Of course, the stories are
traditional in terms of both content and form. They depict more of a rural life than urban. They hold mirror to rural India.

Basavaraj Naikar has his plots on three dimensions and mini themes over profound discussion in his short stories. He truly conforms to regionalism. He takes into account the incidents and events and builds stories around such events. This sometimes is added with a streak of imagination. All these guide towards, regionalism and fiction. The stories narrated with local landscape haul around regional setting with regional fervor. The physical features, the people, their relationship with their fellow beings all have a touch of nativity. There is vivid description of fairs, festivals, decorations and mournings. The north Karnataka people are known for their tenderness, revelry, bitterness with neighbors, lovelorn men, luster and amorous women with adultery and all these are obviously the points of concern of the author.

*The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* (1999) and *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and Other Stories* (2001) manage the wide range of Naikar’s ideas and perceptions from the historical to the contemporary, religious to the common and natural to the scholarly. The whole oeuvre shows the issues and potential outcomes of life in the context of socio-moral reverberation. Research on Naikar is both a work and a mission, however, he has an innovative energy for dealing with the Indian subjects and sensibilities. As a bilingual writer and critic he expresses his dedication by anticipating his scholarship into the nature and character of man in the contemporary society. He cheers at the festival of Indian sensibility yet takes a gaze at life with an embittered eye when its extravagance is influenced by the loss of high ethical values. He knows about the deplorability of human situation and uses joys and sorrows together seeing through the rainbow magnificence of life.

*The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories* is perhaps Naikar's finest portrait of a remarkable individual, The author's avowed target is that of
anticipating the various measurements of the image of Indian life somehow or
the other – which in his case is north Karnataka with which he is rather
emotionally attached. But the charm of such tranquility is often aggravated by
an experience between the individual and the general public and its customs in
some cases, speaking to the current and the traditional, as much as by
viciousness, which to some degree is a part of rural society. The center of
Naikar's achievement as an author of short stories largely lies in his adoring and
lackadaisical painting of the details of the sociological background of the locale,
which, however apparently irrelevant, produces a persuading hallucination
regarding reality, as does Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* on a much larger scale.
Asha Choubey observes:

All the ten stories reflect instincts which are not only basic but also
base and all that comes in mind after one has finished this engrossing
collection is – Isn’t life like this? Fear, greed, sex, ambition (*All for gold,
She Wanted a child, The Invisible Face, When the News Came, Coffin in
The House*) are the basic instincts that rule the life of human race. All our
acquired strength and projected loftiness notwithstanding, we are basically
prone to some basic weaknesses and this is what has been made the pivot
of Naikar’s stories. (Choubey 149)

Unlike his first book *The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories*
shortlisted for Commonwealth Fiction Prize for the Best First Book from
Eurasia in 2000, the second collection *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi and
Other Stories* deals with the broad spectrum of Naikar’s thoughts and
perceptions ranging from the historical to the contemporary. The entire oeuvre
presents the problems and possibilities of life in perspective of socio-ethical
resonance. The text speaks of the universal through the local and natural.

In an attempt to analyze Indian sensibility in all the twelve stories the
dissertation aims at examining the Indian society in general with special
reference to the regional sensibility. The title story *The Rebellious Rani of Belavadi* is a historical biography written in the genre of popular fiction. The other popular stories are “Change of Heart,” “Blood for Blood,” “Cross-Roads,” “The Circle of Vengeance,” “Felicitation,” “Pilgrimage to Kashi,” “The Spider’s Web,” and “Basavanti.”

Chapter 5 of the thesis covers the regional aspects in Naikar’s short fiction.

The thesis has a conclusion where the arguments of the previous chapters are succinctly presented.

B.M. Jabannavar feels Naikar’s fictional works are written in the native brand English. He writes,

North Karnataka life-style, particularly the life style of Dharwad district, is mirrored through his stories, Life of the Goudas, Deshapandes, Patils and others before India’s independence is projected vividly. The popular story of Sangya-Balya the folk-drama of Karnataka is modified. Other stories are marked by lucidity of expression; some of them have a strong auto-biographical flavor -- he language by adding some of the idioms popular in Dharwad. The stories abound in traditional symbols. The imagery he uses is a North-Karnataka imagery. (Jabannavar, 87)
References:


