

THE CONFLICTS IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S IN TIMES OF SIEGE

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Githa Hariharan's fourth novel entitled 'In Times of Siege' (2003) is a controversial novel. In this novel, she raised her voice in opposition to rising fundamentalism and extremism. Fundamentalism severely plagues and perturbs the Indian society. She mourns the failure of material idea which is really dangerous for any progressive society. Alok Rai's pertinent observation is quite an honor to the secreted good point of the novel. He observes that "the novel is not only quite as contemporary as today's newspaper, but tomorrow's as well. That is what makes it a novel." (Web) The novel deals with the significance of history and its genuine understanding in contemporary times. It advocates the absorption of progressive and open-minded views for the appraisal of historical figures and their involvement to the country. The present research paper attempts to study Githa Hariharan's In Times of Siege.

Key Words: *Fundamentalism, Extremism, material idea.*

The novel *In Times of Siege* opens with its protagonist, Prof. Shiv Murthy who is a fifty-two-year old professor of medieval history at Kasturba Gandhi Central University, New Delhi. This is a distant learning university, where Shiv as a replacement for taking classes, "co-ordinates resources for his educational clients" (4). He has come to Jamuna Girls' Hostel of Kamala Nehru University, New Delhi to take his babyhood's friend, Sumati's offspring, Meena who gets her leg splintered while getting off a bus. Now, she has a giant spread wrapped around her leg and with this weighty spread she is incapable to walk properly that is why Shiv, the local custodian of Meena, has come to take her to his residence. Meena is a scholar of sociology, who is pursuing her study on the stories of women affected by the anti-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984.

Shiv Murthy has a wife named Rekha and a daughter named Tara as his family. Both have gone to settle, in the USA. Tara has got a profitable computer job in the USA. Rekha helps her offspring in settlement. It is Shiv who takes care of Meena and manages her bed in a petite room down the stairs with a bottle of water and a glass on a stool. Shiv instructs his housemaid Kamala to take care of Meena properly. Meena pleads him not to inform her parents about the fracture she got in her leg in order to salt away her parents from needless botheration. She suggests Shiv Murthy to take leave for some days from his university so that she can get an accompanying person for removing her loneliness, arising out of being unaccompanied in house. Prof. Shiv Murthy goes to his university where he is to attend a faculty meeting with his colleagues.

Dr. Menon is responsible for the course Modern India. Dr. Menon is "a thin taciturn man with a heap of curls on his head and a lush beard. All this hair and clothes he wears-always a couple of size too big for him-are part of his camouflage system" (18). Dr. Menon lives in his own world all the time, wholly cut off the planet outside. Amita Sen is Prof. Shiv Murthy's only female colleague. She is suffering loneliness and ennui, arising out of her disastrous married life. But Shiv and Amita gets pleasure from a good friendship with each other.

At the meeting, Dr. Arya is complaining in opposition to Dr. Menon to the Head of the Department, for incorrectly editing a lesson, part of one of the modules of Modern India. While inquired by the Head of

Department, Dr. Menon explains them that he has excised only those parts of the text those are unpleasant about a minority community. Dr. Sharma is also quite confident that the problem will be solved shortly. Prof. Shiv Murthy has applied for the leaves at his department. After that, he has brought some course module for scripting at his house in his leisure time. While coming back from the university, he purchases a pair of crutches and ice-cream for Meena. He informs Meena about his leaves. He is now a permanently dedicated care taker of Meena. He washes her hair, does shopping for her, and brings ice cream and comics for her. When he is not studying, he watches TV with Meena, drinks rum and plays indoor sports with Meena. When Kamala, falls ill, he himself prepares breakfast and lunch for Meena.

Professor Shiv Murthy has visited the site of Humpi ruins of Vijayanagar earlier. He wants to write a lesson on the rise and fall of Vijaynagar Empire. One day while watching TV with Meena, he is clued-up by a telephone call of a journalist from a daily paper *CURRENT* that he has written a bit contentious about the life of a great south Indian poet Basava. And his lesson has wound the sentiments of the people; there is great annoyance in the midst of masses for not treating Basava respectfully. At first, Shiv Murthy thinks how an ordinary lesson on a poet Basava can hurt the sentiments of people. Prof. Shiv treats this as a rumour and does not take it seriously.

But quickly after this, Shiv is informed by the Head of the Department, Dr. Sharma on telephone that “your lesson on Basavanna's movement for social reform has been leaked somehow to the press”. And “Apparently there is a certain lack of clarity in the lesson-anyway, the lesson has hurt the sentiments of a Hindu watchdog group. You know our policy is to steer clear of controversy” (53). The Dean and the Head of the Department have received annoyed and abusive letters for this lesson.

A crowd named Itihas Surkasha Manch starts protesting in opposition to the lesson that has created a vast argument in the midst of masses. Dr. Sharma comments about this:

It seems that you have implied that Basavanna's city, Kalyana was, not a model Hindu kingdom. It seems you have not exaggerated the problem of caste and written in a very biased way about the Brahmins and temple priests. And also you have not made it clear enough that Basava was much more than ordinary human being. There are people who consider him divine . . . There is a rumour that you have gone on leave because the lesson has got you into trouble. . . . Well, Shiv, we will have to act swiftly to stop this growing into a controversy. A full apology or retraction from you will be the best we can decide what to call it so that it is not embarrassing for the department for you of course. And we may have to send instructions to our entire study centre to discontinue use of the booklet that contains this module. May be we will have to decide to reprint without the lesson. (53-54)

After listening to the Head of the Department's comment Prof. Shiv Murthy realized the intensity of the circumstances. He tells Meena that he has written a lesson on Basava or Basavanna, a south Indian social reformer and saint poet. Shiv Murthy has made Basava's unbiased and neutral assessment, as a statesman, saint and theorist, based on his own acquaintance and surveillance of history and culture. But a certain division of society feels insulted by the lesson. Because Shiv has not made “the heroes heroic enough” (55). Concerning the lesson Prof. Shiv Murthy comments: “It seems I have not sung enough of a paean to the glory Hindu kingdoms; and that I make too much of caste divisions among Hindus. . . . The protection of history! Whoever heard of history having to be protected?” (55).

Meena suggests Shiv Murthy that he should not lay down his arms to the stress given by the fundamentalists, in its place he should sketch out a plan of action to struggle against “fundoos”(fundamentalist). In the next crack of dawn, Shiv goes to meet the Dean at his office, where the Head of the Department is previously presenting his anxiety over the controversial lesson with the Dean. Shiv Murthy was asked about the controversial writing by the Dean. Prof. Shiv explains about his lesson to the Dean and tells that whatever he has written that is based on historical evidences and not on the basis of long-cherished mythology and folklores. He has added proofs to the end of his lesson to sustaining his

views. Anybody who is having some qualms and objections, concerning his description of Basava's story, can go in the course of this profs and end notes.

The Head gives a vexed look to Shiv. The Head of the Department says to Shiv Murthy that after interpreting his lesson cautiously, he has made a record of some phrases and sentences that are causing confusion and misunderstanding to his lesson. He lists these objections as:

One: Backward-looking. Two: Contradictory account of Basava's life, conflicting narratives. Three: Birth legends fabricated. Four: Called a bigoted revolutionary by temple priests. Also called, a dangerous man, a threat to structure, stability and religion. Five: The comfort of faith was not enough for Basava. Six: There were rumours that Basava used money from the royal treasury to look after his followers. Seven: The lines of social division in the great city of Kalyana were sharply drawn. Caste was a dominating factor. Eight: There was tension between brahmanical religious orthodoxy and the popular religious reformers and saint-poet. Nine: Basava met and could have been influenced the 'mad men from Persia', the dancing, drinking Sufis. Ten: Bijjala, the king of Kalyana, was pressured by realize leaders to commit atrocities on low-caste devotees. Basava told the king a series of tales in which devotees especially untouchable devotees were shown to be superior to realized. (68)

Subsequently listening to these rough demands of the Manch, the Dean gets annoyed and considers the demands of the Manch as a disgraceful effort to insult history. But the Head of the Department, Dr. Sharma whose strategy has been to "steer clear of controversy" doesn't want "to get into debates and controversies-however fascinating, however historically permissible-if the student don't need these or appreciate them." (70). After listening to all these deliberations asserts, professor Shiv Murthy bravely says: "The lesson does not distort history by any stretch of the imagination. And I will not apologize or explain myself to a group outside the university, a group of people we do not recognize as historians" (70). At his house, Meena welcomes Shiv Murthy with newspaper clippings and a postcard sent to him unanimously. There is an editorial in printed in a newspaper *The Current* that reads:

Who will teach the teacher?

Protest against prof's distortion of history

The Itihas Surakash Manch, an independent social and cultural organization, issued a statement on Wednesday in the capital calling for 'an end to tampering with our precious and glorious Indian history'. The statement, signed by one of the organization leaders, Mr. Anant Tripathi, said, 'We will not allow history to be polluted like this. Fifty years after independence, we cannot have Indian historians brainwashed by foreign theories and methods depriving us of our pride in Hindu temples and priests. How are these historians different from the Muslims who invaded our land? Every schoolchild knows the story of Mohammeds, from Ghazni to Ghor. Muslim tried to destroy Hindu pride and civilization. In the same way, these modern invaders pretending to be historians are attacking our system of traditions and our way of life that have stood the test of time. But this time we will not allow ourselves to be conquered and subjected.

The Manch also quoted several historians, including retired Professor Shri A. A. Atre, to support their claim that 'Basava was not against realized as such'. All he wanted, like any saint, was that everyone should live in order and harmony. The venerable professor told reporters in Pune, 'To say that the saint Basava may have died "in broken, disillusioned exile" is as much a mischievous distortion of history as to say that he may have learnt anything from the Muslim Sufis of Persia. Sad to say, there seem to be scholars with vested interests who think the treasures of our past can be taken away from us.'

The KGU historian, Professor Shiv Murthy, has gone on leave since the protest began. He refused

to confirm whether the university had asked him to go on leave or whether he will resign from the department. He also claimed to be unaware of the furore caused by his text. On the question of the historian's responsibility to society, his response was a terse 'No comment.' Professor A. A. Atre has condemned this reaction as 'sheer arrogance'. (75-77)

Meena Sketches out a plan with Shiv Murthy as to how they will struggle with these spiritual fanatics. Meena asks for the help of her friends Amar, Jyoti and Manzar. Amar is a societal campaigner and a dedicated member of numerous citizens' groups. They all carry this subject to the notice of different 'group of citizens' and they try to fight against radicalism and fundamentalism by obtaining hold up from a variety of sections of society such as political leaders, academicians, social workers and lawyers. By impeding in the knowledge of media this disagreement gets more powerful and extensive.

Professor Shiv Murthy's life partner Rekha also suggests him not to take the risk of his life in opposition to these fundamentalists. Rekha is concerned about Shiv as she watches news on TV channels. A TV channel, *Newsight*, arranges Professor Shiv Murthy's interview at his residence where, on being asked about his deformation of chronological facts, he clarifies: "The important thing to remember . . . is that history like the human mind is a very complex body with many strands. Ours is rich, pluralistic history. Of course all these threads must be repeatedly re-examined" (97).

Professor Shiv Murthy gets motivation for scripting a lesson on Basava from his father who has been a freedom fighter all his life. The recollection of his dead father guides him from time to time whenever he needs his supervision on multifaceted problems of life. And it is his father who motivates him for realized the real nature of Basava, filtering truth from fiction. On an occurrence his father told: "Shiv . . . if you want to get hold of something and learn all about it, know it, it does not matter whether that something is in past or present all that matters is that you are free- thinking that you have moral courage" (40). Thus, his father becomes a most important light to Shiv, who feels his imperceptible attendance whenever he is in necessity.

A staff meeting is convened at the department, where Dr. Arya speaks in favour of the Manch, "The Manch represents public sentiments. History and everything else should respect this. For years leftist and pseudo-secular historians have been filling committees with their agents. Now their monopoly is over and they are making hue and cry" (126). At the meeting Professor Shiv Murthy has been clued-up that his lesson has been sent for a skilled commission for an unbiased assessment. In the meeting, Dr. Arya loses his temper with Professor Shiv Murthy and starts struggling with Professor Shiv Murthy and he holds Shiv by his collar and Dr. Menon tries to end their fight. Itihas Suraksha Manch's leader, Anant Tripathi wages a war against Shiv Murthy by observing:

Texts which over emphasize caste divisions and project the Hindu religion and Hindu culture in a poor light should not be allowed. Such conspiracies to tarnish the image of the Indian past should be met with courage. People feel free to revile Hinduism with impunity, but they do not dare criticize Islam because then the swords would be out (99-100).

Meena suggests Shiv to get the help of his social group, and she thinks that they should stand by him at the occasion of disaster. She tells Shiv Murthy about the policy of the protectors, where they "convince people that they are under attack, then offer them protection" (99). Meanwhile, Dr. Menon informs Professor Shiv Murthy that his room, at the department, has been ransacked by some hooligans, the bench, chair and bookshelves have been broken down. His nameplate has been thrown on the ground in a mound of litter. Professor Shiv Murthy is being searched for by fundamentalists and extremists for felonious their sentiments. In the middle of such strong protest, Shiv feels very sad.

Amar, Meena's friend, realized a protest assembly, where the followers of Professor Shiv Murthy, all along with his colleagues, Dr. Amit and Dr. Menon and a bus full of students from Meena's KNU, all have gathered, distributing flyers and pamphlets in opposition to fundamentalism. There are people holding placards, uproaring slogans such as "Stop TALIBANIZATION OF INDIA", "HISTORY

DESTROYED!”, “WHOSE AFRAID OF THE MANCH?” (145).

All over the place there is an ambiance of protest, fuming speeches, and meetings, rallies, out crying of slogans by the followers of the Manch on one side, and on the other the followers of Professor Shiv Murthy such as, organizations like, Secular Women Against Patriarchy (SWAP), Forum Against Hindu Terrorism (FAHT), Peoples Association of Secular Scientists (PASS), unite hands with each other to support Professor Shiv Murthy. The daily routine of Professor Shiv Murthy and Meena, has become too frantic. They have started chasing their own tails and putting their views on history and its interpretations. Narrating their chaotic life, Githa Hariharan writes:

Shiv is losing count of interviews, meetings, telephone calls. Meena has forgotten about her itchy knee. She sits in her bed, phone in hand, a general on the battlefield direction operations. The occasional awkward silence that would sit between them in the early days is now filled; they have more than enough to talk about, all safe subjects (117).

Prof. Shiv and Meena in cooperation understand that they are the part of an army, making development against these fundamentalist forces. Some more incidents of this type have been enumerated by Amar. Incidents like Campaigns in opposition to Christians, the assassination of Australian messenger Graham Staines and his two children, the assault on artiste M. F. Hussain for painting Hindu goddesses in the naked form, blackening of faces of teachers in Goa for setting “politically incorrect exams” and the recollection of a number on the freedom struggle, the commotion of shooting of a big screen on the plight of Hindu widows in Benaras, all are noticed by Amar and Meena. This incident gives milieu to their individual story, where the identical situation has been created around them by these traditional fundamentalists. These examples show how freedom of expression has been covered up by these extremists.

Like Basava, Professor Shiv Murthy also favours reality, truthfulness and reliability. Professor Shiv Murthy thinks that a cast like Meena is also wrapped around him. Because of this he is not capable to progress properly. Dr. Menon also informs Professor Shiv Murthy about a comparable disagreement, where a play is printed in 1986, arranged as a text, formed stress in culture and it was removed from the university syllabus. Here once again the extremist forces and accuses the play of portraying Basava as a normal creature “as a coward; implying that he committed suicide; casting aspersions on the 'chastity' of some women; and letting some characters use obscene language” (109-110). Due to the government regulation the play was removed from the university syllabus. Open-minded views have been a matter of disagreement, where there is repression of fact and authenticity. The vice-chancellor of the KGU, appears on the television in an interrogative session, he says that he is going to shape a group to look into the matter of destruction and hooliganism on the university campus. He is bound to offer a campus without violence and unfriendliness.

People from all walks of life come to unite both forums fundamentalism as well as liberalism. Itihas Surakasha Manch has its own followers and Professor Shiv Murthy also has an army of liberals. Shiv's offspring Tara from the USA, tells him that she is receiving communication from her companions in Delhi and some Indians in the USA. She says to Shiv that “It's sort of weird and embarrassing to explain why you have written something against our temples and priests all that. It's only after coming to the US that many of us have learnt to appreciate Indian tradition” (112). Tara, devoid of realizing the fact, thinks that her father has written something in opposition to Indian culture. Indian culture is a quintessence of religious studies and rich legendary, so scripting or inquiring in opposition to these mythological ideas is not suitable. These are the ways of life, which have been respected by natives from generation to generation and anything in opposition to customs and traditions of a meticulous group of people is not tolerable to the social order. While Meena thinks that these viewpoints should be analyzed and discussed before the society and new honest things should be brought into the notice of community.

Professor Shi Murthy's wife Rekha suggests him not to go in opposition to the grain. She reminds Shiv Murthy that he should not stop thinking about that he is “dealing with hoodlums who have pulled down mosques and churches that have stood for so many years. They've engineered riots, for god's sake what's a little violence to them? Any they are so powerful now” (155).

Everywhere it is in the air that Prof. Shiv has distorted sacred image of Basava. Because of these protests, he thinks that for writing a lesson of history, he should be careful about not hurting the sentiments of public, neglecting authentic historical evidences. Anything that is written against the public sentiments, even if it is true or is proved by the scientific study cannot be expressed honestly. At his home, Shiv is provided with a security guard by the university, who lives in Prof. Shiv's compound and keeps an eye on visitors of Prof. Shiv. There is an article about Dr. Murthy that reads:

About thirty young men claiming to be students look the university authorities by surprise when they stormed into the History Department on Thursday afternoon. The incident has been 'explained' by the Itihas Suraksha Manch as 'a spontaneous protest by students against the distortion of heroic historical figures and the anti-Hindu bias' of a lesson on medieval history written by the professor in question. (169)

In spite of powerful protests, Professor Shiv Murthy never knuckles under to fundamentalists' demand. He is obstinate to not to modify his views. As the time passes, tornado of protest diminishes by degrees. As “The papers, the TV, the university, the Manch, Amar's band of saviours-all seem to have forgotten the notorious professor, along with the glories of Kalyana's temples and the truth about Basava's life and death. Both supporters and opponents have either been stunned into silence or sated by the most recent acts of violence” (181). Meena's spread now has been detached. Her leg is healed now. She is prepared to be taught to walk again. Amar comes to Meena to get her back to her hostel. The remembrance of Shiv's dead father disappears completely from Shiv Murthy's mind. And at last, in the end of the novel, Githa Hariharan writes:

Even Shiv, despite a long record of lost opportunities has found his way to the brink; from where he can if he dares, make the necessary leap off the precipice. He has used his father's memory like a walking stick en route to this first time risk-taking venture. It is Meena who put this stick in his hand again, coaxed his limping legs in the direction he knew better than she must be taken. Now the stick is superfluous that is what Meena and her unlikely allies in contingency, his father, Basava, and the thought-policing touts of Itihas Suraksha Manch have forced Shiv to see. Once he throws away all safe crutches he can truly in the present. Be free to be curious, to speculate; to debate, dissent. Reaffirm the value of the only heirloom he needs from the past, the right to know a thing in all the ways possible. (194)

The novel ends with the disappearance of Meena, who having dispensed with crutches, leans as an alternative on Shiv Murthy's father's old walking stick, as she makes her way to the car and waiting to get her back to her old life. Commenting on the theme of the novel, Sarita Prabhakar comments that “In the novel, there are other real-life stories taken from contemporary life which run parallel to the main narrative and further emphasise the insidious role of the communal forces” (69).

The first noticeable conflict rising in the novel is between fundamentalism and liberalism. It forms the thematic texture of this novel. Fundamentalism projects a faith in old, inflexible and traditional conventions of religious conviction whereas liberalism supports impartial, unbiased and freethinking. Fundamentalism, in this novel, is represented by Itihas Suraksha Manch, led by its extremist head, Anant Tripathi, while freethinking is represented by Professor Shiv Murthy.

Professor Shiv Murthy's lesson on Basava, a south Indian saint poet, has landed him in problem. His lesson has formed a tornado in the social order because of its extremely contentious representation of Basava's life. Basava, in the culture of south of India, has been considered as a saint and an enormous social

reformer whose social reforms have brought equality and fraternity in society. The entire life of Basava had been a matter of enormous admiration to the people and his actions had been a foundation of motivation to forthcoming generations. Basava had genuinely shown his concern for the untouchables and subjugated. He tried to take away prejudice and caste system of elevating the rank of these low-caste sections through his reforming poems, Vachanas. About the controversies relating to Basava's life, A. K. Ramanujan tells:

The biography of Basavanna has many contradictory sources: controversial edicts, deifying accounts by Virsaiva followers, poetic life-histories, pejorative accounts by his Jaina opponents mentioned in the vacans of contemporary and later saints. Basavanna was a political activist and social reformer, minister to a king in a troubled century; it is not surprising that he should have been praised as a prophet by followers and condemned as zealot and conspirator by his enemies, of whom he had many. (43)

Professor Shiv Murthy has analyzed Basava's life systematically on the basis of his own historical studies and archaeological surveys. So as an alternative on being misled by different traditional, verbal narratives widespread about Basava's life, he puts forward a factual and genuine portrayal of Basava's life, opposite to the widespread viewpoint about Basava. But this story of Basava's life has not been acknowledged by some fundamentalist groups, as these groups feel that Professor Shiv Murthy has written a bit of ill-repute that has belittled the God-like representation of Basava. Itihas Surakasha Manch, on behalf of fundamentalists and bigots, begins protest irately in opposition to Professor Shiv Murthy and demands a written admission of guilt all along with the submission of his re-written lesson to the Manch for its appropriate assessment.

But at the same time there are people, within and outer of his educational world who not only support Professor Shiv Murthy but also start an operation for impartial and neutral thinking about the past and its interpretations. These people support secularism and liberalism while standing by Professor Shiv Murthy. In one of her interrogative sessions with *the Deccan Herald*, Githa Hariharan figures out her inspiration of writing this novel:

As a writer, and more importantly as a citizen who has high stakes in the society I live in, I have been very much part of various movements. Over the last several years, along with a lot of several other writers, artists, filmmakers, I have felt very strongly that we are travelling in a direction that is deeply regressive, and both as a citizen and a writer I have felt that I must take this head on, and that was the general background that was going on in my head more specifically, in 1999, after my last novel *When Dreams Travel* came out, as I was mulling over all these things, I broke my knee and was laid up in bed for weeks together. It was a good time to actually think about how I would construct this novel, how I would take up an issue that I was not only interested in but also living through. And so I began writing. I was midway through my novel, when to my shock I found that eminent historians Sarkar and Paniker had their volume on the freedom struggle recalled. In fact I had to stop writing for a few weeks because it was almost as if the media coverage and the kind of historians' fear was both similar yet different from my fictional situation. (Web)

In this way an open disagreement flanked by fundamentalism and liberalism surfaces in the novel and where liberalism and neutral thinking is exposed greater to extremism and prejudice. Professor Shiv Murthy, has been a defender of liberalism and secularism while facing a powerful disapproval of the community and the Manch, refusing to admit defeat to the demands of Itihas Suraksha Manch. He has written a lesson that has been based on his deep and technical analysis of chronological details, so bending down to the bigots is not feasible for him.

Chronological writing demands impartiality while analyzing the chronological characters or

actions happened in the past. The analysis of a chronological character should be done on the basis of historical proofs and archaeological surveys. Maintaining facts aloof from fiction has been a necessary required for chronological analysis. Romila Thapar says, "Historians are responsible for the interpretations because they are the ones who are interpreting it. The evidence does not speak by itself. The historian has to make the evidence speak and so what one's listening to is the historian making the evidence speak" (58). In the analysis of any chronological figure impartiality plays a very important role as a historian needs honest analysis of the concerned one or happening.

Impartiality stands for rational analysis of the chronological figure irrespective of their fixed splendid involvement to history. Biased analysis which is totally based on a person's own prejudiced view about the events and characters creates puzzlement because in that case reality can be interpreted in a different way leading to fake interpretation of chronological events. Biased analysis cannot replicate the fact and reality of the chronological facts.

There is an inherent disagreement between the parable and actuality that openly surfaces in the novel. Myths are the stories which usually do not have any written minutes in human civilizations and transferred verbally from generation to generation. Defining the legends, M. H. Abrams says:

... A myth is one story in a mythology- a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do and to establish the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which men conduct their lives.

Professor Shiv Murthy, in the novel, has tried to sort out actuality from the old age conventional legends which produce a disagreement between falsehood and actuality. While analyzing the character of Basava Professor Shiv Murthy takes alternative to truthfulness and certainty that figure the base of his portrayal of Basava. He searches the truth about Basava's life on the basis of chronological proofs. His report of Basava is based on true chronological proofs. His Basava is unbiased not biased; his Basava is true not mythological. He does not believe Basava as an icon of religious studies but believes him as a genuine figure in history. He examines the nature of Basava in the perspective of his age in which Basava lived a life of a fighter, as a statesman and as a financial minister of Kalyana. His surveillance is based upon genuine and dependable sources of the past and his own archaeological surveys of Humpi ruins of Vijaynagar. He concentrates on Basava's involvement to his state and people rather than his religious or celestial life which has been traced in history with different fabricated stories. What type of a connection Basava used to take pleasure in with his fellow courtiers or what had been his demeanor while trading with state affairs, all these are analyzed by Professor Shiv Murthy and his portrayal of Basava is considered as sacred in the social order and public feels that he has not treated Basava with suitable respect.

In tradition, Basava has been considered as heavenly and religious not as a normal human being or as a statesman. It was understood that Basava used to get pleasure from heavenly powers with which he could do miracles for the community. It was understood that lord Shiva had sent his bull on earth as Basava. He had sent his bull because of the dreadful conditions of the ethical values of the social order where fidelity to divinity started declining, making people's life unhappy. So being the part of the lord Shiva, Basava used to have powers to execute wonders and miracles which he used in order to put aside people from twinge and diseases. He candidly disgusted in opposition to the caste classification of his society. Thus permanent conflict between mythological and true portrayal of Basava gives augment to a disagreement between fable and actuality also. While remarking upon the disagreement in the novel, Sarita Prabhakar tells:

As a historian and professor, Shiv had made an attempt to disentangle the reality from the

myth. What he has emphasized was that Basava was not “a cardboard saint singing syrupy sweet devotional songs, only concerned with hereafter” (140). He was a social reformer and a thinker who examined everything that was traditionally 'sanctioned'. He questions the idea of 'the Hindu' world as being a homogenous whole and protested against all kinds of discriminations. He gathered around him a number of social revolutionaries known as veershaivas warriors of Shiva and the movement came to be known as virsaiva movement. Together with them, he attempted to experiment with a community that 'sought to excluded no one', a community in which 'cross currents could co-exist', in which 'rapids and the most placid of waters were fellow realized' (107). The movement wrought a social upheaval and the city of Kalyana was ultimately burnt. But Basava and his companions left a legacy, a legacy Shiv is now heir to it but in very different way he would have liked to believe that it is Basava who links the year 1168 and 2000 but he is realized to see that “it is not the dissident leader who is the critical link but the same hate mongers, the same manches that have sprouted in two times, centuries apart”(66).

Therefore, brushing out-of-the-way all traditions from actuality Professor Shiv Murthy dares the social order, on behalf of the factual portrait of a poet and social reformer Basava's life.

A disagreement flanked by the past and modernity also comes to the front, when the modern description of Basava's life does not exist up to the prospect of people and legendary description of Basava's life which has been extremely accepted amongst public is permissible to be known in public. The past is the study of actions and community of history. Scripting about events of the past, people requires a deep methodical, logical study of chronological proofs and archaeological sources. The reading of Professor Shiv Murthy on Basava, in modern times, is based on his firm research effort and investigation of chronological proofs. Professor Shiv Murthy analyses Basava impartially, keeping widespread legends and tales of Basava at bay. Modern description of Basava's life which is told by Professor Shiv Murthy, is not acknowledged by the people. Barely legendary and conventional description, which has been widespread, is permissible to be known to all. This creates a disagreement between the past and modernity. History, which is the study of the past, demands an objective approach in scripting about the proceedings of the past. But a disagreement emerges when a biased interpretation of the past by historians inter mingles mythology and fictions in chronological writings. In modern times, chronological figures and proceedings are being analyzed impartially on the basis of historical and archeological substantiations. Modernity has brought a modification in chronological interpretations, by promoting impartiality and neutrality to chronological scripting. So due to modernity, the past once again is being evaluated in the beam of genuineness and authenticity of chronological testimonies.

Modern assessment of Basava's life and his involvement to the society of Kalyana which has been done by Professor Shiv Murthy is not acknowledged by the Itihas Suraksha Manch and other fundamentalists crowd of the social order. Only a prejudiced and fabricated chronological description which has been up till now well-known to public for centuries is accepted by the social order. This disagreement between the past and modernity becomes more multifaceted when the past demands for impartiality and unbiased evaluation of chronological proceedings. In modern times due to the development of science and technologies the work of exploration of chronological proceedings has turn out to be more genuine. The genuineness of any chronological personality or occasion can be effortlessly dogged by applying technical methodologies and techniques that not only decide the reality but also marsh off the misconceptions or rumours about everything. Modernity brings progression in any research labor as due the fleeting of time, our acquaintance about the past gets wealthier and wealthier. The past on the other hand brings the rudiments of fictions also if it is not in printed impartially and neutrally. There can be many disingenuous interpretations of chronological proceedings that took place in the past. A contradictory circumstance between the past and modernity can never take place if the past has its roots in

impartial honest explanations of proceedings or personalities. Disagreement arises when the past loses its position of accurateness and straightforwardness.

Professor Shiv Murthy, being a thinker, also undergoes ruthless conflicts which he faces outwardly and inwardly. His inner disagreement springs up in the shape of his predicament that he faces as an academician and historian. His inner disagreement can be realized when he faces defenselessness as a presumed professor of history. In the eyes of the public, he is considered as a educated professor of a prominent university, but he, in spite of being an learned professor, having power to convey his views on the past, is incapable to convey his views about Basava liberally because of the demands which has been put on him by the Itihas Suraksha Manch which also gets the support of the public whose approaches have been hurt by Professor Shiv Murthy. The ever increasing radicalism and fundamentalism have concealed his free voice; he is not agreed with any rights to verbalize on the past, for he thinks that his study and new conclusion need a certificate by the extremists since only those things can be allowed to the public which does not hurt anyone's thoughts and are not at all contentious in character. A generally acknowledged history of the life of Basava is not feasible till Professor Shiv Murthy writes something agreeable and interesting about Basava considerate for the sentiments of community which should not be injure Just because Shiv Murthy is a well-known professor, it does not mean that he should inscribe something contentious or unclear about the saint poet Basava. Professor Shiv Murthy must be concerned about the feelings of the people and he instead of creating conflicts or controversies should hold up conventional and legendary views which have been transferred from generation to generation incessantly and whose honesty cannot be challenged. His inner disagreement becomes more flagrant, when he starts getting abhorrent mails from various parts of the nation and also gets the pressure for his life for scripting a bit contentious about an extremely appreciated character. Even if he has not in print something contentious, he needs permission from the group of the hard core extremists who will analyze the in print work of from the different angles and once the in print effort gets its approval by the extremists, only then it can be approved to syllabus. Professor Shiv Murthy feels powerful demands of fundamentalists and this generates a multifaceted mental disagreement. Githa Hariharan, while projecting this inner disagreement of Professor Shiv Murthy states:

He is an academic; he argues not some rabble-activist. He is a professor after all, not a two inch newspaper column hero. Basava's man is ready with his rejoinder. Why pretend you are a professor if you can't stand up to someone, telling you what to think? How to think? (64)

Professor Shiv Murthy's departed father inspires Professor Shiv Murthy to write down and examine honestly about the past with accurateness and honesty removing all doubts and confusions. Githa Hariharan very harshly remarks upon the reduction of space for free expression as a consequence of the divergence of the society along class and communal lines in the novel:

History, its layered terrain of past mastering into present, shrinks to the size of a module, a black-and-white booklet of lessons. Then that goes. There is only a lone orphaned atom left behind, a sullen, impoverished particle of knowledge. The world and its multitudinous mysteries are reduced to precarious survival on a crude seesaw; saint versus leader, saint versus man. Golden Age versus Dark Ages. Hindu versus Muslim, Hindu versus Christian, anti-Hindu, pro-Hindu. Secularist, soft Hindu, rabid Hindu. (150)

The beginning of disagreement takes position when reality which has been up till now concealed appears suddenly and begins confronting dishonesty which has been widespread for centuries in communal ambience. Professor Shiv Murthy, in spite hard disapproval by the hardcore Hindu extremists does not give up to the demands of the bigots. In addition, Githa Hariharan has depicted an outer

disagreement of Professor Shiv Murthy's life in terms of bodily battle between two dissimilar views representing fundamentalism and modernism. Dr. Arya, a colleague of Prof. Shiv, who supports traditional and mythical version of Basava's life, takes up a gauntlet in opposition to Professor Shiv Murthy and holds him by his neckline in a robust of anger. Professor Shiv Murthy's outer clash with Dr. Arya is a paradigm of a fight between fundamentalist forces and tolerance.

Distant from this, there has been an fundamental disagreement in Professor Shiv Murthy's dead father's life. His father had been a dedicated freedom fighter all his life. Throughout the freedom struggle, he passionately took part in the freedom movement and went to jail many times but after the freedom of India from the British empire, his country, for whom he fought unselfishly, did not live up to his prospect. His fellow countrymen had elapsed his priceless involvement to the freedom struggle. His unselfish dedication had no meaning for his fellow countrymen. This created a disagreement in Professor Shiv Murthy's father's life which he could not stand and at last, left his house in dissatisfaction, without telling his relations. Professor Shiv Murthy's mother tried to look for him but she could not locate her life partner anywhere. His father had been powerless to hit equilibrium between his own philosophy and quick shifting world. Professor Shiv Murthy's father had been a representation of devastated dreams and aspirations, who became sickened with the contemporary ways of life.

As a result, Githa Hariharan has skilfully wicker numerous types of conflicts into the thematic consistency of *In Times of Siege* which will exhibit endless in a country like India.

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