

**TEXTUALISING HISTORY: A SCRUPULOUS STUDY OF
CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI'S NEELA: VICTORY SONG**

K.Chorna Deepa,

Research Scholar,

Reg No. 18214224012004

Department of English and Research Centre,

Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam,

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli-627012, Tamil Nadu, India.)

Dr. M.P.Anuja,

Assistant Professor,

Department of English and Research Centre,

Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam.

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli-627012, Tamil Nadu, India.)

Abstract

Literature is the representation of the people of a particular period in which the novel is set. It enlightens the reality of an incident and great people adroitly assorted with the imagination of the author. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novels are such instance of re-articulation of great incidence and leaders. Through her work she has made readers know how people were in early decades. The current study highlights the author's virtuoso of reality in depiction of great leaders of freedom struggle and the movements commenced by them for the freedom of the country. Her characters underwent the effect and causes of many such incidents. Through her novel *Neela: Victory Song* she adroitly delivered the conviction of the great combatants of India and other such contributors.

Keywords: Leaders, freedom struggle, history, reality.

Abbreviation: NVS – *Neela: Victory Song*

Literature depicts the people of a particular period in which the work is set. It records the achievements of great leaders with some imagination of the authors. The award winning renowned Indian English writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni propounded many great leaders of freedom struggle in her work *Neela: Victory Song*. She took the colonization and freedom struggle as the setting of her novel. The whole novel delineates the incidents of Calcutta since Calcutta is noted for its revolutionary history. She made obvious the facts and conceived notion of Indians through her works. Her works bring out the facts explicitly. Her way of delivering the meticulous reality assorted with her imagination enlightens the life of great leaders.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni explicated and highlighted the influence of the great leaders like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. They made a huge contribution for the freedom of India. The author Divakaruni through her characters praised the leaders as, "Gandhiji is a great leader ... So has Netaji Subhash Bose" (NVS 120). This is a widely accepted impression of the Indian people. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was later known as Mahatma Gandhi and was admired by people as the "father of the nation" (NVS 119). She even highlighted the nickname of Gandhiji as "Bapu" (NVS 119) by the local people. He always encouraged the freedom fighters to follow the ahimsa. The protagonist Neela's father Hari Charan involved in 'Quit India movement' along with Gandhiji. He keenly observed Gandhiji and had consideration and regard to his principles:

will win over the British the right way, through non-violence. ... nonviolence—civil disobedience, Gandhiji calls it—is the best and strongest strategy against them. Not only will we have right on our side, but the whole world will see that we do. They'll see the villainy of the British, and they'll shame them into setting us free. (NVS 120)

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni stated that Mahatma Gandhi dedicated his whole life for the freedom of India. He even had written several books along with an autobiography. His autobiography was originally published in Gujarati as *Satya Na Prayogi* which was translated into English as *An Autobiography: Experiments with Truth*. He has resumed writing at the insistence of his fellow prisoner. He shared his experiences and his experiments with the truth. A fellow prisoner of Hari Charan often quotes Gandhiji's words regarding ahimsa as, "Gandhiji says, "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind."" (NVS 120) which made a lot of sense for him. People like Hari Charan supported the principles of Gandhiji whereas younger people who wanted independence undeniably followed Netaji, "And his way, fighting the British with their own fire, killing their leaders until they all get the message and leave—is more effective." (NVS 120).

Indian people as a multiple crew fought for freedom with different strategies. Two major strategies were followed by these two great leaders and they had many followers all over the country. Together they got independence for the country. The ‘Salt March’ is also known as ‘Salt Satyagraha’. It was one of the major movements of nonviolent civil disobedience, conducted in colonial India. It was led by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. A protesting crew marched from Sabarmathi ashram to Dandi. This campaign was against the tax amended by the British rulers:

the British have no right to tax Indians for salt. It comes out of Indian ocean, and every Indian has a right to it. So he marched to the ocean with a lot of his followers, made some salt, and took it for his use—and he said that every Indian should do so, too. ... Gandhiji was insistent that his people not fight back physically. (NVS 119)

The march lasted for 24 days in the month of March and April. It made millions of Indians broke the salt law. The salt march rattled the British squatters. Though the British rulers arrested many of its participants, Gandhiji insisted the people to follow the nonviolence. The author mentioned another great movement known as ‘Quit India movement’ in her novel which was also organised by Gandhiji. It took part in the month of August and thus it is also called as ‘August movement’. The primary motive of the movement was to make ‘Brexitee India’ by their voluntary withdrawal from India. But without any clear plan it commenced and thus failed because of the absence of its leaders and thus made some supporters enact violence against official buildings.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her novel not only imparted the movements and the struggles faced by the people of pre-independent India but also bruted about the song of India. The song begins with ‘Vande Mataram’ which gives the meaning ‘Hail! Motherland’. It was sung for the first time in a political context by Rabindranath Tagore in one of the sessions of ‘Indian National Congress’. The depicted the song through her Baoul character. The Baoul sang the song of pre-revised version, ‘Sashya Shyamalam, malayaja sheetalam/ fulla kusumita/ mataram...’ (NVS 15). The song describes India as beautiful green field, with cool breezes on hot days and the sweet voice of her people. India was personified in the song and it gives the meaning, “She was an ideal to be loved, a goddess to be admired, a cause to give up one’s life for” (NVS 15). Through the song the freedom fighters ask for blessings from the motherland for the courage to fight against the British rulers:

*Seventy million of us to raise our voices
against injustice,
One hundred forty million arms that could
Raise their swords.
Why, then, are you still so helpless, Mother? (NVS16)*

This song was the source of inspiration for freedom fighters. It is treated equal with national anthem. It was composed by Bankimchandra Chatterji in 1870s, and he inscribed in his novel Anandamath in 1882. The protagonist Neela sang the song when she was alone in Bimala’s home, the further lines were with the diction “*Beautiful mother, bathed in silver moonlight,/ lovely as a lake filled with lotuses,/ I owe you my very life!*” (NVS 96). The British rulers banned the book and officially declared the recital of the song as a crime. Some freedom fighters were imprisoned for singing the song in public but protesters violated the ban and sung in front of the British officials. Some of the local landowners who supported the British rule and their rules warned people for singing Vande Mataram, “Singing forbidden songs, inciting people to foolishness! I want you out of this village by tomorrow morning. I’m going to instruct my watchmen to give you a good beating if they see you around after that.” (NVS 27). Some people didn’t bring intone out of fear.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni recorded some of the notable singers and writers in her novels. She had mentioned singers Ram Prasad, and Rajani Kanta. Through her characters she appreciated the work of art of Rabindranath Tagore as powerful and evocative. She even registered Tagore’s achievement of receiving noble prize. Neela’s friend Bimala enacted drama on Tagore’s poems which was titled as ‘Bashab Datta’, “It was about a beautiful dancing girl from ancient times, Bashab Datta, who falls in love with young monk.” (NVS 95). Through dance they were about to enact an incident from her life that, how she was exiled while suffering from smallpox and how she recovered from her illness after she nursed with love and compassion of the monk. Tagore’s diction painted pictures in Neela’s imagination. Through Bimala’s father the author brought to light the highness of Rabindranath Tagore, “Very elegant. No wonder he received the Nobel prize!” (NVS 88).

The author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni depicted some of the notable leaders and people of a particular period in which her novel was set. The movements happened during the freedom struggle and the leaders who organized the movements and their principles in the novel stick on to the actuality. She enlightens her readers of about great leaders of that period. She adroitly agglutinated the real incidents and people with her imagination.

References

Chandra, Bipan., et al. *India's Struggle for Independence*. Haryana: Penguin, 2016.

---, *India Since Independence*. India Penguin, 2017.

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *Neela: Victory Song*. Haryana: Penguin Random House, 2006.

Dodiya, Jaydipsinh K. ed. *Perspectives of Indian English Fiction*. 1 st ed. New Delhi: Sarupe Sons, 2006.

Naikar, Basavaraj. *Indian English Literature*. Vol.2. Atlantic Publisher & Distributors (P) Ltd., 2002.

---, *Representation of History in the Indian/English Drama*. Authorspress. 2015.