

**Exigency of Exploitation of Supernatural Tricks for Existential Security: Idiosyncratic Mannerism of an Indian Monk: A Critical Study of Basavaraj Naikar's Novel *The Pontiff of Peacockshire***

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**Abstract**

India is predominantly a spiritual nation that witnesses frequent manifestations of supernatural phenomena and strange incidents on its soil. Since their appearance is characteristically associated with Indian spiritual life they contribute to its magnificence and grandeur. These phenomena seldom manifest in alien countries and hence do not characterize their materialist life where as India as a spiritual country manifests the strange incidents that impart spiritual magnitude and dimension to its life. On the one hand these inscrutable phenomena appear mystically due to unforeseen and unattributable forces without any causal factors. These supernatural phenomena are believed to be manifestation of divine will. On the other hand appearance of some strange incidents are attributable to exploitation of superhuman power by religious personalities like monks and mendicants who attain this power by practice of penance and meditation. As these spiritualists are ignored and neglected by mercenary society, they feel the exigency of exploiting the supernatural tricks with a view to motivating people to acknowledge their divinity and provide them existential security.

**Key Words:** Supernatural tricks, existential security, idiosyncratic mannerism, Indian monk, Basavaraj Naikar, etc.

India is predominantly a spiritual nation that witnesses frequent manifestations of supernatural phenomena and strange incidents on its soil. Since their appearance is characteristically associated with Indian spiritual life they contribute to its magnificence and grandeur. These phenomena seldom manifest in alien countries and hence do not characterize their materialist life where as India as a spiritual country manifests the strange incidents that impart spiritual magnitude and dimension to its life. On the one hand these inscrutable phenomena appear mystically due to unforeseen and unattributable forces without any causal factors. These supernatural phenomena are believed to be manifestation

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Certain burning examples of manifestation of supernatural phenomena can be cited to convince the incredulous persons. Some two decades ago, the idols of Lord Ganesh throughout India sipped milk and

emptied drums of milk and surprised even the scientists who had to acknowledge the phenomenon as divine will. Other strange incidents are observed by devotees in some temples of Madhya Pradesh. Wild beasts like bears come to the shrine and consume food from the hands of the devotees without attacking them. Similarly, two birds at Pakhiteertham near Chennai fly to a temple regularly at a particular time to consume food offered to them by the priests. These two birds come punctually to the temple and eat the food and leave something on the plate for the devotees to share it. These supernatural phenomena happen strangely without any causal factors. But some superhuman phenomena are caused by human beings by virtue of their miraculous power which astound the onlookers beyond measure. A few examples of supernatural phenomena can be cited of Satyasai Baba who possessed extra-ordinary super-human power by virtue of which he demonstrated strange and wonderful performances.

Such a spiritually enlightened personality is portrayed in Basavaraj Naikar's hagiographical novel *The Pointif of Peockshire*. The central character of the novel is Nagalingappa a celebrated monk of South India. He was born at Javalageri village in Raichur district of North Karnataka. He lost his interest in mundane life and renounced worldly life at the early age and gradually gained enormous spiritual power by virtue of which he ascended to the position of an enlightened monk. In recognition of his embodiment of divine power people by and large adored him with devotion and served him with reverence.

This young man embraced monastic life as a monk from the early age and later on

became a celebrated religious personality immortal in the history of Indian monks. He attained divine power in the prime of his life and exercised the same power to create supernatural events with a view to commanding respect, honour and shelter in the society.

The novel *The Pontiff of Peacockshire* by Basavaraj Naikar depicts the spiritual life of this South Indian Monk. His life is a spiritual journey from his boyhood to the end of his life. He is immortal and memorable for his philanthropic services to the inhabitants of the villages of Karnataka which he visited frequently. He is believed to be an incarnation of goddess Kalika just as Swami Vivekananda was presupposed to be a manifestation of Lord Vireswara of Kashi. Shankaracharya was also regarded as an incarnated figure of Lord Siva. It was on account of incarnation of goddess Kalika that Nagalingappa turned out to be spiritually upright, but he was an eccentric man who often behaved idiosyncratically like a lunatic. His eccentricity is beyond understanding.

This article focuses on those supernatural phenomena which betrayed Nagalinga's idiosyncrasy and rendered the spectators spellbound. A few strikingly surprising incidents are delineated in the article to establish how his eccentric activities prognosticate some future events.

Once Nagalinga was trudging through the villages of Chhavani and Lingasuguru where he rebuked the inhabitants there of without obvious reason. Sometimes he whimsically thrashed the people with walking sticks with a sadistic intention. At another village he pelted stones at the earthen pitchers filled with water carried by the women. This impertinence

enraged some inhabitants and provoked them to assault him. The incident evinces the eccentricity of Nagalinga who made a fun of tearing the cloth of men and women.

Another incident occurred due to the outcome of Nagalinga's idiosyncratic behaviour. Once he saw a baby boy of a British forest officer at Kaladagi and pulled out it from the grip of the maid servant Kallavva and threw it into a nearby well. Then he himself jumped into it. This mishap agonized the wife of the officer who instantly prompted the divers to rescue the boy from inside the well but as they jumped into it found neither the boy nor the stranger but strangely enough Nagalinga appeared at the bungalow and was found feeding the boy with sweets. Then he handed the baby over to its mother and disappeared from the spot. This idiosyncratic behaviour of Nagalinga amazed all those who witnessed the incident. Their reverence for Nagalinga was augmented due to his embodiment of superhuman power in his personality. A number of such supernatural feats demonstrated by Nagalinga is surfaced in the events recounted in the novel.

On another occasion Nagalinga treated a palanquin given to him as a source of suffering and set fire to it and burnt it into ashes. He, thereafter, eccentrically collected the ashes there of and distributed it among the palanquin bearers who strangely found it transformed into coins. These collected coins enabled them to become rich later on. This act of setting fire to the palanquin is an unusual and eccentric behaviour although it was intended to enrich some poor villagers.

Nagalinga resolved not to stay permanently at any place but to keep on visiting villages with a view to moralizing the life of the

inhabitants by inculcating spiritual doctrines. One day he idiosyncratically asked a wooden pillar at the house of his devotee Kalappa "how long do you wish to stay in this mortal world." (2) He further addressed a bulk of cow-dung cakes and a round shape stone lying at the backyard of Kalappa's house and spoke to them like a lunatic person "Dear things you will have to do some other tasks than the normal one." (3) Nagalinga spoke in an apocalyptic tone and confused all onlookers present there. He further eccentrically stepped into the shop of Narasinga Manvi and took out all his cash and threw it in public and asked people to get as many coins as possible. After performing this unusual action, he predicted that Manvi will be a rich man in future. His prediction came true, but his unusual tricks surprised all who watched this incident.

Another incident of his peculiar dealing is narrated below. One day Nagalinga snatched away the key of the office treasury and opened the treasury room from which he brought out a few coins illegally and gave them away to the poor farmers. Besides, he pulled out a few files from the record room and burnt them to ashes. As Mamaledar the office in-charge checked the treasury, he found the cash and the file intact to his great amazement. This incident stunned the Revenue officials. Nagalinga betrayed his idiosyncrasy in his activities but did not disrupt the situation. On the other hand his miraculous performances, astounded the onlookers and impressed on their mind the divine power possessed by him.

One day Nagalinga reached a village Navilugund known as Peacock town and stayed at a monastery situated at the bottom of a hill. He was begging food from devotees

in daytime and returning to monastery in the evening. One day he was attacked by severe fever and remained bedridden for a few days. Although many devotees visited the shrine of the monastery, yet they hardly bothered to attend upon ailing Nagalinga. He was left neglected and uncared for. Afterwards, a lady named Bhimavva belonging to the untouchable cobbler caste found him bedridden and came forward compassionately to nurse him. She hesitated to offer him food on account of her inhibition of her low caste but Nagalinga asked her for porridge without shrinking and prompted Bhimavva to rush back home and get porridge. In response to his demand she got the required food and offered it to the monk. Thereafter, she devoted herself to attending upon him with the wholehearted enthusiasm of benevolence and brought him round. This is illustrative of existential predicament which Nagalinga could overcome simply by keeping mum and without manipulating supernatural tricks. After his convalescence, he, created a havoc in Bhimavva's family and behaved idiosyncratically in subjecting her to undergo ordeals as a means of testing her spiritual uprightness. He even went to the extent of torturing her, reproaching her and inflicting on her various forms of physical affliction but she stoically endured all these aggressive treatments. She did not feel outraged or hurt at this kind of physical persecution. Nagalinga even extracted all her ornaments from her body and found her insusceptible to avarice. After rigorous spiritual diagnosis he found her spiritually worthy of initiation. He admired her spiritual integrity. This device and manner of testing of the spiritual worthiness of Bhimavva signify the idiosyncratic treatment met out to the lady.

Another instance of his idiosyncratic behaviour is worth mentioning in connection with his unusual awkward dealing with Bhimavva. Nagalinga behaved with her as if he were her son. He drank milk from her breast as a baby as if she were his mother and hugged her. This eccentric, awkward and odious dealing of Nagalinga with Bhimavva was misconstrued by onlookers as his libidinous attachment to her. This attachment and treatment meted out to her betray his idiosyncratic mannerism.

In the village Garag there was a monastery run by Madiwala Sivayogi. Nagalinga stated his intention to him to stay there but the latter ignored his presence outside the monastery. Madiwala's indifference to his wish provoked Nagalinga to punish the former. Then he provocatively burnt all his cloths, threw his footwear into the stream flowing in the proximity. He further broke all earthen pots, bowls and jars into pieces and created a havoc in the monastery in order to gain entrance into it for existential comfort and stability. His nuisance is surfaced in his idiosyncratic activities. He further performed a miracle by throwing a girl into a well and imputed the blame of this crime on Madiwala. Then, both of them mutually incriminated and accused each other of committing this crime. When a govt officer coerced Nagalinga to point out the criminal then the latter directed Madiwala to ask the dead girl to indicate the person who threw her in to the well. It became unbelievably a reality that as Madiwala Patted his hand on the head of the girl, she became alive and pointed out to Nagalinga accusing him of having thrown her. This incident exposed Madiwala's embodiments of divine power by virtue which he miraculously revived the life of the girl.

Nagalinga stated his objective of throwing the girl into the well to expose Madiwala's divinity which he had concealed so far. Thus, this miracle amazed the public and augmented their reverence for both of them.

Apart from this incident Madiwala, the blind man importuned Nagalinga to lick his eyes so as to revive his vision. The latter compassionately licked his eyes whereby the former regained his eyesight. This miraculous treatment astounded the inhabitants of Garag. After this incident Madiwala was considerably pleased with Nagalinga and treated him with exuberance of hospitality. Thus, the whole miraculous affairs were purported to gain access into monastery of Madiwala and secure his existential position.

After this incident both Nagalinga and Madiwala undertook a pilgrimage to Kashi. On their way they came to a village in hunger and saw some women picking cotton from cotton plant. Nagalinga reacted bitterly to women's ignorance of their presence in the field and applied some supernatural tricks to arouse their devotion to them. With this intention Nagalinga set fire to the cotton field and burnt the crops. This arson scared the women labourers who fled from the field and informed the master of the cotton field about arson. As he learnt this incident, he realized his guilt in ignoring these two monks. With this realization and feeling of guilt he rushed to them and begged them forgiveness. He further worshipped them and fed them sumptuously. He apologized to them in the following words "Holy Gurus, we made a mistake in neglecting you. Kindly forgive us our sins." (4) Thereafter the master led the monks to his field. He was considerably surprised to find the cotton intact and there

was so sign of burning of cotton in the field. The master of the field acknowledged the miraculous power of the monks and attributed this strange incident to their divine power. This supernatural trick was intended to coerce the master to provide them hospitality and existential respite.

Another incident that gives evidence of miraculous power possessed by the monks Nagalinga and Madiwala takes places on their way to pilgrimage. Madiwala had kept of piece of gold hidden in his cloth. When he went out of the spot for sometimes Nagalinga in the meantime untied the cloth in his absence, found the gold and dropped it into a well in the Dharmachatra. Afterwards when Madiwala found the gold missing, he expressed concern over its disappearance and ventilated his agony to Nagalinga. Then the latter urinated a few pieces of rubbles lying outside the Dharmachatra and transformed them into pieces of gold. Then he asked Madiwala to collect them. This miraculous happening astounded Madiwala considerably and impelled him to recognize Nagalinga's divinity by virtue of which the latter could transform the pebbles into pieces of gold. This incident was purported to impress his divine personality on the mind of Madiwala.

On another occasion Nagalinga met a Sadhu named Budiswami in the village Uppina-Betageri. The Sadhu was a habitual horse rider. His horse was untamable and uncontrollable to unfamiliar riders. Nagalinga intended to bring it under control and sat on it facing its back and reined it. The wild horse tried several times to throw Nagalinga down but failed. Nagalinga spoke to the horse "My dear horse you have to abandon all your evil intention and behave gently and obediently and carry the riders

without harming them in any manner.” (5) His words had their magical effect on the horse that mended its nature and made it gentle and tamable to the great amazement of the onlookers. Thus, Nagalinga’s creditable achievement is reflected in his supernatural power in bringing a wild horse under control.

Many such miraculous incidents succeed one after another to the great amazement of the citizens.

Once Nagalinga entered the city of Dharwad and while roaming along the street he saw a British Collector in his residence and impulsively pelted stones around him with notoriety. One of the stones hit the hat on the head of collector’s wife. This enraged the collector who ordered his servants to imprison him. In obedience to his order, they captured Nagalinga and handed him over to the jailor who locked him up in a cell. In the same afternoon, Nagalinga strangely appeared before the collector who was surprised at his unexpected appearance and he again ordered his servants to put him in the cell. As the collector inquired the jailor about his strange appearance the latter convinced him with authenticity that the cell was locked up and Nagalinga had come out of jail in spite of locking of the door and vigilance of the sentinels. Nevertheless, the man re-appeared before the collector in the same evening and surprised him considerably. The collector personally inspected the cell and found the door locked and the prisoner absconded. Consequently, he informed the queen of England about the strangeness of the event and got order from her to leave him scot-free with impunity. Thus, Nagalinga enjoyed liberty to move at pleasure and secured his position by exhibiting his supernatural power and performing miraculous tasks.

Kamalapur is a village in the District of Kalaburagi. A rich man of this village named Tavanappa ran the business of utensils. He invoked the name of Nagalinga before embarking on his business. One day his wife deliciously cooked food for him and served him with devotion. Then Nagalinga took the food to the puja room and closed the door behind and devoured the food with satisfaction and thereafter urinated idiosyncratically on the plates and utensils from which he had eaten. Then he called out Tavanappa to open the door. Tavanappa entered the room curiously and discovered to his surprise that everything in the room had been transformed in to gold but Nagalinga had vanished from the room. This incident signifies Nagalinga’s idiosyncratic behaviour that invariably resulted in the occurrence of some kind of bonanza.

During the year 1857 Nagalinga visited many villages and turned up in the appearance of a lady wearing bangles, putting vermilion on his forehead. He wandered aimlessly and purposelessly till evening and then he came to a cremation ground where he broke the bangles and wiped out vermilion from his forehead. Then he struck his chest frantically and mourned for sometimes and departed from the place. The spectators were confounded and confused by such unusual sight of his eccentric behaviour. They could however visualize the outburst of a catastrophic situation in their land and as a matter of fact his idiosyncratic lamentation forecast the outbreak of the Sepoy Mutiny that persisted in for a long period and resulted in the death of masses of soldiers. This massacre convinced the spectators about the prognostics of such eccentric behaviour of Nagalinga who betrayed his idiosyncrasy to foreshadow a national disastrous.

While sauntering in the town of Betageri, Nagalinga came across a funeral procession in which the deceased wife of a rich man called Brahmayya was being carried to the burial ground. He made a query as to why they were carrying a living lady as a dead one for burial. He intended to examine the body of the lady and assured her husband to resuscitate her on a condition that he has to extract all the gold ornaments from his wife's dead body and offer him. On hearing this condition, Brahmayya took off all her ornaments and offered them to Nagalinga. Then the latter spoke a few words by way of awakening the lady and resuscitated her life. This unusual demand of gold ornaments by Nagalinga in such distressing circumstances evinced his idiosyncratic mannerism by virtue of which he brought the deceased lady back to life and surprised the onlookers.

The last incident of Nagalinga's idiosyncratic manifestation is recounted below. In 1858 he visited the town of Betageri near Gadag and met his devotee Nagappa. He ordered him to make a palanquin and complete it hastily and haphazardly in a day. In obedience to his order Nagappa worked hard and got a palanquin ready for use. The next day Nagalinga reclined on it and welcomed the women of the town who eccentrically embellished Nagalinga as a lady by adorning his figure with sari, blouse, vermilion on his forehead and putting bangles on his wrists. In the appearance of a lady he ordered his devotees to take him round the town Betageri and Gadag. As he was being carried as a lady, the spectators took him for a goddess and worshipped him with devotion. After the procession was over, Nagalinga disrobed himself and appeared in his usual figure as a man. He ordered Nagappa to burn the

palanquin against the latter's will. This procession preordained the impending rule of the country by a woman. Nagalinga's idiosyncratic mannerism prognosticated the imminent administration of the country by the Queen Victoria of England. In this case his unusual appearance foreshadowed some radical change in the political set up of India. The portrait of Nagalinga with his idiosyncrasy is designed to highlight his spiritual elevation.

A succession of incidents in which Nagalinga betrayed his divinity and idiosyncrasy has been delineated to focus on the spiritual personality of this awakened soul. Nagalinga is a rare monk who behaves eccentrically with the objective of forecasting one's fortune adversity or prosperity, but all other Indian monks do not exhibit their spiritual power. On rare occasion they produce supernatural events to seek recognition as a spiritual luminary for example Satya Sai Baba was worshipped as a manifestation of God and regarded as a divine being. Baba could correctly predict the future of the people and cure the incurable diseases suffered by his devotees. He could also miraculously get articles from America and England by virtue of his supernatural power. Just as Nagalinga cured many of the patients so also did Satya Sai Baba. He demonstrated such incredible supernatural phenomena to augment his prominence as an enlightened personality.

Similarly, Tailang Swami too revived the life of a boy who succumbed to stampede. He sprinkled some holy water on the dead body of the boy who regained his life. This was a strange and unbelievable incident but true in reality. Another incident of supernatural phenomena was that a tiger ran

towards Swamiji while he was in deep meditation and lied at his feet with a sense of submission. The tiger was afraid of being killed by the soldiers of the king of Nepal. The tiger harmlessly took shelter under the mercy of Tailang Swami. This incident also surprised the people.

Another day a widow brought her dead son to the cremation ground near Manosarovar. The boy died by snake bite. His mother was bereaved due to his death and she importuned Swami to revive her son. Swami out of compassion patted on the body of the boy and brought him back to life. This is a strange supernatural phenomenon that created a sensation in public who had to regard him as a divine being.

Just as Nagalinga was put in a cell at the order of a British Collector, Tailang Swami was also imprisoned on the charge of moving in stark naked body. As the magistrate ordered the police to handcuff him and put him in a cell, Swami disappeared from the spot. The police searched for him but did not find him anywhere. After an hour Swami reappeared before the magistrate who was surprised by his disappearance and appearance. The magistrate being convinced of his divinity permitted him to roam at pleasure. Thus, Tailang Swami also played this miracle in order to enjoy the latitude of moving at pleasure.

Jagadguru Shankaracharya has also served the society selflessly and ungrudgingly by virtue of his divine power but he did not betray his idiosyncrasy. One day on his way to begging alms, he came to the door of a pauper family. The mistress of the house lamented her poverty before him and melted the heart of Shankaracharya who shared in her grief and compassionately prayed to

goddess Laxmi to enrich the poor family. In response to his prayer goddess Laxmi appeared before Shankaracharya and fulfilled his desire by bestowing riches on the poor family. This is a rare benevolent service rendered by Shankaracharya to a poverty-stricken family by his innate divinity.

One day Shankara went to a nearby river for bathing accompanied by his mother. As he stepped into the river, an alligator suddenly captured his leg and tried to pull him into the water. His mother panicked and shouted for help but no one came to rescue Shankar. Finding his mother panic-stricken by his impending death, Shankar importuned his mother to allow him to accept ascetic life. As his mother reluctantly consented to his decision the alligator released him and fled in to the river. This is a miracle designed by Shankara to seek the permission of his mother to renounce mundane life.

Another incident of his strange achievement is his prayer to Lord Siva to divert the river Purna to flow close to his house for the sake of convenience of his mother. Lord Siva was pleased with Shankara for his devotional love for his mother and granted his prayer. Next day Shankara found the river Purna flowing in the proximity of his house. When the news of this miraculous incident came to light, people came in large number to meet him with devotion. Thus, Shankara achieved this impossible task by virtue of his spiritual integrity.

Another supernatural manifestation that augmented the magnanimity of Shankara was his achievement in reviving the life of a dead boy. One day while he was on his pilgrimage to the temple of goddess Mukambika, he found a couple mourning the death of their only son. Shankara



overpowered by their heart touching cry prayed to the goddess Bhagwati with the intensity of devotion for the resuscitation of the boy. Hardly had Shankara finished his prayer when the boy regained his life and woke up. His parents were overjoyed at the revival of the life of their son and gratefully acknowledged the divinity of Shankar. Thus, he achieved miraculously some unbelievable tasks and came to be known as a divine personality.

Monk Gyaneswar one day authenticated the veracity of his statement by virtue of his supernatural power. In order to prove the omnipresence of God, the monk was subjected by the Brahmins to undergo an ordeal to objectify the embodiment of God in a buffalo. Thereafter Gyaneswar asked the animal to sing out the doctrines of the Veda and as directed by him the buffalo recited some of lines from the Veda and rendered the Brahmins spellbound. They wondered at this miraculous happening, felt disgraced and apologetically begged him forgiveness. Monk Gyaneswar professed his supernatural power by way of establishing the veracity of his statement in argument with the Brahmins.

Similarly, Sivananda Swami too saved many patients from death by virtue of his divine power. One day he lifted a pregnant woman deserted by her relatives and brought her home in her serious condition. He served the lady by relieving her of her labour pain and eased her delivery. This was construed by people as his miracle. He also brought round patients suffering from leprosy by his divine power. The ashes of his ashram had also miraculous effects. In order to substantiate the embodiment of the divine power the following incident is illustrated. One of the lady devotees of

Swamiji has given an account of the revival of the life of her most lovable pet dog. One day she found her dog lying dead for no obvious reason. She prayed to Swamiji for resuscitation of her animal and applied the ashes of the Ashram. Thereafter the dog regained its life and surprised its mistress. Thus, this is a miracle manifested by Swamiji in his post-mortal life.

Similarly, many Indian monks have performed supernatural feats from time to time to seek recognition in the social and religious domain. Many such incidents can be enumerated and narrated. But in this article a few such incidents are delineated to familiarize the readers about the supernatural manifestation of phenomena which attract people towards the monks possessing divinity. Since people believe these monks to be incarnation of God, they worship them and become their disciples out of devotion. Thus, India as a spiritual country has given birth to numerous monks and mendicants who attain the status of luminaries by virtue of their supernatural tricks and divine power. These monks have consecrated the socio-cultural life of India by moralizing and spiritualizing Indian sentiment and attitude.

Basavaraj Naikar's novel *The Pontiff of Peacockshire* is a hagiographical one as it deals with the pontific role of an Indian monk who dedicates his life to the spiritual upliftment of Indian life. The novel narrates the numerous experiences of the monk in reforming the society and arousing religious feeling in the mind of the inhabitants of the villages.

This novel by Naikar stands comparable with his religious plays *The Pilgrimage of life* and *The Golden Servant of God* because of their close correspondence

with his novel *The Pontiff of Peacockshire* from thematic point of view. In the play *The Pilgrimage of Life*, Naikar has portrayed the spiritual pilgrimage of two awakened souls. In this context we refer to the spiritual lives of Govinda and Sarif the two central characters of his religious play *The Pilgrim of life*. Both these characters are depicted as spiritually awakened personality with spiritual insight and divine power in them. They have served the inhabitants of their villages by virtue of their spiritual power. They have accomplished many impracticable tasks by this power motivated by their benevolent desire and serviceability but they have never behaved idiosyncratically like Nagalinga who exploited the supernatural tricks to ensure his existential stability.

One day Sinappa an inhabitant of the village and neighbor of Govinda ignored the family of the latter in inviting them to a communal dinner with a view to insulting them but he instantly got divine punishment as his programme of dinner was vitiated. All the eatable items prepared for the dinner of the Brahmins perished and breathed out foul smell. Then Sinappa realized that the programme of dinner was spoilt on account of having insulted a blessed family. Then Sinappa ran to them and begged forgiveness. He invited the entire family of Govinda to join the dinner and partake of the food. He also begged Sarif to revive the tastes of the eatable items which were stinking. Then Sarif came to Sinappa's house and sprinkled holy water and thereby he revived the deliciousness and taste of the food by his divine hand. This is a strange incident that all items of food which had worsened in taste and flavour were miraculously turned out to be esculent. This supernatural happening is attributed to the spiritual power of Sarif.

An incident of theft which occurred at the temple of goddess Dyamavva implicated Sarif in spite of his innocence. As he was interrogated by the inquiring officer about the missing of a nose-stud, from the icon of the goddess Sarif in his embarrassing situation attributed the gift of his ornament to goddess and in reality goddess herself appeared before the officer and offered her nose-stud to Sarif in order to exonerate him from the charge of theft. She compassionately rescued Sarif from implication in this case. This incident proves Sarif's divinity by virtue of which he called mother goddess to appear before all and prove his statement credible and veracious.

Just as Sarif was a spiritually elevated personality, Kanakadas the central character of *The Golden Servant of God* is also portrayed as a man of supernatural power. He has also performed miraculous task by virtue of their inner spiritual force but he has never behaved idiosyncratically like Nagalinga of the novel *The Pontiff of Peacockshire*. He often delivered discourses in the villages which he visited in order to spiritualize the attitude and outlook of the people. He is so innocent and upright that God loves him and helps him and punishes those who harass him. An incident that occurred at the temple of Lord Krishna at Udupi substantiates this statement. The Brahmins of the temple of Lord Krishna drove Kanaka out of the temple on the ground of his caste while he was praying to God. As he went to the back side of the temple Lord Krishna turned His face backward and cracked the wall to create an opening through which He projected his image to Kanaka who became immensely ecstatic to have a sight of God. This is a miracle that manifests his divinity. As the strangeness of divine appearance came to the

knowledge of the priests they apologized to him and begged him forgiveness for having ill-treated him insolently.

Kanakadas exhibited many miracles in the city of Udupi but all his miracles centre round his devotion to God. In the two plays and the novel Naikar has projected the pictures of supernatural happenings in order to impress the reality of the incidents on readers' mind. Many people of scientific outlook dismiss such phenomena as superstitious beliefs but Naikar depicts these supernatural events vividly and picturesquely to implant belief in the mind of audience about manifestation of these phenomena which are based upon spirituality.

If we explore the genesis of Indian English, we have to go retrospectively back to Indian Renaissance in 1820 when poetry had streamed out of poetical works of Derozio, KashiPrasad Ghosh, Ramesh Chandra Dutta and Toru Dutta. This period also marks an epoch for the birth of novelists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Toru Dutta, H. Dutta, Khetrupal Chakravarti and Rajlaxmi Devi who embarked upon the venture of writing novels in English. The first writer to write a novel was B.C. Chatterjee who published *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864 which was followed by his next work *Durgeshnandini* in Bengali. After a decade Rajlaxmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife* was published in English in 1976. A succession of novels was written by other writers mentioned above. Their novels are reckoned as historical monuments. It is incontrovertibly acknowledged that writing of novels at the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a pedestrian advancement till the achievement of Indian Independence after which it began to flourish vigorously.

After emergence of novels in the mid nineteenth century there was an abrupt cessation of this trend of writing due to predominance of poetical works by Toru Datta, Manmohan Ghosh, Sorojini Naidu and Sri Aurobindo. They were preoccupied mostly with versification on account of which they did not contemplate writing of novels. It was, however, R.N. Tagore in spite of his preoccupation with poetry wrote three novels in Bengali. *The Wreck* (1921), *Gora* (1923) and *The Home and The World* (1919) which were later on translated into English. The first one is a social novel, the second is a political one and the third one is an allegorical novel. But neither Sarojini Naidu nor Sri Aurobindo nor Harendra has written any novels. However, these translated novels by Tagore contributed to the revival and rejuvenation of the languishing trend of writing novels.

In the Pre-Independence period a host of women novelists appeared in the literary scene. They exploited novel as an instrument of demolishing the citadel patriarchal dominance and hegemony. They were Cornelia Sorabji, Iqbalunnisa Hussain, Attia Hussain, Rajlaxmi Devi and R.P. Jhabvala who have shaped the destiny of Indian English novels.

In the post-Independence of India, some eminent novelists like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Daruwalla, Pritish Nandi, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Vikram Seth and Amitabh Ghosh have expanded the horizon of novel and multiplied its number by producing wealth of writing. They have adopted new themes of sociological and political importance. They have vividly portrayed the contemporary situation prevailing in India with a

reformative objective. But none of these writers conceived of writing a hagiographical novel.

In spite of predominance of English novels there was no efflorescence of religious novels in the literary garden of Indian English literature. There was conspicuous dearth of such novels because of writers' lack of interest in such venture.

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an eminent writer named Basavaraj Naikar blossomed out as a prolific writer who has produced many historical plays religious plays, mythological plays and above all a hagiographical novel. For the first time he made a pioneering venture in producing hagiographical novel *The Pointiff of Peockshire* that projects the character of a spiritually upright personality who dedicates this life to pontiffic performances for the philanthropic services of people. This novel

is much different from the earlier ones in respect of conception and presentation of the theme. The novel is based upon a sound structure of concatenation of events. It is so much saturated with religious feeling that it significantly exerts its impact and influence on Indian society by arousing religious feeling and interest in readers. The novel claims its superiority to all others for delineation of supernatural phenomena and strange incidents of psychological impact. The quintessence of this novel rests in the portrayal of manifestation of wonderful happenings that fascinate readers. The novel assumes importance for embodiment of hagiographical thoughts and religious doctrines. The piece of work bears the stamp of Basavaraj Naikar's versatility and his accomplishment as an outstanding writer. He has contributed immensely to enrichment of Indian English literature in general and religious work in particular.

#### Notes and References:

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4. Ibid. Chapter-9-page 105-III Para.
5. Ibid. Chapter-9-page 113-II Para.
6. Ibid. *The Pilgrimage of Life*.
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