Chapter 2

The Regional Elements in Basavaraj Naikar’s

The Sun Behind the Cloud

M. A. Jeyaraju, one of the scholars on Naikar’s writings is happy of Naikar’s regional novel. Likewise, in his preface to his novel Kunjaram Hills, S. Gopalan, an Indian English novelist from the South says:

In the Southern extremity of what was once called the Madras Presidency […] there were prevalent certain local traditions or versions, some found in fact and some perhaps of an apocryphal character, about men and women who fought against the territorial expansion of the East India Company. Invariably they waged a losing battle and martyrized themselves according to these versions. At the same time there were also men, the Quislings who for personal enrichment and selfish advantages, betrayed their own kith and kin and played into the hands of the conquering force. […] It did not always happen that the recorded versions which have passed into the history of these areas were either exhaustive of men and events or quite accurate about the real heroes and heroines of the day. […] It is time that these protagonists got their niche in our history. (n. pg.) (Gopalan qt Jeyaraju 13)

Basavaraj Naikar’s historical novel The Sun behind the Cloud is a commendable attempt to carve such a niche in the country’s history for one such Indian nationalist hero, namely, Bhaskararao Bhave of Naragund, popularly known as Babasaheb.

The Sun Behind the Cloud is Basavaraj Naikar’s first / maiden novel. It is a historical novel. It is an attempt for rehabilitation of a neglected native king.
Prof Naikar hails from Naragund taluk of Dharwad district, and he has written this historical novel about his place. Another reason he claims rightly is, this:

The special reason for my writing this novel (which is my first one) happens to be the political connection of my own ancestors with Bhaskararao Bhave’s rule in Naragund. My great grandfather Virabhadranayaka happened to be one of the army officers of Naragund and a confidant of Babasaheb. He fought heroically in the war with the British and lay down his life for his master. (Sun viii)

Writing a historical novel is quite difficult, for Naikar observes:

Writing a historical is not so easy as that of a contemporary novel. The novelist has to do a lot of research and locate a logical thread in the mutually contradictory pieces of information thereby reconstructing history in a convincing if not a pleasing manner. I have done my bit in this novel and wait for the reactions and responses from historians and literary critics to guide my writing career in future. (Sun ix)

Why Prof. Naikar called the present historical novel as The Sun Behind the Cloud, he tells it:

I have entitled this novel as The Sun Behind the Cloud to highlight the solar image and to suggest the contrast between light and darkness symbolically present throughout the novel. The name of the protagonist, Bhaskararao means “the sun” who shines brightly and then is hidden behind the clouds as it were. Similarly, the East India Company or the British Government which believed that the sun never sets in the British Empire was behind a cloud as it were until it annexed the kingdom of Naragund and began to shine brightly. The solar image happens to be quite ironical. (Sun viii)
The Sun Behind the Cloud begins with the reflection of Lord Dollhouse’s threat of the Doctrine of Lapse that shook the princely states of Kittur, Jhansi and others. It is not just the complex about a male child, but practically, the necessity of a male child as hair to the princely state of Naragund in the then Deccan Plateau (today’s Dharwad district is in north Karnataka). The author describes the genesis of the British threat in the beginning para itself:

In 1800 Appasaheb Sarkar was ruling over the princely state called Naragund. The hill of Naragund lay northwest and southeast across the vast plain. The sturdy hill of about eight hundred feet had the grand look of a sleeping lion. The capital city called Naragund was situated on the top of that leonine hill. Apparao Sarkar was walking up and down in his court and feeling rather fidgety. “What shall I do if I get a female child? I only hope that Lord Venkatapati will bless me with a male issue.” Apparao Sarkar bowed down to his family deity and mumbled these prayers. Now he would go to the window and stare at the sky, now he would come back to the spot where the tiny idol of Lord Venkatapati stood and reverentially bowed down to it. “Lord, if by your grace I get a son, I can spend my lifetime without any worry about my kingdom. My whole life depends upon your mercy. Float me or drown me.” Again he walked to the window and gazed at the golden crest of the spire of the temple. (Sun 1)

Appasaheb Sarkar (Babasaheb’s father) is happy to see that the queen delivers a male child.

Hemalatha and Kanakangi as the maid-servants in the palace hold the attention of Appasaheb Sarkar when the good news is broken to him. The bevy of maids said, ‘See, Sarkar, here is your princeling.’ The Sardars too became overjoyed. The king said in joy:
“Dear minister, please arrange for a grand service to lord Venkatapati and distribution of coins, cereals, cloths and cows to the poor. Let the entire population of Naragund be fed at my palace.” (Sun 3)

On the occasion of the naming ceremony, all the relatives and dignitaries of the Samsthan had gathered in the harem:

The child was named Bhaskararao (meaning the son, hence the title, ‘the son behind the cloud.’ The folks blessed the child, believing that it will shine like the sun whose name he bears and give light to the world. Naikar as an expert in description and creative vision finishes the prince’s childhood and growth in one para. The next para speaks of his marriage with Savitri, from a royal family of the Manjrekars in the Westernghats, probably Maharastra, because the princely state was affiliated to the erstwhile Pune Peswas.

The natives of Naragund remembered the grand royal marriage for many days and appreciated the royal family and its regalia.

The regional aspects of Bhaskararao’s story is historical enough. For example, Apparao’s description of how the family worshipped Venkateshwar of Tirupati comes suddenly alive.

The story begins just like the priest’s story of the Mahabharata myth in Raja’s Rao’s Kanthapura:

“In my father Ramaraya II’s time, an interesting event happened. He used to visit the temple of Lord Venkateswara at Tirupati every year. Once in the month of Pausya, he left Naragaund for Tirupati with his limited company consisting of two camels, five horses and fifty persons in all. The camels were loaded with cooking utensils, ropes and tents. The five horses were ridden by sardars and others were cooks, servants and palanquin-bearers who used to carry it by turns. They went southward covering the plains, mounting the hillocks and crossing the brooks. At
last they reached the river Tungabhadra. But they could not dare to cross the river as it was overflowing with water everywhere. The usual banks of the river were not visible at all as the water had spread over a vast stretch of area beyond the banks. The dark water was rushing torrentially, swirling loudly. The bubbles of various sizes used to float on the waves and burst out occasionally. The trunks of trees, thorny hedges and leaves used to float swiftly before their eyes. The pilgrims could not identify the usual ford on which to cross the river, Ramaraya II exclaimed.

“This is how my father arranged for the chariot-procession in *Navaratri* every year,” said Appasaheb. (Sun 7)

Then there follows the local history of how Lord Venkateswar’s Temple was established in Naragund. It is all what we can call sthalapurana as that can be found in every regional narrative.

The story continues. A few years went by. One day Appasaheb fell ill. The news was brought to Bhaskararao by a servant. Immediately Bhaskararao sent for the royal physicians who came to the palace with their herbs and roots and administered them. But the medicines could not compete with old age. Appasaheb grew weaker and weaker every day. His queen Yamunabayi always sat at his feet and nursed him. His daughter-in-law sat near his head and attended to him. However, the old king died.

After the post-funeral ritual was over, Bhaskararao began to feel the responsibility of the kingdom though slowly. He felt sad at the sight of his widowed stepmother and, therefore, asked his wife Savitri to take special care of his stepmother Yamunabayi. As days went by, Yamunabayi began to spend more and more time in the temple of Lord Venkateswara meditating and saying prayers to the deity.
Now the ministers and sardars started visiting the king regularly and reminded him of the political situation in the neighbouring states. At that time, Lord Dalhousie was the Governor-General of India with his headquarters at Calcutta. The East India Company was situated at Madras then. Although Bhaskararao was puzzled by the presence of foreign rulers in the Indian continent, he could not do anything about it as he had no occasion to rub with them. He began to inspect all the sections of his kingdom like infantry, cavalry, weapons, temple-service, lands, taxes, etc.

After the death of Appasaheb, Bhaskararao Bhave took over the administration of Naragund Kingdom. Bhaskararao had a very bitter experience with Raghopant Limaye who had been an opportunist and who had succeeded in spoiling the relationship between Bhaskararao and his father. As soon as Bhaskararao took charge of the kingdom, he excommunicated Limaye and his house was demolished: the same material being used for constructing a chavadi, a public place.

Ironically Limaye stayed in Dharwad. He befriended the white folks in the DC to office there, with the sole intention to take revenge upon Naragund king. He requested the DC enquire about why the King of Naragund banished him outrightly. Naikar writes:

When Raghopant Limaye’s application was taken up by the officers for consideration, they asked for Bhaskararao’s opinion also about the case. Accordingly Bhaskararao Bhave sent his views on 30-7-1847. He had written to the officers, “Rahgopant Limaye has been engaged in underhand dealings like fraud and instigating the sepoys and merchants to go out of Naragund. Further he has misappropriated the annual grant of Rs.1326/- from the Company Sarkar to the temple of Sri Venkateswara. He has not submitted the said amount to the treasury of the temple. He
should, therefore, be sent back to Naragund along with the temple-grant of Rs.1326/-.” (Sun 21)

Limaye continued more hostilities.

One day, when the holy-service was going on in the temple of Lord Venkateshwara, Bhaskararao saw a young dancer who caught his fancy. She danced there before the palanquin of the deity. He happened to observe the details of her beauty very keenly as he had never done before. Her hair bun secured on top of her head, the mischievous light in her eyes, her drooping shoulders, her shapely breasts, tapering fingers and her protuberant posteriors charming in themselves assumed an additional beauty.

Babasaheb fell in love with her. She was a good dancer. He summoned her one day. He allowed her stay in the capital with her guru Kesara Prasad. Bhimasani felt a sense of liberty as the king took her into confidence. He steered her to the silk covered bed and lay her there. Bhimasani surrendered herself whole-heartedly to the king as she had never before to anyone.

Lord Dalhousie was the Governor-General of India. His rule in the country had not directly affected Bhaskararao in any way. Another fifteen years went by in peace. Bhaskararao spent those years in royal luxury. Although he had heard about the British ill-treatment of other Indian kings, he had had no occasion to be disturbed by the alien rulers.

In spite of all the peace and plenty in his kingdom, Bhaskararao had a secret worry. His first child died immediately after its birth. Afterwards he had no issue at all in spite of his normal matrimonial life. Savitri was not as sportive as Bhimasani in bed, but she was no less artful than the latter. In spite of being a very homely type of a wife, Savitri would not hesitate to surrender herself to him, but yet she failed to conceive for the second time. Bhaskararao consulted many a physician and took a number of aphrodisiac medicines. The north Indian
astrologer who was summoned did not help the king. He said the king would not have a male issue. Then the king in consultation with his Diwan Raghopant Kulkarni decided to adopt a child from his relatives in Pune.

It was in 1845 that the Disarmament Bill was passed by the East India Company when Mr. Dalhousie was still the Governor-General of India. A copy of the bill was sent to Babasaheb through the Deputy Commissioner of Dharwad.

“All the heads of the princely states of India are hereby ordered by the Governor-General to surrender all their military weapons such as guns, rifles, swords and spears etc., to the Government within three months failing which they are to be severely punished. The heads of the princely states are not supposed to retain any military equipment as it is the responsibility of the Government to protect them.” (Sun 28)

The blood boiled in the king as much as his Diwan. However, the king decided not to oppose the Company. He thought of hiding the weapons instead of destroying them. The herald promulgated the order.

“Listen to me, citizens of Naragund, listen to the orders of Babasaheb Sarkar carefully. The Ingreji Sarkar has demanded that all the citizens of India should surrender the arms like swords, spears, maces, rifles and funs etc., to the firangi Sarkar. The Ingreji soldiers may come to Naragund anytime to confiscate the arms. But Babasaheb Sarkar has hereby ordered all the natives of Naragund either to destroy or hide in the earth or throw in the wells or rivers whatever weapons they have in their houses so that the Ingreji soldiers should not be able to find any when they come down to raid our city.” Dhum, dhum, dhum, dhum, dhum, dhum. (Sun 30)
There was quite a stir in Naragund as the news circulated fast among the citizens. The civilians who owned weapons for self-protection felt very sore at having to surrender them to the British.

A month had gone by. The natives of Naragund began to hear the rumour about the British soldiers marching from place to place confiscating the arms and weapons of the civilians. Nay, the British soldiers came to confiscate the armoury of the people in Naragund one day. The soldiers rested for a couple of hours. Then they entered the city of Naragund for confiscating the weapons. They went on visiting the houses one by one and took into their possession whatever swords, lances, rifles or guns they could lay hands on.

Look at how the army chief reacts at this interpolation:

“We’ve come for the weapons. Give us all the weapons that you possess.”

“We have no weapons worth the name. except a few small ones. You may search by yourselves in the house,” said virabhadra Nayaka. (Sun 33)

The soldiers entered the house and went on inspecting different rooms. The inmates of the house tolerated the tap-tap of the boots of the soldiers as they walked leisurely across the big house and searched the nooks and corners of the house.

The soldiers grunted helplessly and walked to the next house. Virabhadra Nayaka stood on the doorstep of his house with his left arm akimbo and right hand twirling his bushy mustaches. The womenfolk heaved a sigh of relief. Virabhadra Nayaka said:
“Absolutely nothing, Sarkar. We had arranged for nice food and water for them at the outskirts of the city. The soldiers were extremely pleased with the arrangements. So was I told.”

“Very good, Virabhadra Nayaka, we have to resort to all these tricks just to save the lives of our people. Please see me in the evening. Now it is time for my visit to the temple.” Virabhadra Nayaka bowed himself out of the chamber. (Sun 35)

It was in the month of February that the British officer Manson came to India and met the Governor-General at Calcutta who ordered Manson to officiate as Political Agent over the sixty-three princely states of South India and establish his headquarters at Kolhapur. Accordingly Manson took charge of the office and began to acquaint himself with the details of the problems. Rajaram Maharaj was ruling at Kolhapur then. Manson had no idea of the nature of the sixty-three princely states that he had to control. He, therefore, sent a circular to all the kings to attend a general meeting at Kolhapur.

Babasaheb set out for Kolhapur on horseback one day. He chose, only eight cavalrymen with him Virabhadra Nayaka known as Vira Sarnayaka accompanied him. Bhaskararao had great faith in Virabhadra Nayaka’s loyalty and heroism. All the ten of them rode on horseback, crossing wide stretches of land, mountain ridges and meandering brooks and rivers.

All hastened. Virabhadra Nayaka as he went nearer the city the houses and temples looked clearer. He saw the gigantic pandal erected by the Political Agent for the next day’s conference. They crossed the first gate. First Virabhadra Nayaka went in. He was followed by Babasaheb on horseback and his bodyguards. Since the first gate was quite high, they had no problem in crossing it. After a few yards, they had to cross the next gates. Thus there were
several gates as hurdles. Virabhadra Nayaka as the king’s bodyguard smashed
the last two gates.

Mr. Manson attended to the details of the conference. When the function
began, it was presided over by Maharaja Ramaram of Kolhapur. In the course of
the programme, Mr. Manson addressed the royal gathering as follows:

“My dear Rajas of all the sixty-three princely states, I have called
this meeting mainly to acquaint myself with all of you. I am happy to
bring to your kind attention the fact that I have been appointed by the
East India company as Political Agent over the sixty-three princely states
of South India. I am extremely happy to meet you all. In fact I called this
meeting only to acquaint myself with your pomp and glory. Since I am
appointed to be your protector, I request you to extend all help and
cooperation. Your loyalty to the British Government will be highly
appreciated.” (Sun 40)

Next morning Mr. Manson visited all the kings and bid farewell to them,
after giving them some mementos and shaking hands with them. When he came
to Babasaheb, he said,

“Hullo Sir Babasaheb, yesterday I was very happy to note your
behavior which speaks of your dignity and respectability. The East India
Company really needs the support of kings like you. As a token of my
appreciation of your heroic behavior, I am giving you a special drum-set.
Please accept it.” (Sun 41)

The Naragund party returned with surprise. A couple of months went by.
Bhaskararao was busy with his daily service at the temple of Lord
Venkateswara, exercises and administration. Although he used to be
preoccupied with diurnal duties, he would worry about his hairlessness. He
consulted his confidants about the same. The king sent Manson the following letter of request:

“Honorable Sir Manson, hope this letter finds you in good health. We would like to bring to your kind attention the fact that we do not have any issues of our own. But we need a heir to take care of our kingdom after us. We, therefore, request Your Excellency to kindly permit us to adopt a near relative of our as our legal heir to the Kingdom of Naragund. We hope to hear a favourable reply from your end at the earliest.” (Sun 42)

Another three months went by. Bhaskararao began to grow restless over the issue. He remembered that there were many other kings who, like him, had no heirs and who were equally worried. He, therefore, sent out messages to Bhimaraya of Mundaragi, Desai of Hammagi, Yasavantaraya of Jamakhandi and Virarani of Chitradurga asking them to gather at Jamakhandi to discuss the problem of adoption.

Mr. Manson attended the meeting at Jamakhandi. All the five princely chiefs had made up their mind to speak of their problems. The meeting began in the morning about 10 o’clock. Bhaskararao stood up and said,

“Sir, all the five of us do not have issues. We, therefore, request you to grant us permission to adopt somebody from among our nearest relatives.” (Sun 45)

There was a look of indifference on the face of Mr. Manson. He scanned all the five chiefs from one corner to the other. Then Bhimaraya of Mundaragi stood up and said,

“Sir, Bhaskararao has spoken for all of us. We are deeply worried about our hairlessness. We must be allowed to adopt our nearest relatives.”
Then the Virarani of Chitradurga sat erect in a dignified fashion in her chair and said,

“Manson saheb, you must permit us to adopt our heirs from among our relatives. (Sun 43)

All the chiefs looked at one another meaningfully and began to wait for Mr. Manson who was a little irritated. He licked his lips with his tongue, sat upright in his chair and said in a firm but slow manner,

“Lady and gentlemen, I have noted the contents of your requests both oral and epistolary. But I must confess before you that I am not empowered to grant the permission that you have so solemnly sought. (Sun 43)

Bhaskararao was fuming with anger. He thundered,

“You must give us permission in your regime. We have got to take care of our states. We do not want to listen to your pretexts.” Manson was irritated by the words of Bhaskararao. He raised his voice and shouted,

“Dear Mr. Bhaskararao, please don’t be in a hurry. We have received orders from our East India company. According to that, all of you should surrender your army and ammunition to our government. Besides, permission regarding the adoption cannot be granted. Therefore all the property belonging to the heirless states should be handed over to our government. Everyone from king to farmer must submit themselves to our authority.”(Sun 43)

Naikar’s novel is not necessarily too historical. It elaborates on other social, religious and cultural issues. Babasaheb as a man is revealed of his royal character. For ex, the King of Naragund’s lust is shown when he falls in love with Gangadhara’s daughter-in-law. Oh! Gangadhar murders her just to save his family honour. So the king’s spies could not locate her!
Political happenings began to go rapidly in the 1840s and 50s.

Bhaskararao received the secret letter from Nanasaheb which he read and felt enthused to carry out the instructions given therein to all the patriots of the Deccan. It read as follows;

Proclamation

From Dhonda Pant Nana Peshwa, Pant Pradhan to all the Suranjamadars, Jagirdars, Deshmukhs, Deshpandeys and other Jameendars, Patels, Kulkarnis, Naikwads, Shetsandees and the whole of the population of the Deccan and the Carnatik. It is ordered to be proclaimed that the English who are “Kaffirs” came to this country under the pretense of carrying on trade. Afterwards instigating sedition among our Suranjamadars and practicing treachery they seized all the Hindu and Mohammadan kingdoms, imprisoning some of the descendants of the former kings and driving others to beggary; they themselves enjoy the country. This is well-known to the whole of you. (Sun 52-53)

Nanasaheb feels that the Kaffirs were destroying Hindustan. So he prays all the princes of states thus:

Ye heroes! This is the best time for you to avenge the wrongs and wickedness perpetrated by the Kaffir English on your land and on your kings. By allowing such an opportunity to escape do not suffer the stain of being effeminate and foolish to attach to the people of the South. At the present time the English having disagreements among themselves about their religion are quarreling and fighting and killing each other. The French and the Russians who entertained from a long time a hatred against the English and a design to turn them out of Hindustan have thought this a proper time to carry it out and with this intention they have been sending armies by sea these three months past. The Chinese also
have declared war against these Kaffirs and the latter having no army to send against the Chinese are much alarmed. The Persians, Afghans and Ballochees moreover, are ready with their armies collected to aid us. In short, this is the golden time to root out completely the English from this country. The Kaffir English in order to discourage the population, fabricate false information of their having taken Delhi and other places and having defeated us and make it known among the public, but such ought not to be believed. If you allow this time to escape, all of you will be liable to punishment from us and for that guilt whatever jageers, lands and other subsistence you may possess will be brought under attachment. This proclamation is published by the order or Ullu Shah Bundeegah Ullu Hozoor, the Emperor of Delhi. (Sun 53-54)

The ending reference is to Bahaddurashah of Delhi.

Baskararao realized that Nanasaheb, on behalf of the erstwhile Delhi Sultan sent the same message to every ruling family in India.

Three months had elapsed after the meeting with Mr. Manson at Jamakhandi, Babasaheb was smouldering with anger at the red-faced fellows. He felt that he must do something about it. He, therefore, sent out his messengers to fetch all the four friends Bhimaraya of Mundaragi, Kenchanagouda Desai of Hammigi, Yasavantraya of Jamakhandi and Virarani of Chitradurga. Likewise he sent letters to the Desais of Soratur, Govinakoppa, Dogaludosi Inamdar and Srirangaraya of Anegundi.

One day Bhimaraya of Mundaragi and Kenchangouda of Hammigi met the Desai of Soratige in his house for a confidential work. The two gave a letter to Desai from Babasaheb of Naragund which read as follows:

The people of the East India Company came to India with the pretext of carrying trade here, but later they began to rule over us. Thus
we Indians have become impotent fellows. They have been taking advantage of our personal and communal differences and conflicts, and sitting over our heads. When they attacked Mallasarja Desai of Kittur, we kept quiet. Similarly, we kept quiet when they attacked and insulted the Maharaja of Jamakhandi and Jahagirdar of Nippani. Now the Raja of Surapur and the Raja of Ramadurg have got into trouble. All these trouble is due to the Company Sarkar which is striking root in Hindustan. In the Northern Hindustan, the kings of Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Kashi and Aligarh have rebelled against the Ingreji people and ousted them and captured Delhi. The Ingreji people have taken a lot of care to prevent this news from reaching the common people of Hindustan. But Nanasaheb Peshwa has issued a farman in the name of Bahudur Shah of Delhi and ordered all the Desais, Deshpandes, Jahagirdars, Patils, Kulkarnis and other Shetsanadis of Southern part of Hindustan to rebel against the British people. (Sun 56)

Soratige Desai and Kenchanagouda reached Naragund at around midnight one day. But Bhimaraya had reached Naragund two hours before them by riding his horse fast. He had met Babasaheb and reported all the important details. He was happy to learn that the Raja of Surapur and the Nawab of Savanur had already come to Naragund. As well as the Jahagirdars of Gajendragad and Sondur, Raja Venkatappanayaka, Jahagirdar of Nippani, the Desai of Mudhol, and Jamakhandi- all came for the meeting. Once the breakfast was over, the princes held a historic meeting. Babasaheb said,

“"In this war with the Ingreji people, we have to accept the leadership of Raja Venkatappanayaka of Surapur Kingdom. He is a leader not only for Karnataka, but for the whole of southern Hindustan, which was once upon a time, part of the Vijayanagara Empire. Since the kings of Surapur were the close friends of the Emperors of Vijayanagara, now
they represent the forgotten empire. Here I have a personal letter from Nanasaheb Peshwa sent on behalf of the Bahaddur Shah of Delhi. Nanasaheb Peshwa has suggested that Raja Venkatappanayaka of Surapur should preside over this function. He has also ordered that after kicking out the Ingreji people from our country Raja Venkatappanayaka of Surapur should become the Emperor of southern Hindustan.” All the kings gathered there clapped loudly in appreciation of Nanasaheb’s orders. (Sun 62)

Finally, Raja Venkatappanayak addressed them:

“All every King and every patriot has a right to participate in the liberation movement of our mother country. How to help and what is the nature of help and such other details are known to our close friend and patriot Sri Nadiger Bhimaraya. Therefore, everybody should obey him. we have authorized him to punish those who are either indifferent or disobedient to him. We have also requested him to act as the Chief Commander of this war of freedom.” (Sun 63)

The news of the meeting of five kings and a queen reached Chandralal Deshpande who was a native of Navalagund. Chandralal Deshpande had a grouse against Babasaheb. Now he did not want to miss the golden opportunity of betraying Babasaheb to the East India Company. He, therefore, sent a messenger Ramu to Mr. Manson and briefed him about the confidential decision of united fighting that the five Desais and the Rani had taken at Naragund.

Mr. Manson was a clever British officer who used to visit all the princely states of his jurisdiction once in six months and gather latest intelligence. Now Manson was so angry with Babasaheb that he wanted to put an end to them. He remembered the courage that Babasaheb had shown in Kolhapur.
Manson tipped both Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant secretly. Lieut Thomson had joined service as Police Superintendent of Dharwad district. Six months had gone by. He was trying to familiarize himself with local details. He used to visit various towns and villages and keep an eye over the public life which required law and order.

Mr Thompson had a round in Dharwad region where he met the Whitemen Bryce, and William Smith, both cotton company agents to exploit Indian cotton for Manchester factories in England. Nigel Bryce was a talkative man who narrated the story of American cotton in India. Thomson listened to him patiently.

Nigel Bryce and Thomson continued their horse ride. Lieut Thomson who had heard and seen something connected with Bhaskararao had grown alert about his duty as a Police Superintendent. He saw the seeds of rebellion and non-cooperation in the behavior of Babasaheb and wanted to bring it to the notice of higher authorities. Thompson asked the Mamledar of Navalagund to report about the Naragund prince to Mr Oglivy, the DC of Dharwad. Lieut Thomson came to know from people that there was a severe famine in some talukas. Thomson secured spy’s information about Bhimraya of Mundaragi.

Lieut Thomson, as a friend of Babasaheb, decided to visit Naragund. He met King Babasaheb and questioned about cannons. He visited Mr. Oglivey, the Magistrate at Gadag and realized the grave danger in the then Dharwad district.

Mr. Oglivey informed the details of the information that he had received from the British resident in Hyderabad like the preparations of war against the British being made by Raja Venkatappanayaka of Surapur and coming together of many important people like Babasaheb of Naragund, Bhimaraya of Mundaragi and many others. Mr. Oglivey said, “Mr. Thomson I suspect that
some conspiracy has been going on against the British. We can see only the
smoke of it now, but the fire is not visible yet. (Sun 78-79)

Thomson listened to Magistrate Oglivey. Then he replied, “My
impression is contrary to yours. I strongly suspect that Bhimaraya of Mundaragi
must be behind the rebellious activities of Babasaheb, or of Raja
Venkatappanayaka of Surapur or of any other king. When I analyze the unhappy
events happening in this part of the District, my suspicion about Bhimaraya of
Mundaragi has been growing stronger. This is too serious a matter to be
neglected. (Sun 79)

The next morning Mr. Oglivey rode on horseback to Dharwad whereas
Mr. Thomson rode his horse to Dambala. Ramu rode his horse towards
Naragund for spying. Ramu met Krishnaji Pant, and gave a letter from Manson.
It read,

Dear Mr. Krishnaji Pant,

Hope this letter finds you in good health. I will be camping at
Munavalli in January 1856. I, therefore, request you to come there with
Baniya Bapu to see me personally without fail to discuss some very
confidential matter. Please keep this as a top secret. The rest in
person. (Sun 82)

Once Krishnaji Pant and Baniya Bapu were working as clerks under
Raghu Prahlad Diwanji, Chief Secretary to Bhaskararao Bhave of Naragund.
Both were in charge of the military goods. Their duty was to supply gunpowder,
swords and spears to the soldiers. They had been given permanent landed
property. Babasaheb had great faith in their loyalty to the kingdom.

Krishnaji Pant and Baniya Bapu met Manson at Munavalli and hatched a
plot against Babasaheb. The British officer encouraged the two for money.
Manson went from Munavalli camp to Kolhapur. He felt a sense of satisfaction at having hit upon a good plan of enervating the arrogant Babasaheb.

Babasaheb was deeply worried about his heirlessness. He thought of a number of ways of solving the problem. One day he called a confidential meeting of officers and enquired about the military prowess that he had. As per the royal order Virabhadra Nayaka attended the meeting at night. One day Baniya Bapu, the Diwan (in league with Krishnaji Pant) met Babasaheb for avoiding the war with East India Company. But the king refused to do so.

One day in winter, Lieut Thomson felt bored at Dambala and therefore, rode to Gadag. The cold was severe. When he reached the Dak-Bungalow, he saw a white man to whom he introduced himself. The white man introduced himself as Mr. Meadows Taylor and further told him that he had come from Hyderabad and was on his way to Dharwad and that he had halted at Gadag for the night rest. He then said rather sternly, “Hope there is peace in your area. As for Surapur, it is burnt down. Now it is the turn of Naragund. You have been killing innocent people under the pretext of maintaining peace.”(Sun 91) Liteut Thomson did not understand the significance of his words. He did not know anything about the destruction of Surapur. He wondered why the white man was speaking to him bitterly.

The next day Krishnaji Pant and Baniya Bapu came to know the decision that Babasaheb had taken. They, therefore, made haste to intimate the same to Manson who in their view, was a king-maker. Krishnaji Pant called a confidant-servant and gave him a letter to be handed over to Manson.

Manson ordered two hundred cavalrymen to be ready. The soldiers got very good stallions to withstand the rough and rocky region.

The next morning Manson thanked the king of Ramadurg profusely for the nice hospitality shown to him.
The spies of Babasaheb brought him the news that Manson had come to Sureban and camped there and that he wanted to attack Naragund within a couple of days. Babasaheb was taken aback by the unexpectedness of Manson’s arrival there.

No sooner had Babasaheb heard the details of Manson’s camp than he began to fume with anger. He instantly sent for his Commander Visnu Kulkarni of Hirekoppa. In the evening Commander Visnu Kulkarni sent orders to his soldiers to gather on the ground in front of the hill. The soldiers rode their horses and gathered. They had put on their uniforms of knee-length trousers and half shirts.

They reached Avaradi where they took out their packets of food and fed themselves well and rested. Soon the Naragund soldiers attacked Manson’s cavalry in dark in Sureban. It was like hell let loose upon the whites.

Manson was flabbergasted by the unexpectedness of the whole situation. Nevertheless, he ordered his soldiers to fight the enemies in spite of darkness. By then the soldiers of Naragund had killed many British soldiers. Although nothing was clearly visible, the swish of swords and the clanking and thudding sounds of swords could be heard.

The Naragund soldiers discovered Manson as hiding in Venkateshwar Temple. Marya, one of the soldiers jumped on to Manson and knocked his gun off his hands. He, then, held the hands of Manson and went on kicking him out of the temple. He felled Manson on the ground, sat on his belly and began to pound his chest. Manson was completely helpless and was pleading for his life. The soldiers killed him. His head was hung at the Red-gate in public.

After a week’s time, Babasaheb called a meeting of all the Deshapandes, farmers and leading merchants of his kingdom. It was a strictly confidential meeting. Babasaheb addressed them, “My dear
citizen-friends, you all know that our soldiers have killed Manson. We have thus, enraged the snake called the Company Sarkar. We don’t know when the snake will take revenge upon us. We must, therefore, be prepared to wage a war against the red-faced fellows. For that purpose, I need your cooperation. You must help us with soldiers, horses, grains and weapons which will definitely add up to our strength. I would like to know how best you can contribute to this war with the British people.”(Sun 109)

All the leaders of Naragund were bubbling with patriotic zeal. They felt inspired to declare the kind of help they would be able to extend. First, a Deshapande got up and assured,

“Sarkar, I shall take the responsibility of collecting all the arms of the natives and supplying them to your soldiers.”

“That’s very good of you, Deshpande,” said Babasaheb.

Then Virabhadra Nayaka stood up and promised,

“Sarkar, I have about seven hundred private soldiers at my command. I shall try to collect another three hundred. This is the best that I can do.”(Sun 109)

Meanwhile Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant sent secret messages to Mr. Malcom who had taken charge of the office after the assassination of Manson. Mr. Malcolm took a vow to exterminate Babasaheb from the face of the earth itself. He, therefore, began to ingratiate Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant. He sent word to them through his secret messengers that they should inform him about every activity going on inside Naragund. Accordingly, Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant informed him that Babasaheb was making preparations for the war against the Company Sarkar. He wrote to the Head Office at Calcutta for the supply of additional soldiers and arms.
The British Government was very suspicious of Babasaheb’s behavior. The British officers knew that he was a very influential chief in the southern part of Maratha country and could, therefore, wield a lot of influence on the neighbouring chiefs who were equally disgruntled with the British government. Sir Malcolm wanted to ascertain the fact about Babasaheb. He knew that Naragund was situated on a high hill and protected by a very sturdy fort.

Babasaheb had asked commander Visnu Kulkarni and Virabhadra Nayaka to make all the preparations for the war. The entire city was seething with excitement. Womenfolk began to leave Naragund for other villages overnight in bullock carts to seek shelter with their parents. The whole city seemed to have come under the influence of Rahu. Malcolm sent an envoy to Babasaheb to intimate the date of war. Babasaheb accepted the invitation. He sent for Commander Visnu Kulkarni and asked,

“My dear Commander sir, hope everything is ready?”

“Don’t you worry, Sarkar. I have made all the preparations. Virabhadra Nayaka has been training nearly a thousand soldiers,” assured Visnu Kulkarni. (Sun 114)

Meanwhile both Krishnaji Pant and Baniya Bapu plotted to mix up raagi malt and oil into the gunpowder on the fort. So that the gun powder would not work when the future battle would take place between Babasaheb and Malcolm.

Babasaheb was waiting for the help from the sympathizers like Desai of Hammigi, Bhimaraya of Mundaragi and the Virarani of Chitradurga. Messages had been sent to all of them who had promised to join him in their common fight against the British. There were still two days’ time for the beginning of war. Babasaheb and his patriotic companions were making preparations of all kinds. Commander Visnu Kulkarni got up early in the morning and went for a stroll. He stood near a crag and looked around at the horizon. The rosy tint was
slowly spreading across the eastern sky. The disc of the Sun was slowly rising out of the skyline. As he turned right, he descried white dots a few miles away from Naragund. It took no time for him to guess that the British soldiers had camped there.

This description foretells the destiny of the princely state. Naikar’s phrases like ‘the disc of the sun’ speak of the region’s predicament that was tragical.

Commander Visnu Kulkarni rushed from there. He sent a messenger to Virabhadra Nayaka to join him immediately. Soon the soldiers gathered in the templeyard and awaited orders. Within a short while Virabhadra Nayaka rode with extraordinary speed. Commander Visnu Kulkarni stood on the high platform and shouted his orders,

“Attention please. Dear Virabhadra Nayaka, you are the leader of a big portion of the civilian army. You shall stand in front of the palace and protect Babasaheb Sarkar from the enemies. You may have as many detachments as you wish to be with you.” (Sun 117)

On 2nd June 1858, Babasaheb was eagerly waiting in the palace. He was feeling rather restless. Bhimarao of Mundaragi had sent a letter to him saying that he could not rush instantly as he was busy fighting with the British people at Koppal. Babasaheb was also waiting for the help promised by Kenchanagouda of Hammigi and the Virarani of Chitradurga. But so far nobody had been able to come to his help as the battle had been unexpectedly preponed by the cunning British officers. He was so restless that he could not sit up for long on his throne. He was pacing up and down in the court hall. He would go to the window, hold the bars and peep out at the outskirts of the city. Then he would quaff a little water from the silver bowl and exclaim, “I’m at you mercy,
lord. Nobody can save me except you.” Suddenly he heard the bugle and trumpet sounds answering those of the enemies.

The soldiers of Sir Malcolm rushed to the main gate of Naragund where the soldiers of Naragund were waiting. As the bugle was sounded, the native soldiers gave a war cry and fell on the British ones. They struck the British soldiers with their large swords, but the British soldiers shot the native soldiers with their guns from a distance. The tussle continued. A few British soldiers were mangled to death and fell in bloody pools. Likewise several native soldiers were shot dead, sagged to the earth and died heroically for Babasaheb. The gunpowder that was available in Naragund was soon exhausted. The soldiers of Naragund lost their lives very rapidly. The surviving ones began to run for life. The soldiers of Col Malcolm were many times bigger in number than the small army of Naragund. Commander Visnu Kulkarni realized the gravity of situation. Because of the traitors Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant, the cannons did not work.

Commander Visnu Kulkarni was able to guess what might happen to Naragund. He rushed to the main gate where face-to-face fight was going on. He learnt that most of his soldiers had been killed.

Babasaheb could see the tremor in Visnu Kulkarni’s voice and tears trickling in his face. The Commander bowed down once again to Babasaheb and said, “Sarkar, I shall rush to the main gate to see what is happening. Meanwhile, you please leave the palace immediately.”(Sun 129) After the departure of the commander, Babasaheb grew deeply introvertive about his own condition and taking stock of what had happened in the past guessed what might happen in future to him. Yamunabayi and Savitribayi were suffering from anxiety about the result of the war with the British people.
“Dear son, how is the battle going on? How are the signs? Are we likely to win?”

Babasaheb, was deeply disturbed by his mother’s innocent question. With a lot of pain in his heart he looked at the mother and replied,

“Mother, how shall I answer your question? This fight has no meaning. Our small native army is overpowered by the large army of the Britishers. Within a short time, our story will come to an end. Then Bhaskararao addressed his wife, “Dear Savitri, be always with your mother-in-law and do as you both think fit.” With these words and a very heavy heart, Bhaskararao walked out of the chamber. (Sun 127)

Savitri changed her dress. They asked their confidant servant and the nearest relative Ramachandra who was about twenty years to accompany them. Yamunabayi, Savitri and Ramachandra left the palace through the secret underground exit and hastened out of Naragund unnoticed by anyone.

The tragical history of Babasaheb continues. Visnu Kulkarni was quiet happy to know that Babasaheb Sarkar and his family had escaped from the palace and were prevented from being ill-treated by the British.

Virabhadra Nayaka stood near the palace along with his troop. As the British soldiers rode near, he stood ready to fight. He struck at them heroically. He ran his sword through the belly of a British soldier who fell to the ground with a piteous yell. Then another British soldier tried to aim his gun at Virabhadra Nayaka, but before that Virabhadra Nayaka knocked his gun with his large blood thirsty sword. By this time a bullet hit the belly of the horse on which Virabhadra Nayaka was saddled. The horse began to lose its strength. But Virabhadra Nayaka jumped off the horse and held it tightly with his left hand. He struck another enemy at the right flank with such a force that the latter
tumbled down to the earth. By that time Sir Malcolm’s soldiers were terribly
irritated by Virabhadra Nayaka’s heroic show. One of the British soldiers pulled
the trigger and lo: the lullet hit Virabhadra Nayaka in the chest and burst out of
his back thereby creating a gory hole in his body. Virabhadra Nayaka died.

The entire novel’s main story comes to an end thus. In this regard,
Aroonima Sinha adds:

The whole novel can be divided into two parts. The first part deals
with the birth, the opulent adolescence and the accession of Bhaskararao,
whereas the second part deals with the conflict of the king with the
authorities of the East India Company and consequently his downfall, his
flight and his arrest, his escaping the death rope by a quirk of fate, and his
life as an ascetic in Varanasi. Bhaskararao marries again at the age of
sixty and his craving for a son and heir is at last fulfilled. But the irony of
the whole situation is that now Bhaskarao is no longer a king and has no
kingdom to bestow upon his son. (Sinha 110)

When the army of Sir Malcolm took hold of the palace of Naragund, he
ordered his soldiers to search for Bhaskararao and the members of his family.
However, the king, and queen and their old mother had disappeared. At night
when the news that Babasaheb’s palace was captured by the British circulated in
the city, the native civilians of Naragund were scared out of their wits.
Raghopant, the close confidant of Bhaskararao, had also run away with his
master nobody knew where.

The next day 2nd June 1858 the British soldiers were directed by Sir
Malcolm to take possession of the palace. The soldiers were accordingly doing
the job. They were very thrilled by the unexpectedly easy victory over the king
of Naragund. Then the soldiers entered a big storeyed mansion which happened
to be that of a courtesan called Bhimasani who also had left the city at night for her temporary safety.

Ramarao had escaped from Naragund at night along with his wife Sitabayi and the small boy of about eight years called Krishnarao, son of Gonvindarao. This Krishnarao was to be the heir of the Naragund chief later if the British would allow it. Savitri’s story took a wild turn, meanwhile.

Savitri asked her mother-in-law, “Where shall we go now, mother-in-law? I don’t think there is any place safe for us.” Yamunabai thought for a second and said, “Savitri we are walking along the bank of the river Malaprabha. Don’t you understand?” Savitri was rather surprised. “How could I recognize the river, mother-in-law? Although I have bathed in the river many times in the past on festival days, I am not able to identify it or the route to it. This is the first time that I am coming to it by this route.” “Daughter-in-law, this is going to be the last time also,” said Yamunabai. Savitri thought inwardly that Goddess Malaprabha herself might show them a way out of their difficulty. (Sun 145)

The two died by drowning into Malaprabha. Their dead bodies floated on the surface of the water of river Malaprabha from Sangala village for nearly twenty-eight miles continuously until they were stuck up in the thorny bushes in the slush of the river bank near Budihal belonging to Naragund taluka. Ramachandra, their servant collected their ornaments and became rich overnight. His wife mismanaged the same creating a burlesque in the narrative. It is full of local color, the story running for nearly ten pages.

The bloody war between Babasaheb and the British had its terrible impact. Now that the British had taken charge of the administration of Naragund, they wanted to take stock of the whole mutiny preceding the seize of Naragund. The British authorities were searching diligently for Babasaheb.
Meanwhile the other participants in the mutiny were captured for trial and possible punishment. Two large buildings were earmarked for housing the so-called ‘criminals’ who were fiery patriots. One building was meant for all those natives who were suspected to be associated with the mutiny. The other building was meant for those who were confirmed to be active participants in the mutiny. Although Naragund palace had been seized by the British and most of the leaders including Babasaheb had fled the city and some of the natives had run away for life to their nearest relatives in the far-off villages, there was a sense of fear in the city for about fifteen days. Then the natives slowly began to return to their houses. The Indian and British spies were sent out to all the neighbouring villages to search for the so-called culprits. Within a couple of months Raghopant was captured and put behind the bars. Later the British came to know that Ramarao had sent the boy Krishnarao to Govindarao. Govindrao and Krishnarao episode runs for so many pages, acquiring lot of local colour.

Bhaskararao had left his palace after briefly requesting his mother and wife to take care of themselves. He had simply no time to think about anything except his own safety. He had mounted an unsaddled horse and rode out of Naragund through the secret underground tunnel. He was accompanied by his confidants Visnu Kulkarni, Raghopant and another four well-wishers.

Then Bahskararao reminisced something and said, “Raghunatha, did we ever dream that we would have to suffer like this? If those treacherous fellows had not adulterated the gun-powder, would our patriotic soldiers have run for their life like cowards? As our fort was impregnable we had no fear about its being broken so easily by the enemies. Our gunmen and cannon operators were great experts in their jobs. Besides the stock of gun-powder was also inexhaustible. (Sun 183)

There is a fine contrast between Babasaheb’s men and of the Pandavas’ exile as Raghopant tells:
“Maharaj, Pandavas’ case was quite different from ours. Though exiled in the forest, they enjoyed the grace and full cooperation of Lord Krishna. But we don’t have such a privilege. Nor can we hope for such as support in the Kaliyuga. We who were known for our heroism have been behaving like helpless women here in the forest. In that great confusion we did not have the presence of mind to bring our weapons along with us for self-protection. When our own men betray us like this, there’s simply no meaning for our life. It’s better to renounce the world and live like saints on hills and dales mediating upon the Lord God.” (Sun, 184).

The royal exiles learn about Savitribai and Yamunabai’s death by drowning. They learn about the sad fate of Krishnarao, the future heir to the kingdom.

After listening to Bhaskararao’s words, all the companions grew rather depressed. They began to think seriously about what to do. For a few seconds there was complete silence.

This silence marks many a phenomenon in the narrative. Raghopant addressed his companions, “Maharaj, let’s all reach Nepal separately and then the company of Nanasaheb there.” (Sun 186) Everyone assented for that. But when the moment of separation came nearer, Bhaskararao felt lonely and alienated by the prospect of moving alone. Dr. Naikar is an ingenious storyteller. He describes how Babasaheb with only one companion Sahasrabudhe suffers privation.

One day Babasaheb and Anna Sahasrabuddhe were walking slowly along the outskirts of a village. As usual they were very cautious about the Company soldiers. They were discussing their own plight. When Sahasrabuddhe heard the clop-clop of horses’ hooves, he turned back and saw that the soldiers were rushing towards them. He requested his master, “Sarkar, the soldiers are rushing...
towards us. You better hide yourself somewhere here.” (Sun 189) There was no
time even to think. Babasaheb saw a haystack of rice paddy near him. He
instantly covered himself with a mass of rice paddy. Sahasrabuddhe felt relieved
that his master escaped. He began to walk slowly. Within a few seconds the
soldiers surrounded him. Sahasrabuddhe felt very helpless. One of the soldiers
asked him, “We know, you are one of the companions of Babasaheb. You tell
us where your master is.” Sahasrabuddhe pretended ignorance.

After capturing the fort of Naragund, the British began to arrest all the
mutineers. Then they would either hang them to death or feed them to the
cannon fire. Every day the wayfarers could see at least four to six dead-bodies
hanging from the gallows.

The author’s description of Raghopant’s exile is partly amusing and
partly mysterious. He writes:

Introspecting like this Raghopant came near a village and sat
beneath a tree. He wondered, “Which village this must be? If I go in this
guise people may identify me and take me to the chavadi and get the fat
prize for capturing me. Shall I then remove these clothes? If I did so, how
shall I protect myself from this cold? What a plight? Either way I have to
suffer. O lord Venkatapati! I have never been false in my trust in you.
should you not have any pity on me? O God! This must be the effect of
my wife’s curse. (Sun 190)

Sir Frank Seutor’s spies tried to locate Raghopant in vain. Finally,
Raghopant was arrested and trialed.

Later that day Raghopant was beheaded. Frank Seutor’s soldiers
continued their espionage in different guises in different villages and mix with
local people to indirectly elicit information about the missing leaders of the
mutiny.
The Gowda of Torgal had a son of ten years who knew that Bhaskararao and his followers were camping at his house. He was playing in front of his house. A little before that he had seen his father offering mangoes to Bhaskararao in the interior room of the big house. There suddenly came Frank Seutor and captured Babasaheb.

On the way to Belgaum, Frant Seutor and his soldiers humiliated Bhaskararao by their abuses. Though deeply hurt by their inimical behavior, Bhaskararao did not retaliate because of his own helplessness. Like Bhaskararao, his companions followed the British silently. Their anger and humiliation were simply beyond speech. Finally, they reached Belgaum on June 2, 1857. They took Bhaskararao straightway to the jail and kept him under strict guard.

The British notified that the trial of Bhaskararao the ex-king of Naragund and the arch enemy of the Company would be on a particular date. On the day scheduled for the trial, the court hall was overcrowded with the native patriots who had come from surrounding villages.

Now the judge tried to change his strategy and tempt him. He, therefore asked Bhaskararao, “Mr Bhaskararao, if you tell us the names of other Samasthanikas who had agreed to take part in the mutiny, we’ll not only release you but give up part of our land along with your own.” Now Bhaskararao lost his temper and shouted, “I am not a man to be tempted by the offer of your land or anything. (Sun 215-216)

The judge passed his final verdict that Babasaheb must be hanged in Belgaum itself. Then the sad news saddened every Indian including Sankara, Babasaheb’s cook. Sankara consolidated his ideas and came to a firm decision. Now Sankara Bhatta felt a very deep sorrow for Bhaskararao. He said, “Maharaj, I pray to God that your life should be saved. Maharaj, kindly have a
few morsels. Now let’s exchange our garments. You quickly escape from here. I’ll sit here in your place. Kindly be quick, there’s no time for thinking.” Babasaheb did as Sankar requested him. This was impersonation which the heroes did in the past. A kind of stone called viragallu speaks of this deed.

All the natives of Belagum and surrounding villages who happened to be Babasaheb’s admirers had gathered at the Haystack Hill where the hanging had to take place. An hour later Babasaheb was hanged!

Then the people unable to control their tears walked home with heavy hearts. The dead body of Bhaskararao was lowered by the servants and laid on the stone platform. The official doctor walked to the spot and examined the pulses, heartbeat and respiration. Then he formally declared him to be dead and gave his permission for the arrangement of funeral.

Now that the palace of Naragund was seized and Bhaskararao Bhave hanged to death by their beloved British officers, Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant felt elated and began to dream of the bright future promised to them by Sir Manson and Sir Malcolm.

The author with historical authenticity writes of how Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant met their tragic end: They approached Malcolm and he replied, “I am just a servant of my Government. I have to obey the instructions given by my superiors. I am sorry to tell you that you are to be punished properly. Krishnaji Pant, you are given the blackwater punishment. And Baniya Bapu, you have to stay in dungeon at Dharward.” (Sun 227) He pressed the bell and the soldiers appeared in his room. He ordered for their arrest. Hearing these strange words, Baniya Bapu and Krishnaji Pant felt a sudden black out of consciousness. The two were put in jails.

Later on Vishnubhatta Ghodse and poet Subbannabhatta both got trial and punishment. Bhaskararao felt sorry for Sankara who sacrificed his own life for
the sake of his master. The British easily believed that they had hanged the king. They gave wide publicity to the news of the execution of Bhaskararao Bhave and printed it accordingly in their gazettes.

This Babasaheb, then almost, reborn, walked to the north for a month. He met Nanasaheb in Nepal. Bhaskararao spent a couple of days with Nanasaheb and felt a sense of relief by sharing the patriotic views of his inspirer who also had undergone the same plight. Then Bhaskararao took leave of Nanasaheb and started his journey back to Varanasi where he noticed Kashibai Mane, a Marathi-speaking woman. Her good-looking niece was there unto. Babasaheb then married the young woman. The newlywed woman got a son.

Ironic enough, one day in the guise the Sanyasi Babasaheb visited Naragund just to meet Kesarprasad! Naikar writes:

Keshar Prasad was rather surprised by the unexpected arrival of a sanyasi who was a perfect stranger to him. He stopped playing with his children, stood up and welcomed the sanyasi with formal reverence. He sent in his grandchildren and therefore, there was nobody inside the big hall. He said formally, “Your Holiness, kindly be seated on this cushion” and stared at him interrogatively. He was not able to identify the guest properly. The sanyasi asked him, “How are you Keshar Prasad? Is everything all right? Hope you recognize me?” “Yes, Your Holiness” fumbled Keshar Prasad. “Do you recognize me? Can you tell me where we met each other?” asked the sanyasi. “I think we met each other in Satara,” replied Keshar Prasad. “Then, it clearly means that you have not recognized me.” “Frankly speaking, no.” replied Keshar Prasad. “Ha, ha, ha, ha.” The sanyasi looked around him and confirmed that nobody else was around there. He lowered his pitch and said, “Why you cannot recognize your own king?” Keshar Prasad was puzzled a bit and said, “You mean, you are our Babasaheb Sarakar? How strange! I was really
misled and confused by your beard and saffron robes. They instinctively rushed into each other’s arms and hugged tightly for the joy of reunion. Keshar Prasad got tears in his eyes for the unexpected pleasure of meeting his beloved king. Then the sanyasi released himself from his arms and said, “Keshar Prasad, I have one very important request to you. please oblige me. That is, please don’t reveal my identity to anyone including the members of your family. Just tell them that I am a sanyasi from Kashi. Will you?” “All right, Sarakar. (Sun 247)

When Queen Victoria took over the charge of India in 1858 and issued the Jahirnama, all the life prisoners were released. Accordingly, Baniya Bapu was released from the prison at Dharwad and returned to Naragund. He stayed in his old house for a few years. He died in the second half of January 1863. But those who were sent out for black water punishment were totally forgotten.

Bhaskarao began to spend his old age years in the company of his newborn son. His wife was extremely happy to give a son to her husband. Ganeshpat was the child’s name. One day, Babasaheb died. The novels end with glossary.

*The Sun Behind the Cloud* as a whole is engrossing in its historicity and narration. The writer’s patriotic zeal, ancestral pride, romantic imagination and attention to trivial details make the novel interesting reading. E.M. Forster says that the final test of a novel will be our affection for it, as it is the best of our friends, and of anything else, which we cannot define.

A Naikar’s critic by the name S. John Peter Joseph observes:

*The Sun Behind the Cloud* may not be as great as Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, which deals with Napoleon’s invasion of Russia or Boris Pasternak’s *Dr. Zhivago*, which describes the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1917 or Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* which
portrays what happened in Paris and London during the French Revolution or Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With the Wind* which depicts American Civil War in the 19th century or Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, a medieval historical romance but it is in no way inferior to any authentic historical novel for it has a universal appeal as found in classics and in its own unique way it brings the past back to the present and makes it live before the readers. (Joseph 38)

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)
References:


