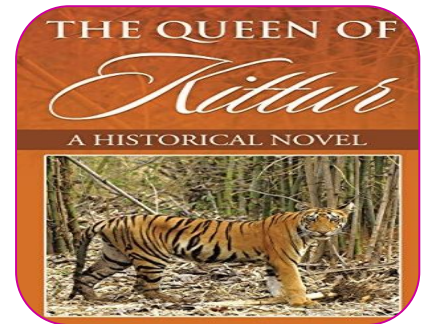




## THE QUEEN OF KITTUR AS HISTORICAL NOVEL

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### ABSTRACT :

*Basavaraj Naikar is the only writer, presenting atom, vivid, and progressive socio-cultural picture of the contemporary, ancient and medieval picture of Karnataka and writing Indian experiences in Indian English. He has written several short stories and published his two collections of short stories named The Thief of Nagarahalli and Other Stories (1999), short listed for Commonwealth fiction prize for Eurasia in 2000, and The Rebellions Rani of Bekwadi and Other Stories (2001). Recently, he has published his first Collection of novellas named Rayanna: the Patriot and Other Novellas (2011).*

**KEYWORDS :** *Basavaraj Naikar , ancient and medieval picture of Karnataka and writing Indian experiences.*

### INTRODUCTION :

Besides, he has published three novels. Light in the House (1999), the hagiographic novel about the life of Sri Sharif Sahib, throws light on the secular image of India. The Sun Behind the Cloud (2001) comprises the colonial conflict between Bhaskararao Bhave of Peshwa dynasty, King of Naragund and the authorities of The East India Company around 1857. His third novel The Queen of Kittur (2009) deals with the first courageous and historical conflict against British power by any Indian woman, as a queen of a kingdom. The multidimensional and multicultural image of Karnataka is penned with so many social issues and matters. He probes the life with analytical, critical, studious and research approach and presents a pure and stainless picture of society above any prejudices and beliefs. His stories deal with historical, religious, mythological, realistic, educational, cultural and social themes. The present article discusses the conflict of Queen Chennamma against British authorities of East India Company and social, cultural, political, educational, and religious image of Karnataka around 1826.

It is necessary- to discuss the parameters of a Historical novel as a genre before going to analyze this novel as Historical novel. This is very impossible and impractical to have a final and definite / definition of historical novel but many critics, writers, and literary eminent persons have tried to finalize different features or characteristics of historical novel. Historical fiction deals with a *story*.

Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines historical novel, "a novel in which the action takes place during a specific historical period well before the time of writing (often one or two generations before, sometimes several centuries), and in which some attempt is made to depict accurately the customs and mentality of the period. The central character-real or imagined- is usually subject to divided loyalties within a larger historic conflict of which readers know the outcome", (online) According to Encyclopedia Britannica, a historical novel is " a novel that has as its setting a period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity (which is in some cases only apparent fidelity) to historical fact. The work may deal with actual historical personages...or it **may** contain a mixture of fictional and historical characters", (online).

The above discussion reveals that the historical novel **has** past setting. The Queen of Kittur has the setting of the past. This novel is about the life of Queen Chennamma and deals **with her** patriotic conflict against British powers. The novel begins **with her** birth of Queen at 1778 and ends in 1826 with her death. **It** deals with the actual historical period from 1778 to 1826 and reveals the history of the Kittur kingdom during this period. Raja Mallasarja marries Chennamma to have a male heir to his kingdom. Raja Mallasarja was the king of Kittur kingdom and have relation **with** Peshwa of Pune. His kingdom used to pay annuity to Peshwa Once, **Raja** was called by Peshwa to meet **him** but **Raia** diplomatically rejected the meeting and came to his kingdom. **But** Ram advised him to meet Peshwa at Pune. He did this and went to Pune **but** there he **was** arrested **for** no reason **and** kept in prison I e. house arrest. **Raja** managed to **free** from the jail **and** came to his home. **Soon, Raja died** of a disease. **Sivabasavasa was** established as the new king of Kittur. He ruled the state with some drawbacks due to his illegal and wrong friends and companions. He helped British authority in fight against Peshwa of Pune though some senior courtiers were not of the same opinion. Soon he died without an heir. Queen and the court decide to adopt a child from the relatives. Master Sivalingappa, son of Balappagowda of Mastamaradi, was adopted as king of Kittur but the adoption ceremony was not completed. Chennamma completed this process and established him as the new king of Kittur after the death of Sivabasavaraja. But the British authority rejected this adoption and ordered Chennamma and other courtiers to surrender before the British. This order was given by Thackeray, the then collector of Dharwad, who wants to rule the Kittur and to flag Union Jack at Kittur. Rani rejected to do it and denied to follow the orders of Thackeray and decided to fight against British by having a meeting of courtiers. Thackeray came to Kittur and tried to seal the treasury of Kingdom but denied to do it and started to fight against the British. Soon, after the war started, Thackeray was killed and other important persons, including Elliot and Stevenson, were arrested. Rani and her court demanded the reestablishment of their kingdom and restore the autonomy to Kittur. Rani released the Elliot and Stevenson in acceptance that British will complete their wish. Chaplin decided to attack the Kittur and got full power from Mumbai to do the same. Soldiers and courtiers tried to save their kingdom but at last Kittur was defeated by British and Chennamma and her daughters in law were arrested and kept under house arrest. Chennamma died at Bailhongola where she was house arrested and strictly watched by British powers. Rayanna met her secretly and told her about his plan to free Kittur from British once again.

Some traitors spent their loyalty to British instead of Kittur. They were punished by Rani by killing under the feet of elephants. She praised and conferred many patriotic sardars and other devotional people who lived and died their life for Kittur. She ran the administration of Kittur and established new dimensions of administration in India. She gave grant to build a mosque in her kingdom. Her contribution to Indian secular administration and secular, social, political, and religious development of India is above doubt and criticism.

Historical fiction should have historical characters, real or imagined. This novel has many historical real and imagined characters that fought for their kingdom and died for their kingdom. Raja Mallasarja, Chennamma, Rayanna, Thackeray, Chaplin so many real characters in this novel that were lived in Kittur kingdom at that time. Historical novel should have historical incidents or events. This novel is basically and vividly dependent upon a historical event I. e. the life of Queen Chennamma and her conflict with British to save the honour and value of her kingdom. All the major and minor events and incident, including major characters, are true according to the history of Kittur kingdom. So many evident are there in the novel to prove it I. e. letters, orders, fort, folk songs, people, past historical references of many people prove that this novel is a true and correct history<sup>7</sup> of Kittur kingdom from 1778 to 1826. Historical novel always probes the contemporary social, cultural, political and religious material which is author's research about that period. Naikar has researched all the dimensions, systems, and parameters of above things in his novel. He has presented entire socio culture milieu of the contemporary Karnataka life. So many rituals, fares, processes, religious rituals, death rituals, naming ceremony, marriage ceremony are discussed in this novel in detail which a pure and secular research of the author and proves his imagination and creativity as the

writer. This novel is the historical recreation of the period and reconstruction of social and cultural life of the Karnataka.

To create awareness about history, historical people, historical incidents of a society, national heroes, fights, conflicts and to develop critical approach of the reader about the history is one of the chief goals of the historical novel and this novel meets all these dimensions. It creates a positive and legendary approach to look at the history of Kittur and its people. Naikar's creative literature always presents pan-Indian view of life, reflection of culture, flashes of culture and society of contemporary and historical time. The Queen of Kittur is the mirror for it. It is "one of the historical novels."

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